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

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

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments
- Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
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<td>The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
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<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
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<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><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 09:00 and made an acknowledgment of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Fair Entitlements Guarantee Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (09:01): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I rise to introduce the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Amendment Bill 2014.

This bill will make some changes to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee scheme to not only ensure its smooth operation, but importantly, its future sustainability.

The Fair Entitlements Guarantee is a basic payment scheme of last resort that covers certain unpaid employment entitlements when employees lose their job through the liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer. The scheme is the successor to the General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme, or GEERS, which was introduced in 2001 by the Howard government to protect employee entitlements.

This government supports the Fair Entitlements Guarantee. After all, it was the Howard government that introduced protection for employees' entitlements, the first time any Commonwealth government had done so. The Fair Entitlements Guarantee provides protection for Australian workers who have earned and accrued entitlements. The Fair Entitlements Guarantee pays those entitlements, where, through no fault of the employees, the employer enters bankruptcy or liquidation and cannot pay the entitlements themselves.

Over time, the costs borne by the scheme have increased significantly. Demand has increased from 8,626 claimants being paid $72.97 million in 2006-07 to 16,019 claimants being paid $261.65 million in 2012-13. This trajectory of increase in the cost of the scheme is not sustainable. To ensure the future sustainability of the scheme, changes must be made.

The Fair Entitlements Guarantee currently provides assistance for redundancy entitlements up to a maximum of four weeks' redundancy pay per year of service, with no cap on years of service.

This level of protection is very generous by community standards. It creates a moral hazard—it provides an incentive for employers and unions to sign up to unsustainable redundancy entitlements, safe in the knowledge that if the company fails, the Fair Entitlements Guarantee and the Australian taxpayer will pay for it.

To secure the financial sustainability of the scheme, the bill will reinstate the previous 16-week cap on redundancy payments made under the scheme, which will apply to employer liquidations or bankruptcies that occur on or after 1 January 2015.
It is very important to note that capping the assistance for redundancy pay entitlements to a threshold of 16 weeks' pay will align redundancy payments under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee with the maximum amount payable under the National Employment Standards.

As well as addressing financial sustainability, this amendment will also address the moral hazard that overly generous redundancy entitlements create.

It will put beyond doubt that the accepted standard for redundancy pay is what is contained in the National Employment Standards—a maximum of 16 weeks' pay. For the sake of consistency, it is important that the National Employment Standards and the Fair Entitlement Guarantee standards are the same.

This bill will only affect people who lose their job when their employer is liquidated or becomes bankrupt on or after 1 January 2015.

While the Fair Entitlements Guarantee payment for redundancy pay will not go beyond 16 weeks' pay, employees will still be able to pursue their employer for any remaining unpaid entitlements through the winding-up process, which is what employees currently do for entitlements not covered by the Fair Entitlements Guarantee.

Let me make it abundantly clear—the government is firmly of the belief that it is the responsibility of employers to meet the cost of their employees. This includes making adequate provision for redundancy pay when employees are made redundant. It is not the job of government and the Australian taxpayer to prop up particular businesses when they are failing or encourage employers to shirk their responsibilities. The government's job is to ensure the economy is as strong as possible and to provide a framework for business to succeed.

This bill also progresses three technical amendments to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee legislation to clarify that:

- a debt owed by a claimant for a particular entitlement can be offset proportionally against other entitlements payable to the claimant under the scheme if the debt exceeds the entitlement to which it relates;
- amounts required to be withheld by law, such as pay-as-you-go taxation, will be deducted from payments when they are made to the claimant;
- payments can be made to the estate of a deceased employee or claimant.

The bill also:

- amends the act so that the issue of whether a person has 'reasonably pursued' a debt owed by the employer is not a consideration for eligibility for any payment under the scheme—it is a matter that is dealt with when calculating the amount a claimant is owed;
- establishes arrangements for costs associated with appeals of decisions relating to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to be drawn from the special appropriation.

This bill will allow the Fair Entitlements Guarantee to continue in a sustainable fashion. It will ensure that the National Employment Standards are consistent with the Fair Entitlements Guarantee.
The government supports the Fair Entitlements Guarantee. And this bill ensures that it can continue to be supported.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Infrastructur Australia Amendment (Cost Benefit Analysis and Other Measures) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Truss.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (09:07): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian government is committed to building the infrastructure of the 21st century and to ensuring this nation has the productive infrastructure it needs to meet the challenges ahead.

The 2014-15 budget laid out a historic $50 billion infrastructure plan to deliver vital transport infrastructure right across our cities, regional centres and rural communities. This commitment is part of the government's economic action strategy to build a strong, prosperous economy, boost productivity and create thousands of new jobs.

Building better road and rail infrastructure will make it easier for freight to move around our cities and to our rural and regional centres. Infrastructure investment helps cut fuel costs and reduces travel times so we can spend more time in productive activities or with our loved ones.

The government is not just getting on with infrastructure delivery; we are also determined to reform the way decisions are made to prioritise new infrastructure projects. Therefore we are acting to reform.

The government's election commitment was for a strong independent, transparent and expert advisory body able to forge productive relationships with industry, states and territories to deliver quality independent advice on infrastructure proposals.

We have delivered on that promise and on 1 September the new governance arrangements for Infrastructure Australia officially commenced.

On 1 September I also announced the new board of IA under Mr Mark Birrell.

IA will now be able to better demonstrate transparency and rigour in its prioritisation of projects and its advice to government.

IA is getting on with the key priorities this government has tasked it with:

- undertaking an audit of nationally significant infrastructure;
- developing a 15 year plan on infrastructure priorities; and
- assessing projects receiving government funding of $100 million or more.
Let's be clear: IA is already assessing projects which involve Commonwealth funding of at least $100 million and will make public the details of their evaluations. This was the government's election commitment and this is what we are delivering without the trigger being specified in legislation.

With the previous amendments provided for in the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill 2013, the government had provided for this to be specified through a disallowable legislative instrument. However, the bill as amended by the Senate no longer provided for such an instrument. We therefore made an undertaking during debate on the Land Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill 2014 to ensure that the $100 million threshold would be included in this act.

This bill will amend the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008 (IA Act) to clarify the legislative and administrative arrangements for Infrastructure Australia. It will also rectify the currently incorrect placement of provisions pertaining to cost-benefit analyses of infrastructure proposals in the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008. This will ensure that cost-benefit analyses inform the evaluation of proposals under the IA Act.

The bill will amend the act to include in the functions provision the requirement that Infrastructure Australia undertake evaluations of proposals that involve Commonwealth funding of at least $100 million. This figure is to be established as a benchmark based on 2014 dollars and indexed at least every five years to ensure this figure maintains relativity into future years.

Australia's future growth will be significantly influenced by our capacity to deliver more appropriate, efficient and effective infrastructure and transport. Investment in nationally significant infrastructure is central to growing Australia's productivity and improving the living standards of Australians now and in the future.

To maximise productivity improvement through investment, funding must flow to projects that yield the highest benefits. Therefore, it is critical to base project selection on rigorous analysis and sound planning to avoid wasteful investment. The government recognises that Australia needs improved planning—coordinated across jurisdictions—to underpin investment and regulatory reforms.

We are, therefore, focussed on long-term planning based on robust, evidence based findings through a greater understanding of the critical issues facing Australia's infrastructure and land transport system.

Notwithstanding the significant reforms the government has made to Infrastructure Australia, it remains an advisory body, a key advisory body with an independent view. It will not be the decision maker in terms of funding allocation. That responsibility will remain with governments.

The bill currently before parliament builds on the IA reforms and corrects anomalies which arose from amendments made to the bill during the parliamentary debate so as to enable the organisation to operate effectively now the new organisational structure has commenced.

The key elements of this bill are to:

- Amend the provisions in the act relating to the function to evaluate proposals for investment in, or enhancements to, nationally significant infrastructure, to include the requirement that Infrastructure Australia undertake evaluations of proposals that involve

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Commonwealth funding of at least $100 million. The bill provides a mechanism for indexation of this amount in future years to ensure the relativity is maintained.

- Move provisions currently under 5B of the act relating to cost benefit analysis to a new section 5AA. This is intended to rectify the current incorrect placement of these provisions in the Act pertaining to cost-benefit analyses of infrastructure proposals. This amendment will ensure that cost benefit analyses inform the evaluation of proposals under the act.

- Provide that a proposal must not be included in an Infrastructure Priority List unless a cost-benefit analysis of the proposal has been prepared in accordance with the approved method.

- Insert a definition for 'proposal' to provide greater clarity.

During debate on the previous amendments to the Infrastructure Australia Act in June this year, the member for Grayndler, Mr Albanese, indicated his support for the amendments we are now bringing. He said:

I put on the record here that if the minister wanted to have a minor amendment bill or what have you to fix up that little bit, if he thought it was important, there would be support from the opposition.

I thank Mr Albanese for his support in bringing forward these amendments to further strengthen Infrastructure Australia.

As these amendments only relate to clarification or are of an administrative nature by rectifying an anomaly, there are no regulatory or financial impacts on business and the not-for-profit sectors. There is no net impact on the government budget flowing from the changes in this bill.

The government is committed to broadening the current infrastructure reform agenda in collaboration with jurisdictions and industry to improve productivity and drive economic growth.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 5) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Ciobo.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr CIODO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (09:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce a bill to amend the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to implement a range of changes to Australia's tax laws.

The government's Economic Action Strategy is not about undoing our strong safety net—it is about making it sustainable.

This government's Economic Action Strategy is about setting up a stronger and more sustainable economy, which starts off with a stronger budget.

We have already delivered on our promise to abolish the carbon tax, and its associated savings will be passed on to households and businesses. That means the average cost of
living, across all households, will be around $550 lower than it would otherwise have been this year.

This bill represents another chapter in the government's Economic Action Strategy.

We inherited from Labor an unsustainable budget position. The measures in this bill will return around $1.4 billion to the budget over the forward estimates.

**Schedule 1: Abolish the Mature Age Worker Tax Offset**

The Mature Age Worker Tax Offset, which merely reduces by up to $500 the amount of tax payable for those who are already working, simply does not work.

It doesn't work because it does not help older Australians enter the workforce.

It does not help reduce labour market disadvantage.

Many older Australians don't need to be encouraged to enter the workforce. They want to work and we need them to work.

That's why this government is introducing a new wage subsidy for older job seekers called the Restart program.

From 1 July 2014 an incentive of up to $10,000 will be available to employers who hire an older job seeker. That means that job seekers aged 50 years or over and in receipt of income support for a minimum of six months can get back into work without some of the hurdles they might otherwise encounter due to age.

The Mature Age Worker Tax Offset achieved little and abolishing it will save the taxpayer $760 million over the forward estimates period.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

**Schedule 2: Abolish the Seafarer Tax Offset**

The Seafarer Tax Offset is a refundable tax offset.

It is provided to companies for salaries, wages and allowances paid to Australian resident seafarers employed to undertake overseas voyages on certified vessels.

Australian companies are eligible for the Seafarer Tax Offset if they employ seafarers on overseas voyages for at least 91 days in the income year.

The current regulatory regime for shipping imposes a cost on shippers and their customers. Because it is a part of a current shipping regulation, the Seafarer Tax Offset effectively imposes a cost on all Australian taxpayers.

The Seafarer Tax Offset's primary goal was to increase the employment of Australian seafarers. In fact, the seafarer tax offset was claimed by fewer than 20 shipping companies in respect of around just 250 employees.

With low take-up of all the tax concessions offered by the previous government's Stronger Shipping package, the Seafarer Tax has not achieved its goal.

Abolishing this offset is expected to save the government $12 million over four years.

And that is another small step towards repairing the budget.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.
Schedule 3: Reducing the tax offset under the Research and Development Tax Incentive

We are also reducing the tax offset available under the Research and Development Tax Incentive.

The rates will be reduced by 1.5 percentage points from 1 July 2014.

These changes are in line with the government's commitment to cutting the company tax rate by 1.5 percentage points from 1 July 2015—which is the same amount as the reduction in the R&D offset rates.

Changing the offset will affect neither the eligibility of companies for the R&D tax incentive nor the way companies claim the incentive.

Nor will the changes affect the administration of the R&D tax incentive more generally.

The R&D tax incentive will continue to provide generous easy-to-access support for thousands of eligible companies in all sectors of the Australian economy.

If this measure were not enacted, the cut to the company tax rate would entail an increase in the benefit provided by the R&D tax incentive relative to the normal treatment of business expenses.

The gain to revenue and savings from this measure will be around $620 million over the forward estimates.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Schedule 4: Deductible Gift Recipients

Australians are generous, choosing to donate over $2 billion every year to charity.

Donations made to organisations with DGR status are income tax deductible to the donor, so DGR status helps listed organisations attract public support for their activities.

Three organisations are being added to the DGR list.

Australian Schools Plus supports schools that face disadvantage to improve education outcomes.

The second DGR to be specifically listed is the East African Fund, which runs the School of St Jude in Tanzania.

Another organisation to be listed as a DGR is the Minderoo Foundation Trust, which supports three programs: the Walk Free Foundation; GenerationOne; and Hope for Children Australia.

Full details of the changes to the DGR list are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Conclusion

The measures in this bill are responsible. They represent another step in our Economic Action Strategy towards a stronger, better and more compassionate Australia.

This bill might seem like a small chapter in this story—but it is a significant element in reducing our debt. As a government, we recognise that we cannot continue borrowing $1 billion every month to pay the interest on Labor's debt.

The measures in this bill will return around $1.4 billion to the budget over the forward estimates.
These measures represent a careful and measured approach to re-prioritising government revenue. This government will continue to make the right decisions to position Australia for future opportunities and challenges.

I commend the bill to the House. Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Report

WYATT ROY (Longman) (09:22): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties I present the committee's report 142, incorporating dissenting reports, entitled *Treaty tabled on 13 May 2014*.

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

WYATT ROY: by leave—Today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report 142, containing the committee's views on the *Free Trade Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea*. The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement, or KAFTA, was tabled in parliament on Tuesday 13 May 2014.

Free trade agreements are becoming increasingly popular as a means of encouraging trade liberalisation, opening up market access and strengthening bilateral relationships. This is the eighth free trade agreement that Australia has signed.

Korea is one of Australia's most important trading partners: our third-largest export market, our fourth-largest trading partner and a growing investment partner. Currently, Australia faces various tariff and non-tariff barriers and restrictions in Korea. Korea's average tariff on imports is 16.8 per cent, with an average tariff on agricultural goods of 53.6 per cent and tariff peaks of over 500 per cent.

KAFTA will eliminate these very high tariffs on a wide range of Australian goods exports, including beef, wheat, sugar, dairy, wine, horticulture and seafood. It will also create new market openings in key areas of commercial interest to Australian services providers, including legal, accounting, financial, education and other professional services.

KAFTA is expected to be worth $5 billion in additional income to Australia between 2015 and 2030. It is expected to provide an annual boost to the Australian economy of approximately $650 million after 15 years of operation. In its first year of operation, KAFTA is expected to create 1,700 jobs. Eighty-four per cent of Australia's current exports, by value, will enter Korea duty free. Agricultural exports are expected to increase by 73 per cent and manufacturing by 53 per cent by 2030 as a result of the agreement.

The committee found that a range of benefits are likely to flow from the implementation of KAFTA for Australian businesses, industry and exporters. Apart from the direct value of tariff reductions, increased competitive advantage and potential future opportunities were identified as tangible positive results. Witnesses emphasised the importance of the agreement in protecting our competitive edge in the Korean market as Korea signs free trade agreements with our major competitors, including the United States, European Union, Chile and ASEAN countries.
We identified and examined a number of issues that are causing concern amongst the wider community. In particular, the perceived dangers associated with the inclusion of an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism in the agreement and possible changes to intellectual property rights. More generally, some dissatisfaction with the treaty-making process in Australia was drawn to our attention. However we recognise the constitutional constraints on the process in Australia and we highlight the improvements that have been made over the last two decades.

Overall, the committee is satisfied that KAFTA will provide substantial economic benefit, not only to Australian business and industry, but also to the broader community.

I might take this opportunity to thank the hard work of the negotiating team, predominantly in DFAT, but across the public service. I also thank my fellow committee members, who undertook a very large body of work in formulating this report on what is a very significant agreement for our country. And I also thank the committee secretariat team, some of whom are here in the chamber today, who joined us on that journey and who put together what is, again, an enormous body of work on a very important agreement.

On behalf of the committee, I commend the report to the House.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (09:27): by leave—I thank the chair for his kind remarks and endorse his comments about the work of the secretariat concerning this treaty agreement.

There is no doubt that globalisation has changed the face of the world. But has it changed the world for the better? This is much less clear. A report earlier this year by Oxfam found that the richest 85 people in the world own as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population, some $3½ billion dollars combined. Half the world's wealth is owned by just one per cent of the world's population and the situation is getting worse. In nearly every country they surveyed, economic inequality has increased since 1980. The richest one per cent in the US more than doubled their share of national income; in Australia, the richest one per cent doubled their share and after the GFC the wealthiest one per cent in the US captured 95 per cent of post crisis growth whilst the bottom 90 per cent became poorer.

I think that the globalisation cheer squad, who claim that the world is getting better, also have some explaining to do about the dreadful and deteriorating security situation we now see in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, Gaza and beyond. As Tim Costello has pointed out, with the globalisation we now have global problems: global terrorism, global warming, global financial crises and global diseases. So when it comes to bilateral trade agreements like this one, I support Labor policy. I do not support the inclusion of investor-state dispute settlement provisions in bilateral trade agreements.

I am aware that in the past there have been treaties negotiated which include such provisions. But the litigation launched by Philip Morris to sue the taxpayers of Australia over the introduction of plain packaging on cigarette packets, using our trade agreement with Hong Kong as a device, was a wake-up call to all of us about the dangers inherent in these provisions.

The Labor Party had regard to this wake-up call. Labor's national platform expressly states that Labor does not support the inclusion of provisions in trade agreements that confer greater legal rights on foreign businesses than those available to domestic businesses. It goes on to
say, 'Labor does not support the inclusion of provisions that would constrain the ability of the
government to make laws on social, environmental and economic matters in circumstances
where those laws do not discriminate between domestic and foreign businesses.' But that is
exactly what the investor state dispute settlement provision in this agreement will do.

Craig Emerson, no starry-eyed crusader for international socialism, during his time as trade
minister, refused to negotiate any bilateral agreements which included such a provision.

ISDS provisions elevate the interests of corporations above those of the public and their
democratically elected governments. They are fundamentally undemocratic.

The government says the investor state dispute mechanism contains safeguards. But there
is no guarantee that the safeguards are adequate. We are agreeing to submit government
actions to ISDS arbitration panels. These panels are made up of investment law experts, who
have a past and a future in representing investor complainants. ISDS panellists can be an
advocate one month and an arbitrator the next. Unlike permanently employed, independent
judges, arbitrators are paid by the hour, creating an incentive for cases to drag on. Most cases
take from three to five years to resolve.

ISDS has no system of precedents or appeals. One arbitrator from Spain, Juan Fernand
Armesto, has observed, 'When I wake up at night and think about arbitration, it never ceases
to amaze me that sovereign states have agreed to investment arbitration at all. Three private
individuals are entrusted with the power to review, without any restrictions or appeal
procedure, all actions of the government, all decisions of the courts and all laws and
regulations emanating from the parliament.' The more you think about it, the more amazing it
is.

The Treaties Committee was informed that as of April this year, there were 568 known
ISDS cases brought under treaties—274 cases have been concluded, approximately 43 per
cent were decided in favour of the state, 31 per cent were decided in favour of the investor
and approximately 26 per cent of cases were settled. There is every chance these cases
involved taxpayers handing over money to corporations. Nearly 300 cases remain unresolved.

We do not need, and are crazy to have, this handbrake on government. After the
Productivity Commission recommended in 2010 that Australian governments should seek to
avoid ISDS provisions in treaties, we did that. It did not sto

WYATT ROY (Longman) (09:33): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39(c), the debate is
adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Reference to Federation Chamber

WYATT ROY (Longman) (09:33): I move:

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

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Customs Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Morrison.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (09:34): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 amends the Customs Act 1901 to implement Australia’s obligations under chapter 3 of the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

Chapter 3 sets out the rules of origin criteria and related documentary requirements for determining the eligibility of goods to obtain preferential tariff entry into Australia under the agreement.

The complementary Customs Tariff Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014, will amend the Customs Tariff Act 1995 to set out Australia’s tariff commitments under the Agreement.

The agreement was signed by the Minister for Trade and Investment, the Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP and his South Korean counterpart, the Minister for Trade, Industry and Energy, Mr Yoon Sang-jick, on 8 April 2014 in Seoul, South Korea. I commend the minister for trade and my colleague for the outstanding work that he has done in bringing this agreement to completion. The governments of Australia and Korea have agreed to aim for the agreement to enter into force in 2014.

The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement is a comprehensive agreement that substantially liberalises trade with South Korea and creates significant new commercial opportunities for Australian businesses. South Korea is Australia’s fourth largest trading partner and the implementation of this agreement will significantly boost Australia’s position in this major market where competitors like the United States, European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are already benefitting from preferential access. Goods liberalisation alone is estimated to be worth nearly $5 billion in additional GDP to Australia between 2015 and 2030.

On entry into force, 84 per cent of Australia’s exports (by value) to South Korea will enter duty free, rising to 99.8 per cent on full implementation of the agreement. There will also be significant new market openings in services and investment.

The agreement contains simplified and trade facilitative rules of origin and related documentary requirements. Goods imported into Australia that meet the rules of origin, implemented through this bill, will be entitled to claim preferential tariff treatment in accordance with the agreement.
The amendments include relevant obligations on Australian exporters and producers who wish to export Australian goods to South Korea under the agreement and obtain preferential treatment for those goods in South Korea. The amendments also confer certain powers on authorised officers to examine records and ask questions of exporters or producers of goods exported to Korea in order to verify the origin of such goods.

The agreement reflects Australia's close bilateral economic relationship with South Korea. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Customs Tariff Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Morrison

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (09:38): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Tariff Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 is the second bill relating to the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

This bill contains amendments to the Customs Tariff Act 1995 to implement part of the agreement by:

- providing duty-free access for certain goods and preferential rates of customs duty for other goods that are Korean originating goods;
- phasing these preferential rates to zero by 2021;
- amending Schedule 4 to maintain customs duty rates for certain Korean originating goods in accordance with the applicable concessional item; and
- creating a new schedule 10 to specify excise-equivalent duties on certain alcohol, tobacco, and petroleum products and to provide for phasing rates of duty on certain goods as specified in the agreement.

This bill complements the amendments contained in the Customs Amendment (Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Ordered that the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

COMMITTEES

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

Report

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (09:40): On behalf of the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia I present the committee's final report entitled Pivot north—Inquiry into the
development of Northern Australia, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr ENTSCH: Before I start, I have to say it is great to see my deputy, the member for Perth here and also another Warren—Warren Snowdon, member for Lingiari—here in the chamber as we deliver this report today.

This inquiry has formed one part of a broader process aimed at looking at ways to develop Northern Australia.

The Australian government had made a commitment to produce, within a 12-month time frame, a white paper outlining its vision for the future of Northern Australia. The committee's findings and recommendations will inform the white paper process, assisting the government to formulate its policy for the future development of Northern Australia. The inquiry into the development of Northern Australia has been greeted with a huge amount of enthusiasm and anticipation, but also with scepticism about possible outcomes.

Since 1937 there have been numerous investigations, reports and recommendations aimed at developing Northern Australia, which are certainly gathering dust on shelves. It is now up to us to prove the sceptics wrong and get things moving. The development of Northern Australia is one of the great challenges and opportunities facing the nation. Northern Australia covers over 40 per cent of Australia's land mass, but contains only four per cent of the population. It has abundant land, water and mineral resources. It has medical and educational institutions with world-class facilities. Northern Australia is on the doorstep of Asia and is part of the tropical world, which by 2050 will encompass over half of the world's population. There are great opportunities for the people in Northern Australia within that tropical zone.

The development of Northern Australia has in the past lacked a commitment of governments at all levels to pursue investment and development in a consistent, sustainable and coordinated way. The committee has made 42 recommendations covering a wide range of very important issues considered essential for the development of Northern Australia. The first is the creation of a department of Northern Australian development based in Northern Australia. This will give a high-level political focus to Northern Australia, ensuring that the recommendations of this report and the directions set out in the white paper are given priority in the development of government policy.

Several priority recommendations target urgent infrastructure with the capacity to rapidly facilitate economic development, including major roads, rail links and water infrastructure. Other priority recommendations call for the investigation of special economic zones, address the availability and affordability of insurance in Northern Australia and urge the continued funding of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative. I thought you would find that interesting, Deputy Speaker Scott; I note that you took particular note of that.

The remaining recommendations include particular development proposals and measures to address opportunities for and to overcome impediments to development. To realise the opportunities that development could bring, the committee has made recommendations to establish a CRC for northern agriculture and to develop a national institute for tropical sports and sports medicine. The committee also recommended the exploration of new methods to engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. This is particularly significant,
given the large and growing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Northern Australia.

The committee has recommended the implementation of long-term strategies for the development of capital infrastructure and agriculture in northern Australia. These strategies will underpin the long-term growth and development that northern Australia needs.

There are serious impediments blocking northern Australia’s development which must be addressed. To do this, the committee has recommended improved regulatory arrangements for aquaculture and better regulations for fisheries to enable sustainable growth of the industry. The report also addresses growing concerns over fly-in, fly-out employment, calling for improved taxation arrangements to encourage local employment in the resources sector. The main purpose of the committee’s recommendations is to promote investment and liveability in northern Australia. One major constraint that Australia faces is growing the population in the north. This is absolutely critical.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the inquiry. The committee undertook a very extensive program of travel for public hearings and inspections and certainly received a very large number of valuable submissions. I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of my fellow committee members. As I said, we have two with us here today, and I thank them as well as the other members of the committee very much for their support and participation. I thank the committee for its endurance in the face of very tight time frames and extensive travel commitments. This report has the support of the whole committee and, as such, will live beyond the life of this parliament and well into the future. I commend the report to the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (09:46): by leave—It has been a great adventure to travel with this committee and to meet the brilliant characters whose imagination and hard work have made northern Australia such an intriguing place. I acknowledge that we have some great nor’wester’s in the gallery today. We have Mayor Kelly Howlett, Deputy Mayor Gloria Jacob and CEO, Mal Osborne, from the dynamic town of Port Hedland—a place which is contributing so much to the wealth of the nation.

Australia does need to pivot north for a whole variety of reasons. Firstly, we have in the north of Australia a very substantial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population that needs the opportunity to be brought into the economic life of Australia, to provide an opportunity for their current and future generations to be full participants in Australia’s economic life. We need to work hard to bring an end to the endemic disadvantage and what we might call an economic apartheid that is still evident today. Secondly, we need to develop the north because it allows us to develop new markets and opportunities for our nation. These opportunities arise from the proximity to Asia and from the fact that we share a climate zone with hundreds of millions of neighbours to our north. This gives us the opportunity to use our educated community and our access to research and technological innovation to find cutting-edge solutions to agriculture, health, resource development and construction in the tropics and hot savannah.

Our committee's task was to hear in great detail from right across northern Australia the vision of local communities for the north and to provide an open filter to bring those ideas together. It would be fair to say that we did not have the resources that would enable us to do the cost-benefit analysis or necessarily prioritise the submissions to provide that rough filter
and bring the projects together. We certainly saw some submissions that were quite extraordinary in their aspiration. For me, some of the most important contributions stressed the importance of detailed research—not to stop development but to guide, in the most creative way, the investment in research that is critical for us to fulfil the potential of the north. It is true that we might not be the food bowl for Australia, but we certainly can put more food on the table and we can advance the capacity of our Asian neighbours to feed themselves through the pioneering work that has been done in agricultural and horticultural innovation.

There was a very great focus on the need to develop the water resources, but we stress that, whilst there were many different ways in which the community felt that could be done, we were very clear that this needed to be always predicated and built on a solid foundation of scientific research. I was particularly very taken with the work that has been done in places like Kiltro and Gogo Station, where we saw the fine grain mosaic—the use of groundwater brought into the food chain to allow us to not only produce agricultural crops but to feed that into the development of our livestock and local value-add opportunities. I was also very pleased to see the great submissions on projects like the Pilbara interconnected grid—a fantastic project that will reduce the energy cost and will make the Pilbara a place that will be very viable for a whole diversification of interests into the future.

As the chairman said, if we are going to be serious about this, if we want the white paper that this feeds into to be something other than another shelf filler, we are going to need to ensure that there is a well resourced department of northern Australia with its own minister and its own resources. I thank the chair for his very generous and collaborative leadership. I think it would be fair to say that we had a committee that came to the task with some very divergent perspectives. Our chairman's generosity of spirit and leadership enabled us to find some common ground, and I want to thank all my colleagues. We have had some absolutely fantastic times—particularly with the two Warrens. It must be something in the water or in the name.

Mr Morrison interjecting—

Ms MacTIERNAN: That is right; it would be a great one, and it is great to have been a passenger. I have survived it and have become battle hardened. I also thank the secretariat. I understand that it has been a wild and sometimes rough ride, but we do appreciate their efforts and, in the end, we have been able to bring together a very solid report.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (09:53): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (09:53): I move:

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

Question agreed to.
Intelligence and Security Committee
Report

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (09:53): by leave—I rise to make a statement on behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security in relation to its inquiry into the listing of Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code Act 1995.

Under the provisions of the Criminal Code, the committee may review the making of a regulation to list a terrorist organisation and report the committee's comments and recommendations before the end of the disallowance period for each House.

I am reporting the committee's findings to the House today to fulfil the committee's responsibility to report within the disallowance period for the Criminal Code (Terrorist Organisation—Boko Haram) Regulation 2014. The committee has conducted its review and fully supports the listing of Boko Haram. The committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list the Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.

The committee's written report will be presented to the House in the next sitting fortnight.

Publications Committee
Report

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (09:55): I present the report of the Publications Committee sitting in conference with the Publications Committee of the Senate. Copies of the report are being placed on the table.

Report—by leave—agreed to.

BILLS
Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (09:56): Most Australian universities are accepting their responsibilities with regard to the changes to the Higher Education Act. In fact, the University of Western Sydney was the first university in New South Wales to freeze its student fees for 2014 to ensure certainty for its students. This was a responsible move by the university and it is a strong indicator about how the sector will respond to the demand-driven and autonomous proposal by the government and assess and determine how they will maximise the opportunities presented in this amendment bill.

Aside from the opportunities that these reforms present Australian universities, I think it is critical to emphasise the benefits for Australian students. I have already commented that the competition enabled by these reforms will be a win for all students, and I believe it is important to highlight that, as is the case at the moment, students will not have to pay a single dollar up-front. Fees will be repayable when students are in the workforce earning a sustainable income.

The Australian HECS structure is to be commended. It has seen thousands of first-generation students, like myself, gain a higher education degree. The coalition, however,
identified barriers to higher education and I am pleased that this amendment bill will go some way to overcoming these. The current arrangements disadvantage students who want to study sub-bachelor higher education qualifications such as diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees. These provide excellent pathways to create opportunities for students needing time to develop both the skills and qualifications necessary for a bachelor's degree and many other tickets to jobs for work-ready graduates. I myself studied through the TAFE system. I worked full-time whilst I was studying through TAFE and, through the Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, was able to gateway into the University of Western Sydney, where I obtained a Bachelor of Business with a major in marketing.

I am proud to have come through the higher education system in this way and I am proud to be part of a government that seeks to support students by providing access to universities. We are also supporting students by providing HECS to subsidise students who seek these types of pathway qualifications. This move alone is expected to provide an additional 80,000 higher education opportunities for more students annually, with Commonwealth support by 2018.

Minister for Education and I anticipate that this move will overcome some of the disparity in my own electorate. During the consideration in detail in June I raised with the minister concerns I had about access to education in Western Sydney. For instance, in Glenmore Park in the south-west of Lindsay the median income for couple with children is $2,474, which is higher than the New South Wales average. Further, 33.5 per cent of people are attending some form of educational institution, be it primary, secondary or tertiary, and 11.1 per cent are currently enrolled in university or tertiary education.

To the west of my electorate is North St Marys, about 13 kilometres from Glenmore Park. The average income there for families with children is $1,935, which is $539 per week less than that of Glenmore Park and lower than the New South Wales average. In North St Marys, 33.8 per cent of people are attending an academic institution. Only 5.1 per cent of the community go on to tertiary education. Let me repeat: in Glenmore Park 11.1 per cent people are currently enrolled in tertiary education; in North St Marys that figure is 5.1 per cent—less than half as many. This is despite North St Marys being much closer to the local University of Western Sydney campus.

This added Commonwealth support for higher education is welcome news for the people of North St Marys, who will now have a greater opportunity to go on to university, should they choose to. Further to these measures, the new Commonwealth Scholarships scheme will promote access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and ensure they share in the benefits of a deregulated environment. This will allow providers the flexibility to provide individual support tailored to the unique needs of students and is welcome news for aspiring students in communities like North St Marys.

There is a general consensus among those in the sector and the government that we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape an Australian higher education system that is sustainable, affordable and equitable in serving the best interests of our nation. As the Treasurer said on budget night, we should aspire to have a world-class tertiary education sector. By deregulating the sector, I believe we can achieve this and create a tertiary education sector that this country deserves. It is in this way that I commend the bill to the House. (Time expired)
Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:01): I am vehemently opposed to this bill, the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014. It is another broken election promise from the Abbott government. This bill, which seeks to increase the cost of university fees and impose more debt on students, is grossly unfair and it undermines the educational opportunities of young Australians.

On 1 September 2013 the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, on the Insiders program said this: … I want to give people this absolute assurance, no cuts to education …

The Liberal Party's policy document for the last election, Real solutions, states on page 41:
- We will ensure the continuation of the current arrangements of university funding.

On 17 November 2013 the shadow education minister, Christopher Pyne, said on Sky News: … we want university students to make their contribution. But we're not going to raise fees …

They are the commitments that the Abbott government gave the young people of Australia prior to the last election. In this bill, in this proposal before the parliament today, they blow those commitments out of the water. They are lies. They have lied to the Australian public about this dastardly reform. It introduces an outdated principle into higher education in Australia, and that principle is the capacity to pay—access to education based not on merit but on your family's bank balance.

Cuts to university funding, deregulation of fees and the application of higher interest rates to student debt are the most despicable betrayal of the interests of young people in Australia in my lifetime. The Prime Minister lied to thousands of young Australians when he said that there would be no cuts to education. The cuts themselves are unconscionable, but to mislead young Australians regarding their access to education is unforgivable.

If members opposite believe that I am embellishing the truth in my views on this, they only need to look at some of the emails that I have received from constituents to see their anger about what this government is doing. On 26 August this year I got an email from Karen Privat in my electorate, who wrote:

As someone who grew up in the USA and had to go through the process of paying back university fees, e.g. my small university charged approximately US $26,000 in tuition, room and board per year … one of the things that has struck me about living in Australia is the accessibility of higher education to all students who have the marks to qualify.

She went on to state:

My family, my fellow colleagues who work with me here at UNSW, and my friends who have an interest in Australia's ability to grow, develop, and compete on an international level both economically and creatively, join with me in supporting you to vote against this proposed legislation when it comes before you in parliament.

On 28 August this year Rabeya Akter from my electorate wrote:

I am very disappointed about the proposed changes to higher education announced in the Federal Budget. Allowing universities to set their own fees will burden future generations of students with significantly increased debts … Young people have been told to earn or learn and yet the Government is making it harder to get a quality education. Access to universities should be based on merit, not on the size of your bank balance.

I could not agree more. These are the views of the people of my electorate. These are the views of the people of Australia regarding this dastardly reform that the government seeks to
introduce in the parliament today. These are the people who know that their opportunity and their kids' opportunity to learn, to better themselves, is being whittled away by the Abbott government.

In terms of the elements of this bill, the bill will allow universities to charge what they like for courses. It deregulates university fees, which are currently capped at the maximum student contribution. This will increase the cost of a university degree—no doubt.

At the moment the average cost of a law degree at a public universities is about $30,000. At private universities such as Bond University the cost of a law degree is $127,000, four times the cost of that of a public university. This is what universities will be allowed to charge in a free market. Universities Australia have done some modelling on the expected costs and increases to university fees which will come about as a result of this reform. They find at the medium fee increase scenario, with a four per cent interest rate, an engineering graduate working full time faces a HELP debt of between $98,952 and $113,169 and will repay it over a period of 20 to 25 years. This is compared with $46,701 to $49,284 debt and 14 to 18 years repayment time under the existing arrangements. A nursing graduate working under a medium fee scenario, who works part time for six years, would pay off a debt of $51,620 over 20 years, compared to a current HELP debt of $24,666. That gives you an example of the additional costs of education for young people in Australia just to get a degree, if this reform is introduced.

What is the Minister for Education's response to this? The education minister says that that is fine because students can just take out a loan and over the lifetime of their earning capacity they will be able to pay it off—no problem. That is the way it works in the United States of America. Now you are making it even harder to get a loan. Not only are university fees increasing but also the debt associated with taking out a loan is increasing. Currently HECS or HELP debt is indexed to the consumer price index which is sitting at about 2.6 per cent. Under this proposal, student debt would be indexed to the government bond rate, capped at six per cent. The government bond rate at the moment is quite low at 3½ per cent. There is an immediate one per cent increase in the cost of debt. This reform will not only in the future; it will apply retrospectively. So anyone who currently has a HECS debt will immediately face that debt going up—affecting 1.2 million.

So a degree will cost more and it will take longer to pay off. This will have a disproportionate effect on low-income people in Australia and, importantly, on people who take time out of the workforce to raise a family—as we know, they are predominantly women. These people will bear the greater burden of this reform. The longer it takes to pay off the HECS or HELP debt, the more you will pay because the interest on the loan is compounding.

Those opposite have no concern for families who have the great aspiration of seeing their kids do better than they have done by getting a better education. For struggling families in my electorate who are just scraping by and making ends meet, that makes it harder for the kids to get a higher education. In that respect this reform must be condemned.

It will also affect the quality of courses offered at universities. What will develop under this scenario is a two-tiered university system in Australia, much the same as in the United States. For courses which are in high demand, typically at the Group of Eight universities, the sandstone universities such as Monash and the University of Queensland where there are
courses such as medicine, engineering and economics in high demand, universities will be able to charge what they wish. They will be able to charge whatever they like because the demand is there. Subsequently, those universities will raise more revenue. That is where the good academics will wish to go and that is where the research and development dollars in Australia will go.

What will happen to second-tier universities? What will happen to universities in rural and regional areas throughout Australia? I will tell you what will happen. The dollars will flow out of them, the academics will flow out of them, the research and development will flow out of them and they will become second-rate universities throughout this country.

So rather than a system that promotes equality, rather than a system which promotes access particularly to kids in rural and regional areas to a decent degree, it will make it harder for kids to stay in those areas and, importantly, for some of the courses which are not in high demand to attract students. They typically are very important degrees—teaching, early childhood development, sociology—degrees which have an emotional element attached to them and which we have undervalued in Australia. It will also ensure that universities are encouraged to push low-cost degrees. When you have a free market such as this, universities will seek to reduce the cost of offerings to the public to make more revenue. So courses that are popular but do not cost as much will be the ones that universities and private providers will be pushing. The more expensive and more important courses such as science, languages and engineering, which are very important to Australia's economic development, will not be encouraged because universities will not be up to make the same buck out of they will under the low-cost scenario.

So these reforms not only push up the cost of university education in this country but they will also reduce the quality of courses that are offered, particularly in rural and regional areas. But do you see anyone from the National Party over there standing up for kids in their communities? Do you see anyone from those rural and regional electorates over there standing up to what the Minister for Education and the Prime Minister are attempting to do in this reform? No, you do not. Once again, they have gone silent. They have destroyed the interests of young people in their communities.

I thought that this reform had some redeeming features when I saw that there is a requirement for university education providers with more than 500 students to offer Commonwealth scholarships under the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme, to support disadvantaged students. But, when you read the fine print, again they have duped the Australian public on this reform, because there is no additional Commonwealth funding going into support this program. The government are not putting any money into these Commonwealth scholarships at all. Guess where the money is coming from. It is coming from the pockets of students who seek to do degrees, because they are funding it through the increase in university fees. It is effectively an additional tax on students that will fund the scholarships that the government are attempting to introduce. And they are promoting this under the banner of doing their bit for disadvantaged students and promoting a new Commonwealth Scholarship scheme. Well, blow me over; again, the duplicity and the misleading nature of the government are absolutely spellbinding—duping the Australian young people into paying more tax so that they can fund the scholarships.
This bill represents a despicable betrayal of Australia's young people and their educational aspirations. It is unfair. It affects low-income families to a much greater degree. It is unbalanced because it introduces a two-tier education system into Australia. And it is based on a lie and a broken promise. That is why this bill must be defeated.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:17): Australia is a land of opportunity and a fair go. I support the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 as I believe that it proposes a well-considered solution to the problems facing higher education today. It will usher in a fairer and more secure system that provides greater opportunity to a greater number of students than ever before.

Around this time of year, the thoughts of year 12 students around the country turn to what they will be studying next year. On top of Australian students, countless others from abroad will also be looking to continue their studies. In a country with over 40 universities and many more private colleges, they should be spoilt for choice. After all, we hold Australia to be at the cutting edge of higher education. We like to think of our universities as having a world-class standard. In many ways they do, though in others our universities have come up lacking. A look at how we stand in international rankings paints a startling picture of how we are going. The 2014 Times Higher Education world university rankings puts our highest-ranking university at 43rd in the world, while the 2014 Academic Ranking of World Universities puts our highest-ranking university at 44th. In previous years, we have hovered around that range, hardly a place for a country that prides itself on educational excellence. The relative decline of Australian higher education can be put down to many things; however, costs, increasing debt and excessive regulation stand out as major culprits in this situation.

These reforms aim at stopping the rot in higher education and deliver a strong, secure, sustainably competitive international university sector. This bill serves to create more opportunities for people to commence further study, as people from disadvantaged and rural and regional areas have greater access to higher education than ever before. Students from rural and regional areas will now have greater choice, as education providers innovate and compete in a deregulated market. Courses that once would have required mandatory attendance in one of the capital cities could soon turn online, giving many students the opportunity to study from their homes. How great it will be when the sons and daughters of Australian farmers can study beyond secondary school without leaving their families and homes behind. The benefits for these students would be immense.

The benefits of higher education are already well documented. On average, students who have higher qualifications earn more and live longer and healthier lives than those who do not. And yet the disadvantages of living in remote areas are also well known. With these reforms, we will see more rural and regional people get higher quality educations that will reap benefits for all concerned. How sad that Labor wants to stand in the way of such opportunity for country Australians. Labor is supposed to represent the average Australian, yet it stands in the way of reforms that would clearly benefit fellow Australians from the bush.

True to form, Labor opposes this bill that would see the creation of the largest ever Commonwealth scholarship scheme for disadvantaged students. I find the scheme to be one of the most exciting developments in education in recent times. The brightest students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be able to study free of charge. The scholarship scheme will
be the greatest in Australian history. It will ensure that the best and brightest students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to free education. This goes on to benefit the families and communities of scholarship recipients and Australia as a whole. This is a nation that believes in the importance of the fair go. With these scholarships, we will give those that need and deserve it the best shot available. These scholarships are funded not by the taxpayer but by the educational institutions themselves. It will soon become the responsibility for every institution with more than 500 Commonwealth-supported students to contribute one dollar out of every five of additional income. The prospect that my constituents may have access to such a scheme is a truly exciting thing.

The difference between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party when it comes to education—and there are many, but the primary difference—comes down to fairness. Labor like to talk fairness, but Liberals deliver fairness. The seismic reforms of which I speak are the foundations of that new fairness in the higher education system.

How is this so? Well, fairness comes from the principle that the person who receives the benefit pays for it, not someone else. How can it be fair that the vast majority of the benefits accruing from enrolling in higher education go to the students but the vast majority of the bill goes to the taxpayer? How is it fair that today students pay approximately 40 per cent of the burden of their university education and taxpayers 60 per cent? But the students will eventually see 100 per cent of the benefit. How is that fair? This package of measures will bring the student-taxpayer balance back to fifty-fifty burden sharing. Research indicates that those who go on to complete third-level, or university, education will, over their lifetime, earn up to 75 per cent more than those who do not.

However, it is not merely a question of the share of the burden and who pays what amount vis-a-vis the taxpayer and the student. It is also a question of fairness and the rate at which students will pay. Why should it be the case, as it is today, that students receive moneys borrowed by the taxpayer at rates less than the taxpayer borrowed at? It is right, proper and fair that the government, acting on behalf and in the best in interests of the taxpayer, asks students to pay the same rate on their share of the amount as the government borrowed the money at. After all, the money was borrowed to pay for that student's education, and all of the benefits will go to that student. It is only right that they pay the rate the government pays, when they reach the qualifying threshold for that repayment. The government will lend to students at a rate that reflects the cost of government borrowings to fund their student loans, with a maximum of six per cent.

This common-sense, prudent, timely and fair measure will bring indexation in line with the cost of borrowing to the government, saving $3.15 billion over four years. This change is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the HELP program. We are absolutely committed to maintaining HELP so that no student pays up-front, which is why we are making these changes to secure its future.

These changes are also necessary to fix the fiscal mess left by Labor. Labor are all about living for today. There is no vision. There is no moral clarity or rectitude. There is no discipline, and no fairness. In government, the Labor philosophy was very much, 'Borrow from tomorrow to live for today.'

When it comes to international and global competition, most nations are absolutely ruthless, and, while Australia may be among the best in the world now, that does not
guarantee a place amongst the best in 10, 20, or 30 years time. A great and timely reminder is the rise of Chinese universities through the ranks. The point is that complacency leads to decay. Hubris is not a policy. Not having a long-term plan to secure Australia’s place amongst the nations of the world is not smart or fair. How could it ever be fair to wantonly allow the Australian higher education system to fall into mediocrity? How are future generations yet unborn to compete in a global, interconnected business environment? How can they then continue to enjoy the same high standard of living that we enjoy in Australia today?

But don't just take my word on it. How about taking the word of Michael Gallagher, Chief Executive of the Group of Eight universities? He says:

The 2014 Higher Education Budget reforms are necessary. They are logical, coherent, sustainable, equitable and inevitable.

Mr Gallagher went on to say:

My guess is that the detractors of micro-economic reform in Australia’s higher education industry will find themselves on the wrong side of history in resisting efficiency improvement and innovation …

It is no longer acceptable to bury our heads in the sand and pretend our universities are not falling behind when compared to those of our neighbours and the rest of the world. Global university rankings have struggled to include an Australian university in the global top 50 for years. The number of quality further education providers in the Asian region continues to grow, while more and more students seek to study in less traditional ways such as through online courses or through private colleges. Yet Australian universities and private institutions are unable to capitalise on this new trend and are instead held back by burdensome regulations that are ill-suited to the 21st-century global education market.

As such, I applaud initiatives that seek to equip tertiary institutions with the ways and means to take advantage of the circumstances and deliver the best outcomes for students and the nation alike. The benefits of deregulation and the free market are well known, so there is no need for me to labour this point.

However, with these reforms, we will free higher educational institutions from the shackles of regulation and give them the freedom to compete with each other in the education market. By being able to set their own fees, universities will soon have to compete with private colleges and other educational institutions, which will drive all players towards further innovation in areas such as service delivery and student support. With this, students only stand to benefit from the improvements and innovation in the further-education market that is driven by free-market competition. This will help guarantee the future of education in this country.

Education is opportunity. Through these reforms, Australia will see 80,000 extra students enrol in Australia by 2018. There will never be a better time to commence further study in this country, and many of these extra students will be the first from their families to continue studies beyond a secondary level.

Finally, these reforms are poised to bring substantial windfalls to Australian science and research as well. Australia has a proud record of contributing to the scientific community at home and abroad. Yet, under the previous government, nothing was done to ensure the future success of our research sector. I welcome the substantial extra funding the government seeks to provide for research in Australian universities such as through the Future Fellowships
scheme and the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy. These schemes were largely abandoned by the previous government and had no proper planning for operation in the following years. By committing increased funding the government will ensure the success of programs such as the Future Fellowships scheme well into the future. Specific research areas also stand to benefit under these reforms as universities become more competitive and attract higher calibre researchers and increased private funding. This all goes towards a brighter and more efficient research sector with benefits for all of us.

This reform bill will enable universities and other institutions to rise to the challenges of the 21st century and ensure that Australia is not left behind by global competition. The passage of this bill will see a greater number of disadvantaged and rural and regional students commence studies when they might not have been able to before.

Somewhere in the middle of this debate is the rub of the thing, which is: who really knows what is best for Australian universities, the universities themselves or some grey, unknown bureaucrat in Canberra? The coalition believes that we have too many Canberra bureaucrats. Why does Labor not trust the university sector to know what is best for their industry?

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (10:31): Having listened to the member for Tangney it reinforces my opposition to the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill that is before us today. There is a complete lack of understanding, which demonstrates why there is such a huge difference in approach between the Liberal government and the Labor opposition. Labor actually understands the benefit to individuals, to society and to our economy of higher education. Plainly, that is not something that is understood by those opposite.

A few months ago I had the opportunity to meet with students at La Trobe University which borders my electorate of Jagajaga. I listened to a number of students, and I will just mention a few of them: Rose Steele, Betty Belay, Helen Morrison, Jenny Stramilos, Jasmine Ingram and Sebastian Horey. Each of them talked with me about their aspirations for the future. They told me how they wanted to use their university degrees to contribute to society and to make Australia a better place.

The students also talked to me about their fears. Having just listened to some of the contributions from the Liberal members opposite, these fears about this government’s proposed higher education reforms are well founded. For these students, instead of planning their future careers with confidence, they are worried about how long it is going to take them to pay off their higher education loans. Instead of applying their creativity to whatever endeavours they might want to pursue, they are anxious about how they will deal with paying higher interest rates of up to six per cent on their student loans. And who can blame them for having such fears?

The real interest rate on HECS-HELP loans means a degree will end up costing a lot more than the course fee and will take a lot longer to pay off. With compounding interest, young people who are on lower incomes, or who take time out of the workforce to raise a family, will end up paying the most. I just want to go through some of this in detail. According to NATSEM, students could pay up to three times as much for their degree, even if fees only increase by 50 per cent. This is considered to be a conservative estimate, given the projected fee hikes. Assuming a compound interest rate of five per cent, the full impact of Prime Minister Abbott’s higher education changes becomes evident.
A young Australian woman studying science at university currently takes around eight years to repay a debt of just over $44,000. According to NATSEM, under Tony Abbott's higher education reforms, the same degree would cost $170,863 and would take 20 years to repay. This is the real impact. This is what we are really talking about. These are huge debts that this government is going to saddle young people with. Young Australians should not be crippled with such debts.

It is not just NATSEM that have drawn this conclusion from the government's proposals. According to Universities Australia, a nursing graduate under a medium-fee increase scenario, who works part-time for six years after working full-time for six years,—obviously, someone who is going to work part-time because she is looking after her family—will pay off their student loan of $51,620 over 20 years compared with 17 years to repay a HELP debt of $24,500 under existing arrangements. These are the real impacts on young people who are going to be told by this government, 'You have the choice of getting a higher education degree or buying a home and starting a family.'

The Program Director at the University of Melbourne's L H Martin Institute, Geoff Sharrock, said that the Group of Eight universities will significantly increase fees. He said:
Most universities will raise fees to at least offset their loss of income from government subsidies. Many will go further to boost the total level of income they'd receive, above 2014 levels. Either way, Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts will balloon.

Bruce Chapman, the architect of the Hawke government's HECS program, said:
Fees will go up and they will go up quite significantly.
And, of course, higher fees will deter many students from undertaking a degree in the first place. Students, particularly those from low-socioeconomic families, may decide not to follow their dreams and enrol in university because the cost is simply too high.

And who do we have to thank for this higher education bill that will increase course fees, cut funding and create inequality? None other than the Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, the member for Sturt—the man who himself denied before the last election that an Abbott government would increase university fees. Last year in an interview, the minister—before he became the Minister for Education—said that the Abbott government was not considering increases to university fees because:
We promised that we wouldn't—
increase fees—
and Tony Abbott made it very clear before the election that we keep our promises.

And there is more. Last year the minister said:
The public want a period of stable government where the government keeps its promises .... And there's much I can do in universities and schools while keeping all my promises.
And it goes on. In a media release on 26 August 2012, the then shadow minister for education—once again, Mr Pyne—said:
While we welcome debate over the quality and standards in our Universities, we have no plans to increase fees or cap places.
Yet here is this legislation that we are debating in this parliament today. It is a bald-faced lie. That is what we are debating today—a bald-faced lie that was told before the election. And the government does not even have any embarrassment about coming in and—

Mr Husic: None—no shame.

Ms Macklin: No shame whatsoever. There is not even any attempt to hide the fact that these bald-faced lies were told. It is the same old story throughout my portfolio. Before the election we heard time and time again from Mr Abbott that there would be no cuts and no changes to pensions. We now know that that was a lie. The government said before the election that there would be no cuts to health and no cuts to education—that is a lie; no cuts to the ABC and no cuts to SBS—that is a lie; and no adverse changes to superannuation—and we saw the filthy deal done between the government, Mr Abbott, and the Leader of the Palmer United Party that will see significant adverse effects to superannuation.

Another thing they said before the election was that there would be no new taxes—another lie. And of course we have the one we are debating today—said so many times before the election, particularly by the now Minister for Education—which is that there would be no increase to university fees. Yet here we are today in this parliament debating this proposal from the government to increase university fees. On every single one of these issues, this Prime Minister and this Minister for Education have broken their promises. This government just lied through their teeth before the last government—over and over and over again.

Let us not forget that the author of this bill, the Minister for Education, is the same minister who spent every day in the last parliament moralising about honesty and integrity in politics. What a sham! Here we are almost at the first anniversary of this government and they have not even been able to get through one year without breaking all of these promises. If this bill passes the parliament—and I sincerely hope, for the sake of the future of our country, that it does not—this minister will forever be known as the man who broke the hearts of so many young Australians and destroyed their aspirations by saddling them with these terrible levels of debt. This bill will reduce participation by young Australians in our universities. How on earth can that be in the national interest? How on earth can it be in the national interest to discourage young people—or not so young people—from going on to further their education at university?

In total, the government's budget measures cut $5.8 billion from higher education teaching and learning and university research. During my visit to La Trobe University I not only met with students but also met with some of the dedicated staff at that university, including members of the National Tertiary Education Union. They told me how devastating these cuts will be to higher education teaching and research at their university—a university that has provided so many opportunities for people in my electorate. They reinforced my view—as does all the evidence—on just how critical quality staff are to the success of our higher education system.

Of the $5.8 billion cuts, this bill on its own will result in $3.9 billion of cuts by: cutting funding for Commonwealth supported places in undergraduate degrees by an average of 20 per cent—and for some courses up to 37 per cent; reducing the indexation arrangements for university funding to CPI in 2016—down from the rate introduced by the previous Labor government; cutting almost $174 million from the Research Training Scheme—a scheme that supports the training of Australia's research students; and introducing a real rate of interest on
student debt—a measure which will apply not only to existing and future students but also to the millions of Australians who have an existing HECS-HELP debt. Young Australians do not deserve to face $100,000 worth of debt from their university education. They do not deserve that, particularly when their aspiration is to get ahead and get a decent education. They deserve to have the opportunities that so many others in this House have had to get a great university education.

We want to make sure that we have fairness and equity in our university system, and that is why Labor will vehemently oppose this bill. We oppose the cuts to university funding and student support, and we will not stand by and see a system of higher fees, higher student debt, reduced access and greater inequality. That is what this bill will deliver to our country, and it will set us all back such a long way. So many opportunities will be denied if this legislation gets through this parliament, and that is why we will do everything in our power to oppose it.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (10:45): Before I start my contribution, I must mention the appalling contribution from the member for Jagajaga. The member for Jagajaga was a minister of the Crown in the worst government that this country has ever seen, a government that saw this country rack up enormous amounts of debt. She was a minister in a government that has meant the current government has to make some very tough decisions about getting our economy back on track.

This bill is not a measure taken by this government to try and fix up Labor's mess. This bill is about real reform. This bill is to make our tertiary education sector sustainable and relevant in the long term. It is a bill that will enable our universities to not only survive but grow and prosper. This bill will make it possible for people in the electorate of Parkes to obtain a tertiary education—probably the first generation of their family to do so. From the privileged surrounds of the electorate of Jagajaga in Melbourne, maybe that is not important.

The other thing that is important in this is to actually speak the truth. The member for Jagajaga talked about the government putting up fees for students. But there is no talk of the government putting up fees for students. There is an increase in Commonwealth scholarships and an opportunity for more people to attend university. It is very irresponsible for members of the opposition to be running a scare campaign—through their trainees, their future members of parliament, and members of the students' union who are holding rallies and protesting against ministers of the Crown when they visit universities. Unfortunately, they are not speaking the truth.

I am the father of three adult children who have attained a university degree—and some of them have more than one degree—so I do have a fair idea of the trials and tribulations involved in funding a university degree. If you listen to the members opposite, you would think all this was free, that the education fairies rain goodwill upon all students and magically these courses are funded. What we are talking about is a modest increase in fees. Students are paying 40 per cent of their course fee but they will now pay 50 per cent. When my children were deciding where to go to university, and how they were going to fund it, the tuition fees were not a concern. As regional students, they were more concerned about how they were going to fund their accommodation and find part-time work so that they could live away from home. The fees they paid through their HECS debt were not a major concern. They may be grumbling a little now as they pay off their HECS debt—they are now in the workforce—but
it is one of the best deals they will ever get. Given that they are able to earn a higher income because of their university degrees, it is not unfair that they should be paying those fees back.

With this scare campaign, students concerned about how they are going to finish their course have been contacting my office. Students who were enrolled before the budget will not be charged any differently from the arrangements they are already under. Students who accept a Commonwealth supported place at a higher education institution after 13 May 2014 will be subject to the existing arrangements until 1 January 2016, when they will move to the new system. I am conscious that the current debate about these changes has led to some inflated claims about the likely fee levels and repayment requirements for students. These claims should be treated with caution. Universities will have more say about their own fee arrangements in due course. No student will need to pay a cent up front, and no-one will need to repay anything until they earn over $50,000 a year. I repeat: the government is not increasing fees. Members of the opposition should stop saying that because it is not correct. The government is not increasing fees.

Competition between higher education providers will force universities to be reasonable in setting fees. If they charge too much, they will have empty lecture theatres. Higher education providers will have to compete for students. When they compete for students, the students win. The government believes in the transformational power of higher education, and that is why we will provide around $37 billion in funding for teaching to higher education institutions over the next four financial years.

Australian university graduates, on average, earn up to 75 per cent more than those who do not go into higher education after secondary school. Over their lifetime, graduates earn around $1 million more than they would if they had not gone to university. Given this, it is only fair that students make a reasonable contribution to the cost of their education. The government will ensure that students are not disadvantaged by these changes. HECS loans will continue to be available to assist Australian students with the cost of their education.

Australian universities are dropping in world rankings and Australia cannot afford to be left behind in an era of increased mobility, rapid innovation and shifting balances of power. Higher education institutions have the ability to respond to these challenges particularly in the face of rising universities in Asia and elsewhere. The government believes that these higher education institutions, not governments, are the best judges of how we can maintain and promote a world-class higher education system.

From 2016, institutions will be responsible for setting their own levels of student contributions, freeing them from bureaucratic restrictions. The extension of Commonwealth subsidies to private universities and non-university higher education institutions will support 80,000 Australian students and encourage institutions to compete on price. When universities and colleges compete for students, students win, as I said before.

Reform to our higher education system is necessary if we are going to stay at the forefront of international education. The government will be providing around $37 billion in funding to higher education institutions over the next four financial years and government spending is going to increase each and every year. Despite what the members of the opposition are peddling—their scare campaign—the government will be increasing education funding to universities over the next four years.
The government is not proposing to increase fees. In fact the fees will be set by the institutions themselves. This offers great opportunities for higher education institutions to offer courses that are suited to their strengths. These changes will not affect students who enrol on 13 May 2014. As I have said, they will be exempt. It is important to note that on average students will earn more over their lifetime and it is not unfair that they should make that contribution. It is also important to know that they will not have to repay that loan until they are earning $50,000 a year.

Labor cut $6.6 billion in funding to higher education while they were in office including $3 billion in their last year. There will be more opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds through the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme and this will be great for regional Australia. Quite frankly, why shouldn't a student from a family that may have limited means, who has exceptional ability, be given an opportunity to study at one of the top universities in this country? Isn't that what opportunity is all about?

Regional educators will be able to provide for more students because they will have greater ability to offer a wider range of courses, and I will mention Charles Sturt University, which has a campus in Dubbo in my electorate. I know Professor Van has had some concerns about parts of this package, but I also think that there is an understanding that the university also realises that there needs to be reform and that some of the issues that are, I believe, of concern to Charles Sturt may even be addressed.

The deregulation of tertiary education will allow opportunities, and in Central Queensland the merger between the TAFE and the Central Queensland University is a classic example. This will allow opportunity for students in my electorate to obtain funding to attend diploma and other courses. TAFE Western has over 36,000 students including nearly 7,000 Aboriginal students. TAFE Western is the greatest educator of Aboriginal people in Australia. These reforms will allow those Aboriginal students from Western New South Wales to possibly be the first members of their families to obtain a tertiary education. I think that is incredibly important.

Following on from legislation that came through this place a month or two back, which will allow apprentices to obtain HECS type loans to help them through those first difficult years of an apprenticeship when the wages are indeed low, will also allow many of those young people in Western New South Wales and elsewhere to be the first members of their families to obtain a tertiary qualification. Indeed, isn't that what education is all about? I know from my previous role as chairman of the Gwydir Learning Region, that once people make that first step into furthering their education, then it is much easier to follow on. Quite often people who make that first step go on to complete further studies and, indeed, spend the rest of their life completing their education. Education is a lifelong journey and I believe that these reforms will enable many more people in this wonderful country to obtain that opportunity.

Debate adjourned.
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

G20: OECD Tax and Transparency

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (10:59): by leave—

Introduction

If we are to unleash the productive capacity of Australia's economy, create new jobs and unlock innovation, foreign investment is essential. That is why this government welcomes foreign investment. As we have said many times before, Australia is open for business. But opening our doors to business also means ensuring that multinational companies pay tax in Australia on the income they earn here.

As the Prime Minister and I have both previously said, you should pay tax in the country where you have earned a profit. That is not just an essential tax principle; it is rational and fair. Of course, most businesses do comply with our tax laws. But there is a small proportion of multinational businesses that set up sophisticated arrangements to avoid Australian tax. This is patently unfair—unfair on the Australian taxpayer and unfair on local businesses that are doing the right thing.

This government will not stand idly by while this is happening, and we are firmly committed to ensuring that Australian tax is paid on profits earned in Australia. That is why we are taking action on three fronts by: implementing effective domestic policy changes, collaborating with and through the Commissioner of Taxation to strengthen administration, and pursuing multilateral international change.

Australia's integrity rules and legislation

Australia has a robust and sophisticated set of laws that deal with aggressive tax planning and international profit-shifting. They ensure that our tax system has integrity. These laws include specific provisions covering transfer pricing rules, thin capitalisation rules, controlled foreign company rules and general anti-avoidance rules.

I am advised that they are amongst the strongest anti-avoidance laws in the world. But the government is acutely aware of the need to stay alert to constant changes in financial arrangements used for tax minimisation across the global economy. Our actions underscore our strong commitment to making sure that multinational companies pay the correct amount of tax in Australia on the income they have earned in Australia.

When we came to government just 12 months ago, we immediately dealt with 96 announced but unenacted tax measures with one dating as far back as March 2001. The government methodically worked through this backlog and in December last year, after an expedited consultation process with tax experts, facilitated by the board of tax, we announced that we would proceed with 37 measures, including some with amendment. We decided not to proceed with 55 measures on the basis that some were redundant, some were just too complicated to be complied with and some policy announcements were simply unable to draft in legislation.

As honourable members know, the House of Representatives currently has before it legislation that tightens the rules governing thin capitalisation. There is further legislation before the parliament that will prevent multinational companies using hybrid financial arrangements to circumvent the proper application of our thin capitalisation rules. This is a
flaw that is been in our laws for more than a decade. I note that the previous government recognised this and announced its intention to address the issue.

This government is now building on the previous government's work and is legislating to fix thin capitalisation rules, by making sure that repayments of interest to companies in Australia from overseas subsidiaries are subject to tax even when they are dressed up as dividends. These amendments are due to take effect from 1 July this year.

The previous government announced several other measures without properly considering the full impact of the changes on Australian companies. One flawed proposal repealed section 25-90, which enables companies to claim interest deductions on investments in their overseas subsidiaries which produce exempt dividend income. Soon after the election, the government was told that this measure would impose extra costs on Australian businesses seeking to expand offshore and those already operating offshore, by denying legitimate business deductions for interest costs on their borrowings. Increasing taxes on Australian businesses seeking to expand into new markets is poor public policy.

**Australia's tax administration**

Good policy and robust legislation requires the support of well-resourced and skilled tax administrators. We are working with the Australian Taxation Office to create the best tax administration system in the world. The Australian Taxation Office has extensive investigative powers and can take appropriate measures to ensure that multinational companies operating in Australia are not just complying with our laws but also paying their fair share. I have asked the Commissioner of Taxation to double his efforts in this area by undertaking more extensive inquiries and audits of multinational companies considered a risk to Australian tax collections.

Australian consumers often pay much higher prices compared to United States consumers for identical IT hardware, software, music, games, sporting equipment and fashion, to name a few. Members would also be aware of media reports detailing that some companies selling these products pay little tax in Australia, despite their products selling for much higher prices in Australia than elsewhere around the world.

Part of the commissioner's efforts will be examining whether these are location specific profits being generated and then shifted out of Australia. In such cases, Australia's transfer pricing rules could apply to determine whether the appropriate amount of profit from Australian sales was booked to Australian operations. These rules, of course, are based on the OECD's internationally recognised transfer pricing rules. I have also asked the commissioner to double his efforts in applying our rules so that his officers are able to look at these price differences to ensure that profits earned in Australia are taxed in Australia. Combined with our strengthened transfer pricing rules, the commissioner's proactive agenda will provide greater integrity to our tax system and help us collect the right amount of tax.

**Global Action**

The third area we are taking action on is on the international front. International cooperation, of course, complements both our robust domestic laws and our administrative efforts to counter international tax avoidance.
The ATO has placed greater emphasis on its cooperation with other tax authorities. We now have a significantly improved understanding of international tax planning arrangements, where the risks lie and there is better targeting of compliance activities.

As you will know, I am meeting other G20 finance ministers in Cairns in two weeks time. Along with other parts of the G20 agenda, we will be discussing the progress of the G20's work on tax reform and we will be undertaking further work to accelerate global integrity measures. The G20's tax agenda responds to international concern about the ability of multinationals and high-wealth individuals to avoid or evade their tax liabilities. The G20 is committed to making our international tax system fairer for all countries, whether they are fully developed economies or not. The G20's tax agenda focuses on addressing base erosion and profit shifting—known as BEPS—tackling tax avoidance and promoting tax transparency and automatic exchange of information. It is getting strong technical assistance from the OECD, but it is a fully inclusive work program involving the 20 largest economies in the world. It was endorsed at the 2013 St Petersburg summit and significant progress has been made. An important theme for our upcoming meeting in Cairns will be tax transparency and information exchange. When tax authorities provide better information on individuals, as well as the global operations of multinational companies, that data becomes a powerful tool to crack down on tax avoidance.

I have further promoted the work at G20 finance ministers' meetings in Sydney and Washington this year. Australia is now a leader in exchanging information with other countries. This involves transmission of individuals' information on financial accounts and income to other tax authorities where they are resident. Currently, the tax office automatically sends information to around 40 countries and it receives information from around 20 tax authorities. I can advise the House that a new common reporting standard for the automatic exchange of information was endorsed at our G20 finance ministers' and central bank governors' meeting in Sydney in February. This is a single global standard for the collection and reporting of financial account information on nonresidents. This will result in a large increase in the amount, accuracy and comprehensiveness of financial information exchanged between tax authorities. It will help the Commissioner of Taxation to identify and catch tax cheats.

We will detail our implementation plan for this initiative, along with other G20 countries, at the upcoming meeting in Cairns in two weeks. Australia will not be alone in moving to this new global standard. More than 60 other countries and jurisdictions have committed to doing the same, including Luxembourg, Switzerland, Singapore, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands. This exchange of information will catch hidden assets and undisclosed income. Under this government we have provided Australians with a one-off opportunity to disclose those assets held offshore, without severe penalty. Accordingly, I encourage Australian residents with offshore investments to take advantage of the ATO's voluntary disclosure initiative, Project DO IT. They should now come forward and disclose unreported foreign income and assets before the end of this calendar year. I will say that again: now is the time to report assets held offshore by Australian residents before the end of this calendar year.

At Cairns the G20 will also ensure progress on the OECD base erosion and profit-shifting action plan. We are halfway through an ambitious two-year program to update international tax rules for the 21st century. The action plan is aimed at ensuring that international tax rules
keep up with advances in multinational companies' business models, such as greater use of intellectual property, information technology and integrative global supply chains. The OECD has developed a comprehensive 15-point action plan that includes articulating the challenges of collecting tax on the digital economy and developing responses to these. At Cairns we will review the work to date, which involves progress on country-by-country reporting of tax information by multinationals, assessment of harmful tax practices and responses to business use of hybrid-funding instruments to avoid tax. The OECD has advised me they have made progress on all 15 action items and that Australia continues to lead the global response to tax base erosion and profit shifting, as G20 president.

As I have made quite clear, the government is absolutely committed to a fair and efficient taxation system. We are determined that multinational taxpayers will not be able to avoid their Australian tax obligations by shifting their international profits to low-tax or no-tax jurisdictions. We already have strong domestic laws and an active, effective tax administrator, who is working with other tax administrators internationally to put together the global picture of these multinationals. We will continue to monitor our domestic laws. We will introduce new laws, if necessary, in response to the changing international economy and will make sure they remain effective in countering arrangements designed to shift profits out of Australia. Our leadership role in the G20 tax agenda demonstrates just how determined we are to maintain the integrity of our tax system. In its role as G20 president this year, Australia has taken the lead in global efforts to address international profit-shifting arrangements.

I thank my fellow finance ministers in the G20 for their cooperation, particularly over the last few weeks, in this area. That leadership will continue well into the future and over the next few weeks in the lead-up to the leaders' meeting in November, finance ministers will continue to meet—in Cairns in two weeks and again in Washington a few weeks after that and then again in Brisbane in November—to deliver real progress in ensuring tax evaders are caught, wherever they may be located.

I present a copy of my statement and I ask leave of the House to move a motion to enable the member for McMahon to speak for 15 minutes.

Leave granted.

Mr HOCKEY: I move:

That standing and session orders be suspended as would prevent the member for McMahon speaking in reply to the minister's statement for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (11:15): The Treasurer in his ministerial statement outlined the principles as to why tackling tax avoidance is important, and he is right. He talked about the importance of foreign investment in Australia's economy. He is also right about that. I have made very clear Labor's approach to foreign investment, being in favour of foreign investment, and I have outlined publicly how I would have taken a different approach to the Treasurer on some key foreign investment issues that he has had to deal with in his time as Treasurer.

Tackling tax avoidance is, of course, the right thing to do. We need a government which can fund important investments in the future. The fact of the matter is that the Australian government will always need to tax to a certain level. The fact of the matter is that, if some
people are avoiding tax, it simply means others are paying more. That is simply a matter of fairness. Businesses, whether they be big or small, domestic or international, should all be paying their fair amount of tax. This is a matter of competitive neutrality. Tackling international tax avoidance is about being fair to all businesses. It is a pro-business approach. So we agree with the principles outlined at the beginning of the Treasurer's statement. I do have to say, though, that I am disappointed that the statement did not contain much more substance than it did. I had thought, when I heard the Treasurer was going to bring down a ministerial statement today, that it would include some announcements, some steps forward. Unfortunately, it did not. There were 2,000 words, but very little action. In fact, the Treasurer and this government have not been proactive when it comes to improving our response to tax avoidance, unlike the previous government.

The Treasurer said in his remarks that we have a robust and sophisticated anti-tax-avoidance regime. Again, he is right, but that is due in large part to the actions of the previous Labor government. I want to take this opportunity in the House to pay tribute in particular to the former Assistant Treasurer of Australia, David Bradbury, who, under the member for Lilley's leadership, led the way in ensuring that we have what the Treasurer called a robust and sophisticated anti-tax-avoidance approach by reforming part IVA of the Tax Act—the anti-tax-avoidance section. So important and so good was Mr Bradbury's work that, after leaving the parliament, he has been employed by the OECD to lead the OECD's work on tax evasion. The Treasurer referred to strong technical support from the OECD. That technical support is being provided by the former member for Lindsay, David Bradbury, which shows just how well-regarded he is on an important international stage.

In the 2013-14 budget, Labor enacted a comprehensive package to reduce profit-shifting and multinational tax avoidance: addressing aggressive tax structures that seek to shift profits by artificially loading debt into Australia; better targeting of resource sector concessions for depreciating assets to support genuine exploration; improving the integrity of and ensuring better compliance with the foreign resident capital gains tax regime; closing loopholes in the offshore banking unit regime and the consolidation of the business entities regime; preventing sophisticated investors from engaging in dividend washing; and increasing ATO compliance checks on offshore marketing hubs and business structures. All these measures put together improve the budget bottom line by more than $5.3 billion. I need to say that, unfortunately, on coming to office this government decided not to proceed with important measures at a cost of $1 billion. I note that the Treasurer referred to this in his ministerial statement.

I also note a significant change in rhetoric from him on this point. He had previously claimed that these changes were not implementable—unworkable, poorly designed. Now he says that they would have imposed extra costs on business. He changed his excuse for not implementing these changes quite dramatically. I say to the Treasurer: if you are fair dinkum about dealing with tax evasion, you would be implementing the previous Labor government's changes. You would not be walking away from them. You would not be backsliding on them. You simply would be implementing them and you would, of course, have our support to do so. The chamber is sometimes asked, 'Where is the bipartisan approach?' If you had a bipartisan approach, we would congratulate you for implementing those changes if you had done so. You have not done so, and so we criticise the government for that.
On the matter of implementation, as a former Assistant Treasurer, a former Treasurer and a shadow Treasurer, I fully accept that tax changes can be complex to implement, that sometimes unintended consequences can emerge after announcement and that the tax office and the Treasury can provide advice as to that, but you work those through. You do not use them as an excuse to walk away from important tax changes; you do not use them as an alibi for letting tax evasion go free. You use it as an opportunity to work with business, to work with the tax office and to work with the Treasury to ensure workable, proportionate tax laws. You do not use them as an excuse—which this government has done and which they should be condemned for doing. This comes at a cost of $1 billion to the Australian taxpayers. As I said before, the Australia government will always need to raise a certain amount of tax revenue and, if some people are avoiding it, others simply pay more—Australian businesses and individuals pay more.

I want to go to the Treasurer's comments in relation to the tax office and compliance. This is important. The tax office implementing the tax laws and assurance compliance is a key part of any government's approach. The Treasurer referred to his asking the Australian Tax Commissioner to double his compliance effort. Let me make it very clear: we on this side of the House are strong supporters of the Tax Commissioner, Mr Jordan. He is a very good Tax Commissioner, appointed by my predecessor, the member for Lilley—a very good appointment from the business community. He is somebody who understands the tax system very well as a former deputy chair and chair of the board of taxation. But let me say this as well: simply asking the tax office and the Tax Commissioner to double his compliance effort at the same time as reducing funding from the Australian tax office makes absolutely no sense at all. We asked the tax commissioner to increase tax compliance efforts as well, but we gave him the resources to do it. We increased the funding for the tax office when we were in office. Under this Treasurer, the staffing complement for the Australian Taxation Office has been reduced by 4,700 people over the next four years. That is a very substantial reduction for the tax office. I say to the House very clearly: compliance will suffer as a result. With that many fewer people working for the tax office it is inevitable that compliance will suffer.

We would support the Treasurer in his request to the tax commissioner to double compliance efforts, but we say: give him the tools he needs to do the job. Give him the resources he needs. Rhetoric is not good enough. Words are not good enough. Saying that you have asked for more compliance at the same time as reducing the resources available to the commissioner is simply not good enough. It takes more than words to beat tax evasion. Words do not beat tax evasion. Rhetoric does not beat tax evasion. Chest-thumping does not beat tax evasion. Strong laws, properly enforced—strong compliance measures—beat tax evasion. A strong tax office beats tax evasion. My colleague and friend the shadow Assistant Treasurer has pointed out consistently the folly of the government's approach when it comes to tax office funding, and it does mean that people will be getting away with tax evasion.

I also want to go to the Treasurer's comment about transfer pricing and his commentary about technology companies in particular. He pointed out that in Australia we pay more for many goods, most particularly in relation to information technology—although he did point out other areas quite validly as well. This should come as no surprise to the House, because some people have been talking about this for some time. The leader on this particular matter has been the member for Chifley, who is at the table. He has been pursuing this matter.
aggressively and appropriately on behalf of Australian consumers, through his work on the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications.
Working with the member for Wakefield, the chair of that committee, he conducted a very
good inquiry with the other members. The committee handed down its report a year ago.
While it did go to tax evasion—it was not their remit—it did go to this issue, and I call on the
government to take that report seriously and to examine its recommendations very seriously.
A year has passed and nothing has happened. Australian consumers deserve better than that.

The Treasurer talked of the OECD and the G20 process—again appropriately. It is
important that we work together with our like-minded nations, and good progress has been
made. On tax information exchange there has been remarkable progress, I think, over the last
six years. Countries which would not engage in tax information exchange now do—countries
in our region; countries which could have been regarded as tax havens now exchange
information with the Australian tax office. This has been a bipartisan effort. I was dealing
with it when I was Assistant Treasurer, many years now, through the OECD. My successors
in the former government did, and I am sure that will continue under this government.

The role of Australia as chair of the G20 is important. Of course, the G20 is actually run, in
effect—some people may not appreciate this—by a troika of the chair, the previous year's
chair and the incoming chair. Australia has played a role for some time in leadership in the
G20, not just this year as chair and not just ending when our chairmanship ends but following
on to the next year. So I would encourage the Treasurer not just to use our time as chair of
G20—which is very important—but our time on the troika as being very important in
providing leadership. This cannot be a 'set and forget' approach from the G20. Simply making
statements and then walking away will not achieve the job. In our year as chair—which is a
wonderful opportunity for the Treasurer to show that leadership—which will include next
year, as it included me last year and the member for Lilley prior to that, it is very important
that while we are on the troika, the effective co-chairmanship of the G20, that that work
continues.

As the Treasurer said, the OECD action plan was endorsed at St Petersburg in 2013, when
Mr Carr represented Australia. It was progressed at Moscow, when I represented Australia at
the G20 finance ministers meeting; so this has been an ongoing process and I am glad to hear
that the Treasurer will be continuing that work in Cairns, as he should, and he will have our
bipartisan support as he does so. But we do need to see concrete action. Words are not
enough. We need to see much more than that.

It is important that tax evaders know that this is not something which will be a temporary
approach by any one government at any particular time. It is important that tax evaders know
that they cannot gain governance and they cannot wait for one government to pass and
another government to come in and then they will get away with their actions. They need to
know that there is a bipartisan approach to tax evasion. To the degree that the Treasurer will
pursue that, he will have our support. Again, this is why I express my profound
disappointment that the government has decided not to proceed with those important
measures that the previous government was implementing at a cost of $1 billion. Tax evasion
is not beaten by lectures. It is not beaten by simply lecturing other countries that they should
better, or lecturing the parliament. It is beaten by concrete actions, which the previous
government showed—at some political cost and some political risk—that we were prepared to
engage in. Unfortunately, the current government has not shown the same determination when it comes to that $1 billion in forgone tax revenue, because of their changes.

We talk of budget emergencies, the age of entitlement, the need for tough decisions; there is one right there—$1 billion which could be implemented. If the Treasurer had concerns about implementation, had concerns about details, then of course the Labor Party would be open-minded about changes he might wish to make to ensure that it could be properly implemented.

Mr Hockey interjecting—

Mr BOWEN: If they are undrafted, get them drafted.

Mr Hockey: Undraftable.

Mr BOWEN: The Treasurer has changed his rhetoric yet again. In his ministerial statement he said that they would increase the cost burden on other companies; now he says they were undraftable. No law is undraftable if you are prepared to do the work, to consult with the sector, to work with the tax office, and to work with the Treasury, it could be done. The Treasurer simply lacks the will. The Treasurer lacks the political will to make it happen. The Treasurer is strong when it comes to standing up to the weak but weak when comes to standing up to the strong. That is the fact of the matter: he lacks the will to take on tax evasion.

Mr Hockey: You've been praising me; now you're bagging me!

Mr BOWEN: I have been prepared to praise the Treasurer when he has earnt it. I have been prepared to commend the Treasurer when he has done the right thing. I have been prepared to provide bipartisan support to the Treasurer on important matters. But, when he has failed, I will tell the House—and he has failed on tax evasion. He has failed by giving back a billion dollars to tax evaders. Australians deserve better. Australian small businesses deserve better. Australian businesses that are large and paying their fair share of tax deserve better. They deserve to be able to compete on a level playing field. I call on the Treasurer to give them one: give them a level playing field, give them fairness. (Time expired)

BILLS

Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (11:30): With this Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill, the Abbott government is launching an unprecedented attack both on our universities and on the aspirations of thousands of students. Cutting $3.9 billion out of our higher education sector and telling universities that they can make up that difference only by charging students more is a direct attack on the equal opportunity that this country has fought so hard for.

The harsh reality of the first anniversary of the Abbott government is that it has shown that it was never the Prime Minister's intention to keep his promise made before the election that there would be no cuts to education, just as it was never his intention to keep his promises of no cuts to health, no new taxes and no changes to superannuation. The Prime Minister is not
only letting down everyone who voted for this government, believing in those promises, but also risking the future of young Australians.

Among those young Australians who will be hit the hardest are those attending our regional universities. Over the last 40 years, the reforms of successive Labor governments have opened up our universities, providing those who previously could only dream of going into higher education with the opportunity to do so. Labor successfully ended the cycle of young academic talent being overlooked due to the size of their parents' bank balance. This bill aims to absolutely smash that legacy. Just as the Abbott government did with health and with pensions and with superannuation, they are pursuing a cruel and flawed ideology that directly attacks Australia's sense of social equity, the very framework that has made our country the envy of the developed world.

According to Universities Australia, cuts to course funding will result in degrees in engineering and science increasing by 58 per cent; agriculture, by 43 per cent; nursing, by 24 per cent; education, by 20 per cent; and environmental studies, by 110 per cent. The Grattan Institute's Andrew Norton has predicted 30 per cent of female graduates in nursing, education, IT, commerce and engineering will never clear their debts under this plan. Australian Catholic University Vice-Chancellor Greg Craven has also warned against the government's plan, saying that it would disproportionately affect nursing and teaching graduates.

These increases are only the starting point, as it is anticipated many universities will go further, with independent modelling forecasting that the cost of degrees in science, in medicine and in law will well and truly exceed $100,000. In fact, I met recently with the Go8 deans of medicine and they are already being told that their courses will be the fee leaders at universities. They are already being told that courses in medicine will be the fee leaders—that is, the most expensive, costing the most that can possibly be charged.

To the health sector, this will be devastating. Most Australian universities now require students who wish to undertake a medical degree to first complete a three- or four-year bachelor law or science degree. That means students who graduate with medical degrees will be at university for at least seven years before they are able to seek full-time employment. Starting their working lives with such a massive debt will require graduates to put remuneration before job satisfaction as they seek the jobs that pay the highest amount immediately rather than pursue that which they are most passionate about.

Now, what do you think that is going to mean for the health workforce when, already, for the first time in five years, we are starting to see a substantial drop in the number of medical students who want to become GP specialists? Where do you think a cohort of students, potentially with debts of $100,000 or more, are going to seek their careers? In general practice? Possibly not. They are going to seek careers where they are able to earn the most as quickly as possible so they can pay off their massive university debt. Many students will be forced to go into workplaces where they can earn the most to pay down a debt many could still be wearing decades after they finish university. As I said, this will have very serious consequences for the medical profession.

The government has already attacked general practice in its budget, and these changes, frankly, represent another attack on our health workforce. Do you think our new medical graduates with $100,000-plus in debt are going to want to practise as a GP in Dubbo or
Wagga or any place they are not going to be able to get the money that they need to pay that debt down?

These changes also represent an attack on our medical research workforce. Again, the potential for those students, knowing that they will have such substantial debts, to take the decision to go into medical research—and it is often low paid—is going to be well and truly lost. This comes at the same time as the government is trying to justify the GP tax on the grounds that the funds are needed to pay for the Medical Research Fund, which it insists is critical to tackling our future health needs. Well, this bill runs completely counter to that aim. The government hits patients with the GP tax—which drives them away from seeing doctors, making them sicker and adding to the future health burden—so it can pay for medical research but then imposes such a crippling debt burden on our brightest and best students that few will ever be able to afford to participate in that research.

The bill not only risks our reputation but is a massive barrier to our economic future, because it is absolutely vital that we have a productive, innovative and highly skilled workforce. The Australian experience has proven that economic and social prosperity is only achieved through policies of inclusion, not exclusion. Let us be absolutely clear about this: there is nothing, absolutely nothing, inclusive about $100,000 university degrees. There is nothing inclusive about saddling young Australians with a lifetime of debt. These are truly regressive reforms, and no amount of spin or denial from the other side can prove otherwise. The removal of price controls will see the cost of university degrees skyrocket. The prospect of degrees exceeding $100,000 will become reality if the government proceeds with this bill. The $1.9 billion cut in Commonwealth funding for course delivery will force universities to pass this on through higher fees. I note the capacity and the concern which regional universities have expressed about that.

This is a tax on our future. It is a tax on our students who will pay the most, not only through increased fees but through a constantly growing debt burden. For it is not enough for the Abbott government to slug students with cuts to course funding and the removal of price controls; they want to then multiply this already crippling debt through changes to HECS and HELP loans. At Federation University—and I am aware that this is a breach of standing orders, but I have spoken to the Deputy Speaker about doing this briefly—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent):** Don't suck me into your sin!

**Ms KING:** I will not, sorry, Deputy Speaker. I have undertaken to hold this up briefly in this chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Federation University is also part of my electorate.

**Ms KING:** So the Deputy Speaker has a vested interest in this as well.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am at one here with the member.

**Ms KING:** At Federation University in my electorate, three-quarters of the students are the first in their families to attend university and almost a third of the student population are from low socio-economic backgrounds. These students cannot afford to even contemplate incurring $100,000 debts in their teens. The Abbott government is nothing short of ignorant if it thinks this will be anything other than a massive disincentive for families in regional and rural Australia. Many of the regional universities have said that they would not be able to charge those sorts of fees. That puts regional universities behind the eight ball from the start.
They have had massive funding cuts and have no capacity to make up the shortfall. Over time that will compound and compound.

Regional universities are at the heart of not only our regional economies but at the heart of the capacity of regional students to gain teaching degrees, nursing qualifications, IT qualifications, engineering and health sciences, to provide the workforce in regional Australia. Over time, the capacity of universities to deliver that breadth of courses will decline. Also the quality of courses will decline. We will see the sandstone universities, potentially the Go8, those great institutions, able to charge those fees, and regional universities will decline further and further. That is the reality of this bill.

The government claims its new Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme is designed to support disadvantaged students, but again they fail to recognise the inequity inherent in this bill. No Commonwealth funding is allocated to those scholarships, with funding provided on the basis of additional fees from students. So the more universities charge, the more they will be able to provide scholarships. That is fine but it is not okay for regional universities, which are not going to be in a position to do that. This structure will further widen the gap by entrenching market position and power with our sandstone universities. Former Melbourne University Vice-Chancellor Professor Kwong Lee Dow confirmed this very point in a recent speech during a visit to Ballarat:

If high fees are commanded by preferred institutions and preferred courses, to show their status some others will move towards these higher charges to position themselves in the market.

That is exactly what this bill is designed to do:

In poorer communities, including regional and rural communities, families will not be able to meet these higher fees, so the institutions will have less funding and so become less competitive over time.

Professor Lee Dow then went on to say:

… whatever finally emerges from the political machinations with the Senate, students will be paying significantly more, and rural and regional students will be disproportionately affected.

Professor Lee Dow's observations are far from unique. Since the Minister introduced this bill, several professors from regional campuses throughout the country have joined the chorus to highlight the terrible impact of this bill on their universities. In my own electorate, the Vice-Chancellor of Federation University, Professor David Battersby, highlighted the sham of the government's so-called Scholarship Scheme in a piece published in the Ballarat Courier:

The shallow rhetoric about having more scholarships for regional students, including assistance to help them to attend metropolitan universities, and the availability of more sub-degree courses, ignores the real differences we have in this nation between metropolitan and regional higher education.

The differences are structural and not simply related to student choice and cannot be easily ameliorated by the application of market forces.

I make special mention of Federation University not only because of its status as a leading regional education institution but because of its fantastic record of providing our region with highly skilled nurses, teachers, accountants, scientists, engineers and research graduates. They are people who stay in our communities and fill important jobs, develop businesses and provide important services for our communities.

Flying in the face of this record is the Abbott government's determination to cut $42.5 million from teaching and research funding at Federation University. Federation University
Prides itself on its key focus on research and innovation and has formed a partnership with Monash University, University of Melbourne and Deakin University under the Collaborative Research Network to establish the Self-sustaining Regions Research and Innovation Initiative. The project comprises three major elements: regional science and technology innovation, regional landscape change and regional social and educational connectedness and health innovation. The focus of this initiative is to deliver world-class research with an integrated focus on drivers of change, impacts and solutions for people and communities in regional Australia.

Collaboration in research is critical, but with the government saying to universities, 'If you don't support these bills we'll find the money elsewhere, if you don't go out hard and campaign for these bills and if they don't get through, we'll cut your research funding,' what sort of blackmail is that? What sort of message is that sending to universities? Frankly, I think universities have been shocked by the minister's behaviour in making that statement. That will have a significant impact on my university, Federation University.

One of the components of this bill and one which I think the other place will seek to have discussed separately is the establishment which we signed off on in government—that is, the name change from the University of Ballarat to Federation University. I want to put on record my very strong support for the name change to Federation University, Ballarat, or Federation University, Churchill campus—I am sure we are going to see more Federation University campuses across the state of Victoria in the years ahead. I also want to put on record the damage that this bill does to regional universities. I know that many members of the National Party have concerns about it. I know that, deep in their hearts, they care very much about what happens in this place to regional communities. I hope very much that they are able to convince the Minister for Education to take into his heart the needs of regional Australians.

Mrs Griggs (Solomon) (11:45): In the words of Minister Pyne, this government is the best friend students have ever had. Today I rise to speak on the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 and the benefits it will bring to students across the country. The coalition is introducing some of the greatest higher education and research reforms in Australia's history. I am proud that the coalition government is helping to make Australian higher education the best in the world. I am also proud that we are striving to achieve the best universities in the world. Australia has always been a nation that endeavours to be the best it can be. These reforms will allow our universities to be the best they can possibly be.

When I started university, in 1987, I had to move away from my regional home town of Alice Springs. Like most students, I struggled on a small income while I was living away from home, in the big smoke of Darwin. I was the first of my family to go to university. After I completed my studies, my husband, Paul, went to university to study a bachelor of police investigations. My mother actually started tertiary education in her 40s, while I was still at university myself. To send one person to university can make a difference to an entire family's higher education experience. My mum has since gone on to study a graduate diploma in public sector executive management, a graduate certificate in public sector management, a bachelor of public administration and a master's of international management.

Mr McCormack: What a woman!
Mrs GRIGGS: I think she is a very impressive woman, particularly since her first studies were in her mid-40s. I am very, very proud of my mum and I think that she is a good role model for my family.

We want to get more students to study higher education, and we are doing that by making it more accessible for regional students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who might have thought university study was way out of their reach. This legislation will create the biggest tertiary education scholarship reform that we have ever had in this country. We are levelling the playing field between city and country. University deregulation means more money for scholarships, and this means more opportunity for students from regional and remote areas to move closer to a university or tertiary education provider.

We only have one university based in the Northern Territory, and that is Charles Darwin University, which is where I studied a bachelor of business, majoring in information technology. It is a fantastic university and a unique educational institution. I was speaking with the new Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University, Simon Maddocks, about his role. He reminded me that Charles Darwin Uni is very different from other capital city universities and that it may need some extra attention in that regard. So I have been working with the vice-chancellor to ensure that the unique challenges facing Charles Darwin University are heard by Minister Pyne. Vice-Chancellor Maddocks expressed his concerns about how these changes might affect regional universities. I will continue to work through these concerns with Vice-Chancellor Maddocks and keep the lines of communication open between Charles Darwin University and Minister Pyne's office.

In fact, these higher education reforms offer many advantages and opportunities for regional universities and will in turn benefit the communities where they are located. Deregulation of universities is widely supported among the higher education industry around Australia. For regional universities, deregulation provides an opportunity for them to position themselves much more effectively and attractively. Charles Darwin University provides high-quality education, with high student satisfaction and excellent employment outcomes. Package that together with lower fees than interstate universities, and you have an attractive marketing plan to recruit students from all over Australia.

We do admit it is possible that fees will go up for some degrees. However, universities still want to attract students, and Australians are smart people; they will look out for the best value for money and this will keep universities competitive. If Charles Darwin University can offer courses at a lower cost than their city counterparts, they could see more students from major capital cities choosing regional areas to undertake their studies. This would be a great boon for the Territory's economy. Locals would welcome the economic benefits students bring to our region, and Darwin is a great drawcard for young people.

The government is committed to improving regional universities, and we will do everything we can to ensure that they are not left behind and that they are able to compete with metropolitan universities. In reducing per student funding under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme, we have made concessions for regional universities to ensure that this does not impact regional universities disproportionately. Many regional universities, including Charles Darwin University, have higher numbers of teaching and nursing students, and these courses will see lower than average reductions in funding, which is good news for regional universities that have large teaching and nursing cohorts.
Charles Darwin University is also a research intensive university. It boasts international excellence in environmental science and in Indigenous and tropical health. It is also leading the way in terms of engineering expertise to assist in the oil and gas developments that have been attracted to our area in our bid to develop the north.

These higher education reforms will allow Australian universities to build on their strong, competitive research systems. We had come to expect funding shortfalls from the previous Labor government, but this case is actually quite extreme. Research assistance had been left in the lurch. Not a single cent had been put aside for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy beyond 30 June next year. The Future Fellowships program had been left dry. As I said, not a cent was left to award to mid-career researchers to undertake world-class research in Australia after 30 June next year.

But there is good news: we actually take research seriously. This government is investing $11 billion over four years in research programs for Australian universities. There is $139 million for the Future Fellowships scheme and $150 million in 2012-16 to continue the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy. This government is picking up the pieces after the failed Labor government, and we are the ones who will ensure that Australian researchers are not left behind.

I look forward to working with Charles Darwin University to ensure that it continues to be a top research university and to provide it with access to the coalition's new research funding model. Of more benefit to Charles Darwin University is this government's change to the Commonwealth supported places for students. We think that students studying for diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees should be able to access Commonwealth support as well. So Charles Darwin University offers a large range of diplomas and advanced diplomas, from a diploma of business, to a diploma of conservation and land management, to an associate degree in engineering or an associate degree in legal studies. Charles Darwin University has a large range of courses that will suit any student's needs.

This government, as I said, is investing $371.5 million to support this initiative with diplomas and associate degrees which will give more options and therefore more flexibility to those who might be thinking of studying. Diplomas and associate degrees provide alternative pathways to those of the traditional bachelor degree after high school program. These courses can give students the opportunity to develop the skills required in a high level of tertiary education or may suit them when they do not necessarily want to do a bachelor degree. Expanding Commonwealth subsidies to these types of courses will help to ensure Australians have the best chance of success when they are studying. This is particularly important in regional and low-socioeconomic areas where students are less likely to attend university than students in large capital cities.

The coalition government is increasing competition between higher education providers. When these institutions are able to compete against one another to attract students then the students win.

We are extending Commonwealth support to private universities and to alternative higher education institutions so that they can also compete for students. We are investing $448.9 million to deliver on this goal. We expect that over 80,000 additional students will benefit from this investment. This means better outcomes for tertiary education institutions.
estimated 48,000 students in diploma and associate diploma courses and 35,000 students in bachelor courses—pretty good numbers, wouldn't you say, Parliamentary Secretary?

Mr McCormack: Exceptional!

Mrs GRIGGS: What a great investment for the future of our nation! More choice equals better options. Competition will drive quality and encourage providers to be more responsive to students' wants and needs. Yes, some of the courses may go up, but many courses may drop their prices due to the institutions wanting to attract students to study with them.

I find it really disappointing that the Labor Party are trying to scare our kids out of attending university. Even my own nephew, who is attending university next year, has spoken to me about some of the scaremongering that has come from those on the other side. If anything is going to scare our kids away from tertiary studies, it is the ridiculous claim from the Labor Party that people cannot afford to go to university anymore. This is false, and it is highly irresponsible to be spreading these sorts of lies. The Labor Party just do not seem to get it. Students do not have to pay one cent for their university education up-front. I will repeat that: students do not have to pay one cent up-front for their university qualifications.

Yesterday we heard from the other Northern Territory member of the House of Representatives, who was telling the parliament that this legislation requires homeowners to get a second mortgage to pay for their education. For the member for Lingiari, I will repeat again: students do not have to pay one cent up-front for their university education. It is irresponsible and shameful of the members opposite to discourage their own constituents from starting university at a later stage in life as my mum did. The member for Lingiari has a high-paying job. Why shouldn't his constituents be afforded the same opportunity to upskill and increase their income?

That is what the coalition government is here to do—to give all Australians the opportunity to secure their own future and make a better life for themselves. As for the Labor senator, I am not sure that she will be able to tell you how these reforms will affect Charles Darwin University, because she does not actually seem to be in the Territory much; she seems to be travelling all around the country—all you have to do is have a look on her Twitter account to see that. She is unlike her predecessor, my constituent Trish Crossin, who actually did know what was going on. She was right on the ground. And if she was here, she would have a bit to say about this, I am sure.

This government will maintain the HELP loan scheme so that not even regional students have to pay anything up-front for their higher education. In fact, they will not have to pay a cent back until they have a job and are earning a decent wage. People tell me they think this is a good deal, considering most graduates go on to earn 75 per cent more than the taxpayers who supported their education and did not go to university. This government is committed to enabling universities to continue to provide high-quality education and learning in the decades to come. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I note and welcome the young leaders from the seat of Hasluck sitting in the advisers box.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:00): I want to start today by telling a story about two young Australians. One was a bright young man who wanted to become a doctor. Unfortunately, his parents were not wealthy and they could not afford for him to go to
university. He left school at the age of 15 and became an apprentice electrician. It took him many years to go back to study at night school to become an accountant. The other was a bright young woman who wanted to become a teacher. She grew up in a housing commission house in Victoria. She had a single mum who worked three jobs to keep food on the table. She was dragged kicking and screaming from school at the age of 15 because she had to go out and pay her way; her mother could not afford to support her.

That bright young man was my father and that bright young woman was my mother. My mum went back to get her HSC after many, many years of bringing up my sisters and I. She went back to get HSC in her 30s. Then she started to study at university. It was her great ambition to study at university and become a teacher. But, unfortunately, she could not finish her university degree because my father left us when I was 11. He left my mum with three daughters and not very much money in the bank account—$30, in fact. So Mum had to go back to work.

When my father left, my mother was absolutely petrified that my sisters and I were going to face the same destiny of intergenerational disadvantage that beset what I call my working class matriarchy. My great-grandmother left school at 12. She cleaned houses. She was a domestic for the wealthy in the Western district of Victoria. My grandmother left school at 13. She worked three jobs, largely as a cleaner around Melbourne in hospitals and theatres. As you heard, my mother had to leave school at the age of 15 because she was a housing commission kid. Her mother was a single mum and she could not afford to put her through not just university—that was a pipedream—but high school. My mother was petrified that this intergenerational disadvantage that resulted from lack of access to education would beset my sisters and I when my father left us when I was 11, so she was absolutely determined that my sisters and I would go to university. We were very fortunate because we had that opportunity, and that was thanks to Labor. That was thanks to the free education reforms that Whitlam introduced in the 1970s and the affordable HECS system that Dawkins introduced in the 1980s.

I fear that these reforms that we are debating today will take us back to the Australia of the 1950s where only the wealthy were educated, where bright students from the so-called wrong side of the tracks were denied the opportunity of higher education, denied the opportunity to pursue their dreams and denied the opportunity to become doctors, as was my father's dream, and teachers, as was my mother's dream. Given my background, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill and to join with my Labor colleagues in standing against this dreadful legislation and policy. I stand together with my Labor colleagues to protect access for all to higher education.

Christopher Pyne, prior to the election, said, 'We will ensure the continuation of the current arrangements of university funding.' The government said that there were to be no cuts to education. Those were the words of the Prime Minister prior to the election. This legislation is further evidence that the promises of those opposite are meaningless. In total, the Abbott government's budget measures cut $5.8 billion from higher education teaching and learning and university research. That is an awfully big cut from a government that promised again and again there were not going to be any cuts to education.

This legislation we are debating today enables the delivery of $3.9 billion of these cuts, including through slashing funding for Commonwealth supported places in undergraduate
degrees by an average of 20 per cent and, for some courses, up to 37 per cent. This which means that universities will have to increase fees to make up the difference. The reforms also involve reducing the indexation arrangements for university funding to CPI in 2016 down from the appropriate rate the previous Labor government introduced, which means $202 million in cuts over the forward estimates period. This will be a major contributor to a $2.5 billion per annum shortfall in 10 years time, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office. These reforms also involve cutting almost $174 million from the Research Training Scheme, which supports training of Australia's research students—the scientists and academics of tomorrow. They also involve introducing fees for PhDs. I will come to that later. They also involve introducing a real rate of interest on HECS, moving from CPI to the 10-year bond rate capped at six per cent. This highly regressive measure applies not only to existing and future students but to anyone who still has a HECS debt.

I have been astounded when listening to the speeches of those opposite that many have said these policies will not necessarily result in fee increases. According to Universities Australia, the cost of important courses like engineering and science will have to increase by 58 per cent to make up for the government's funding cuts, while nursing will need to increase by 24 per cent, education by 20 per cent and agriculture by 43 per cent. Environmental studies—which in many ways is the field of the future, looking to ensure that Australia can compete in a low-carbon future—will have to increase by 110 per cent.

Canberra is lucky enough to be home to several excellent universities, including the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University. There are over 30,000 Canberrans currently enrolled in one of these three universities. So it is not surprising that Canberrans are passionate about this issue—and passionate they are! I have spent a lot of time talking to Canberrans about what they think of the budget. I have been doorknocking, held community forums and mobile offices, and I have spoken to Canberrans about how the budget will affect them. I have been inundated by emails, letters and phone calls from constituents who are unhappy with many aspects of the budget, but there is one aspect that they find particularly horrendous. Almost every single person I have spoken to has felt that the government's higher education policies are unfair and an attack on our very social fabric. There is a lot of anger in the Canberra community about a whole range of issues in the budget. There is a lot of anger about changes to Newstart, there is a lot of anger about changes to research funding and there is a lot of anger about the fuel tax hike. However, the issue that resonates with everyone is the cuts to higher education. More people that I have spoken to oppose the cuts to higher education than any other single policy.

These Canberrans who are very angry about these higher education reforms did not necessarily go to university themselves, but they have aspirations for their children or grandchildren to go one day, and they may have aspirations to become a mature age student themselves. Most importantly, they believe that every Australian should be able to choose whether or not to go to university based on their skills, hard work, interests, dreams and career goals, not on their bank account or postcode.

I have also heard concerns from Canberrans still paying off their HECS debt. They are wondering how they will cope with the significantly increased interest they will have to pay from 2016. I have heard concerns from Canberrans who had always considered themselves
lucky to have such great universities right here in their own city, but who now fear that their children will never have the opportunity to study at these universities.

Canberrans are united against the Abbott government's changes to higher education. They know that they will make university study inaccessible for people from a disadvantaged background like my parents and me. I was the first person in my family to be tertiary educated. My middle sister is a scientist and my little sister is a neurologist, thanks to reforms that Labor introduced in the 1970s and 1980s. If those reforms had not been introduced—if the environment that this government is proposing had existed—I wonder whether my sister would now be a neurologist, I wonder whether my middle sister would be a scientist and I wonder if I would have had the chance to go to university. Given the fact that I grew up with a single mother, like my mother and her mother before her, I really do wonder if we would be where we are today, would have the choices that we have today, and whether our lives would be transformed as they have been through higher education if these reforms were in place when we were in our late teens or early 20s.

Canberrans know that the government's proposals will create a two-tiered system where only the very rich can access our best universities. They know that these changes will saddle our kids with enormous debts, preventing them from ever entering the housing market or getting ahead in life. They know that these changes are bad for our country and that, as I said before, they cut into our very social fabric.

One of the very worst aspects of these bad reforms is the fact that they unfairly disadvantage women. We already know that women shoulder the majority of the caring burden in Australia, which means time away from their career. Whether they take time off after the birth of a child or to care for sick and ageing relatives, it financially disadvantages women, especially when it comes to superannuation. Now, the Abbott government wants to charge them increased compounding interest on their HECS debt while they are out of the workforce. Under these changes, a female accounting graduate who takes a three-year break from her career could still be paying back her student debt well into her 50s, with about $45,000 in interest and, during the period when they are not earning, they are accumulating a debt on which the interest is compounding. By contrast an accounting graduate with the same debt who does not take time out from their career would repay it in 23 years with only $24,000 interest.

We already have a gender pay gap that see women paid less than men, even at the graduate level. These changes will shoulder women with even more debt and further entrench the fact that women are less financially secure than men in this country—particularly when they retire. And we know what the Minister for Education's response to this was:

Now, women are well-represented amongst the teaching and nursing students. They will not be able to earn the high incomes that say dentists or lawyers will earn, and vice chancellors in framing their fees, their fee structure, will take that into account. Therefore the debts of teachers and nurses will be lower than the debts, for example, of lawyers and dentists.

This appalling statement shows how incredibly out of touch this government is.

I am also concerned about the brain drain on our country that these reforms will cause. I recently visited my alma mater, RMIT. I had a meeting with them to talk about the potential impact of these cuts. These were kids from Moe and Morwell, from the Latrobe Valley and from all over Victoria, and they were studying engineering. I was shocked to hear that they
are now considering moving abroad to study—going to Germany, to the UK or to Scandinavia to study—because under these proposed reforms it will be cheaper to study in Europe than in Australia. What concerned me most was not the fact that these students are going off to study in Europe and Scandinavia; it was the fact that they then see themselves as staying there.

We know that we have got an engineering shortage in nearly every field in the country. These highly educated engineers will go off to Europe and stay there for the remainder of their careers and possibly their lives. As one of these young men from the Latrobe Valley was saying, ‘Not only will it be cheaper for me to go and study in Germany; they have also got a manufacturing industry in Germany as a result of the government support.’ In the past, Labor has shown strong industry support in this country, and it still exists, fortunately, in Germany. He is thinking, ‘I will get a cheaper degree and I will get the opportunity to work in a thriving, growing, prospering manufacturing industry.’ This is of great concern to me. We will lose the precious intellect and potential of bright young Australians. I am concerned there will be a brain drain.

I am bitterly disappointed with this legislation. I completely oppose it, as I mentioned. I am very concerned that it will mean that only the wealthy in this country will be able to be educated, which is an absolute outrage. (Time expired)

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (12:15): Two days ago we heard the Leader of the Labor Party dramatically railing against the proposed reforms to higher education in Australia. Anyone would think that loans for studying at university were a brand-new draconian action introduced by the Liberal Party. This, however, is far from the truth. The Higher Education Contribution Scheme, HECS, was brought into being by none other than the Labor government under the leadership of Bob Hawke. While over time the system has evolved, the current cohort of university students is probably unaware that this was indeed a Labor initiative. In fact, David Gonski, whose name up until now has been the call to arms for teachers and educators around Australia, has backed this initiative of reform. I quote from News Corp Australia:

THE architect of the former Labor government’s education reforms has backed the Abbott government’s plan to deregulate higher education fees, claiming it will free up funds to make universities ‘even greater’ …

Australians are proud of our world-class education system. Education is entirely free for our primary and high school students, and I welcome the students who are in the gallery today. Undergraduate and postgraduate education is available to all Australians with no up-front costs, guaranteeing that no Australian is prevented from going to university and making a difference to their future.

In addition to my 10 years as a high school science teacher, I taught high school in the United States as an exchange teacher and was a volunteer teacher educator in India. It was after my experience in these countries that I learned the true value of our own unique education system right here in Australia. We have a system that ensures equality of opportunity and a chance for every child to attend school, and to attend university if that is their choice.

The reform package before the House today is about cementing the foundations of our world-class education system for years and decades to come. This is not about class warfare,
it is not about increasing student debt, it is not about stopping Australians attending university; it is, however, about future sustainability for university education in Australia, and increased opportunities. This bill should not be a plaything of Labor and Greens to run their irresponsible scare campaigns. Without reform, within 10 to 20 years, the HECS-HELP scheme will become entirely unsustainable for any government, and the students in the gallery here today may not be able to attend an Australian university. It is the action of a responsible government to look further than six months into the future and to care about how Australia will look in 10, 20, 30 years, not just at the next election.

The bill contains a substantial set of reforms which will allow Australian universities and higher education institutions to flourish and promote choice and opportunity, including a significant deregulation and expansion of the demand driven funding system to improve flexibility and competition. This includes an extension of the demand driven system diplomas and associate diploma programs that cater to less-prepared or less-confident students; the removal of limits on fees; and extension of funding to private and non-university institutions.

Increasing competition is known by any businessperson to act as a breaking mechanism on price increases. The more supply, the greater the downward pressure on prices. This is the reality for any product as insignificant as confectionery; and it is no different for important products like education. I should know about confectionery price increases and competition, because I produced confectionery for 17 years. These reforms are necessary to avoid Australia being left behind at a time of rising performance by universities around the world, something Universities Australia has repeatedly warned is a danger.

I recently emailed my daughter travelling in Europe about the government's reforms. She has graduated and has two masters degrees. Her response was short and to the point: 'What on earth are they on about? The same thing is happening all over Europe in their universities.' To do nothing would impact on quality and send higher education downwards towards mediocrity. This inaction would let our students down and directly threaten our third largest export—international education—which is valued at $15 billion.

Before I delve into the detail of our package of reforms as a whole, I quote the vice-chancellor of our only university in Gilmore, Vice-Chancellor Paul Wellings, who recently penned an opinion piece in the Financial Review on this very issue. In his well-written article, he says:

The unpalatable alternative of leaving the fee system untouched and just adding to the large cuts imposed by the outgoing government was clearly an option. But this option was disregarded by Pyne in a decision to make the sector more competitive.

... ... ...

... there is a real chance that Pyne's reforms will increase the competitiveness of the sector while maintaining our ability to offer university education free at the point of delivery to all students, irrespective of their social circumstances.

As a member from a regional electorate with a regional uni, if there were to be any adverse changes to higher education under this package you would expect regional areas like mine to be the first to feel the brunt and to say so. The comments quoted here are proof that this reform package will be good for all university students and is being welcomed by those at the coalface. The Regional Universities Network has echoed the sentiment:
The Regional Universities Network (RUN) welcomes the announcement in the Budget of an ambitious program of reform for higher education which recognises the importance of the sector to Australia. The Treasurer and the Minister are to be congratulated for highlighting the important role Universities play in Australia’s future.

It saddens me that in my electorate of Gilmore only three people out of 20 attend university. We have one of the lowest participation rates in the country for higher education. One highlight of this higher education package is the $371.5 million that the government is investing into diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees over three years, which my local students use as a career pathway for a degree. While many young people in Gilmore are reluctant to commit to a university education, often because it means moving to Wollongong, Canberra or Sydney, there are many who are open to the idea of studying through these different pathways.

These reforms offer great choice. Gilmore may be one of the regions in Australia with the lowest university participation, but we are one of the top 30 areas for young people going to TAFE. For the youth of Gilmore, TAFE is where many high school leavers see their chance to gain technical and further education in a way that supports their personal goals and careers. Through this legislation, the government is also giving greater opportunities to those students from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds, like those in my electorate, through this new program allocation.

We are told by those opposite that university education should be free. Mr and Ms Taxpayer would say that the current system is far from free. However, the proposed reforms result in a revenue-neutral position for the government. We plan to change the indexation of HELP debts from the current consumer price index to the Treasury 10-year bond rate, capped at a maximum of six per cent—which is actually cheaper than a personal loan. We are doing this because, when the government is $300 billion in the red, every dollar borrowed from HECS is another dollar the government needs to borrow from someplace else.

The interest rate on Treasury bonds is much lower than anything available from a commercial lender. I only wish this had been an option for me when I attained the enrolment level for medicine but could not work my three jobs and do the face-to-face study hours required. If the government is going to borrow $30,000 on your behalf, it does so by issuing a bond. And it is only fair that the cost of issuing and maintaining that bond is incorporated into the HELP debt. This change reflects the cost to government of borrowing the money it lends to the students—and nothing more. It is far less expensive than a commercial loan, and our changes will go a long way towards ensuring the sustainability of the HELP scheme. Perhaps if this scheme had been available previously then more of those on the other side of this chamber would have studied commerce or economics, and the disastrous debts such as those we were left with last September would not have happened. I do not recall any election material from last year's election that said they promised to leave such debt. In fact, didn't they promise four years of surplus? Talk about broken promises! Let us keep things in perspective. The challenge of change that has been left to this government is a direct consequence of severe mismanagement by the previous government and the revenue from Mr and Mrs Taxpayer, our family businesses and our international investors. They squandered the money and borrowed more. It is shameful.
Another reform this package incorporates is the introduction of new HELP repayment thresholds. When you have a HELP debt currently, you are required to pay back that debt as additional taxation once you earn over $53,000 a year. Between $53,000 and $60,000, you pay back at the rate of four per cent of your income. The amount you pay back every year as a proportion of your income then increases with your income on a tiered system up to a maximum of eight per cent right up to an income of $99,000. This reform package introduces a new lower level—-a two per cent HELP debt payment—and it kicks in at just over $50,000. Let me repeat: the only part of the repayment system is a two per cent HELP repayment threshold, and that is the only change we are bringing in. This is not a brand-new payback system; it has been in place for some time, under governments on both sides of politics. It goes quite some distance towards assisting in timely payback of student debts. We are slightly reducing the payment threshold, but in doing so we are cutting the total payment amount by about half.

It is important to put the changes to HELP into perspective. Australia’s HELP debt increased from around $16 billion in 2008 to more than $30 billion in 2013. In the last year alone the government provided about $5 billion in HELP loans alone. This will be $10 billion in 2017. And no-one needs a degree to understand that this is completely unsustainable; money does not grow on trees. This government is reforming the HELP scheme to make it affordable and sustainable and, most of all, a scheme that still looks after the most disadvantaged in our community. Our reforms mean that no student will need to pay a dollar up-front to go to university and no-one will be asked to repay their debt until they are earning at least $50,638 by 2016-17.

Fee deregulation is necessary to ensure that universities can still access the resources they need. Changes in fees will be a direct result of demand and university policy. Some institutions may increase fees, yet other fees may be reduced. Fee deregulation means that providers will be required to compete on price and quality. New competition among providers will keep many fees down. As a former high school science teacher I know that university attendance is often determined by family experiences and aspirations that are set in the early childhood years. The educational experience, the family’s expectations and, even more importantly, a person’s economic background while growing up may affect potential attendance at university or even the aspiration to attend.

As I mentioned earlier, at the end of my high school years I was accepted to the University of New South Wales in medicine. However, when I looked at the cost of moving from Woodford in the Blue Mountains to Sydney and the cost of texts and other materials, there was no way I could afford such a course, so I accepted a teachers scholarship. I had already given up on the idea of forensics or architecture, having been told that despite my outstanding results the companies did not employ women on cadetships. Thank goodness that attitude has changed. However, with these reforms, students of any gender and any socioeconomic background can choose the course that they are most interested in. They can invest in their own future. We have expanded opportunity horizons, and I am 100 per cent in support as I know from firsthand experience how much a cheap loan would have meant to me.

This package of reforms is about true equality of opportunity for all Australians, regardless of background, disadvantage or gender. Unlike the Labor Party, we believe that reform is more than just robbing Peter to pay Paul, or even robbing our grandchildren of tomorrow for a
media grab today for populist expenditure. We on this side believe that for true reform of our universities and higher education sector we need to do more than talk about an allocation of imaginary Rudd dollars for students and universities. We need a plan, we need a vision, and we need a government with the guts to prosecute the reform argument. I remind the House of a simple fact: over the working lifetime of the average university graduate, they are likely to earn more than a million dollars than someone without a degree. Right now, we have a chance to open the door of opportunity to so many more Australians. Let's make the most of our national future and also help our students to make the most of theirs.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (12:30): After 14 hours of debate, I move:

That the motion be put.

Division required [12:34]

(The Speaker—The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ......................82
Noes ......................55
Majority ................27

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Simpkins, LXL

AYE
AYES

Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bird, SL
Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Clare, JD
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Conroy, PM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ
Griffin, AP
Hall, JG (teller)
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Jones, SP
King, CF
Leigh, AK
Macklin, JG
MacTiernan, AJGC
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Owens, J
Parke, M
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Pipilis, BF
Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thomson, KJ
Vanvakkinou, M
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.
The SPEAKER (12:39): The question now is that the bill be read a second time.
The House divided. [12:40]

(The Speaker—The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ................. 82
Noes .................. 55
Majority .............. 27

**AYES**

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambarno, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hockey, JB
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

**NOES**

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General was announced recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the bill.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (12:42): It is an absolute shame that the government will not debate this legislation before the House. Members on both sides of the House have been gagged from expressing their opinion. The member for Chisholm, who has so many university students, lecturers and workers in her electorate, is not able to properly debate this bill. This government is scared of scrutiny, it is scared of transparency and it is shameful that this government will not properly debate this bill.

I was not able to fit some very concerning elements into my 15-minute speech and so I would like to draw the House's attention to Commonwealth scholarships. Many on that side of the House have bragged about how revolutionary Commonwealth scholarships are, but it takes me back to the era of Menzies, which had similar scholarships. The big difference between the Menzies government and this government is that the Commonwealth paid for the scholarships in Menzies' era, but this government is not putting one cent into the Commonwealth scholarships. They have taken the naming rights but are not putting their money where their mouth is. These Commonwealth scholarships are about hiving profits off
other students. They are about students paying higher fees. The bill makes the assumption that students will not only pay for the costs of their course but also pay significantly more, and that money is then provided for these Commonwealth scholarships.

This is an unfair system. It does not allow us to have an equitable system which ensures opportunity for all. Of course, there are a number of other nasty elements in the bill and one of them is the real interest rates that will not only apply to new students. The Commonwealth is breaking its commitment, its agreement, with many, many other students that already have a HECS debt. The parliamentary secretary, at the desk today, highlighted how many Western Australians will actually have to face real interest rates. When they did their degree they had no concept that the terms of their agreement with the Commonwealth would be changed. They had no concept when they did their degree, no concept at the election, and no mention of this whatsoever.

It is absolutely appalling that this government is abandoning so many of those students who have completed their degree and incurred a HECS debt in good faith. Now the Commonwealth is reneging on that deal. Of course, it could not happen in any other place in our society where someone could provide you with a loan and then say, 'Oh, you thought it was a fixed interest rate, but, of course, it is not and, indeed, we are going to up that interest rate quite significantly.' This is such flawed legislation before the House and it is, of course, very, very disappointing that the minister and the government could not tolerate hearing any more of the debate. They could not tolerate it and did not like to hear all the concerns of the Australian people which the Labor Party was bringing to this chamber.

We will continue to fight against these changes. We believe these changes are incredibly bad for the country. We believe these changes are very bad for middle- and low-income earners, for mature aged students, for a whole range of people that had a dream to go to university. Of course, that dream has now been dashed by this government. We will continue to fight in the community against these changes and to raise awareness. But we do not have to fight very hard because everyone that I speak to knows how bad these changes are. It does not matter if they are parents, if they are teachers, if they principals, or if they are grandparents. These changes, people know deep in their heart, are unfair and are un-Australian.

I would urge the government to throw this package out; dump the package. Start again and look at something that is constructive for the Australian people, for our universities, to ensure that equity and access to higher education is something that every young person with the smarts can aspire to.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (12:47): I rise to support the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill presented to the House by the Minister for Education. Let me take you to something that I have been reading, which I find interesting. It is the report, *Australia's competitiveness: reversing the slide*, by Professor Tony Makin of Griffith University. It states:

The 2013-14 *Global Competitiveness Report* has Australia ranked 21st, outside the top 20 most competitive countries in the world for the first time.

If further states:

The WEF measure scores and ranks countries across a range of economic indicators for a set of so-called 'pillars' that are thought to drive economic growth. These pillars are individual economies' institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and education, product market
efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation.

... ... ...

Australia's economic ranking has seriously deteriorated since the turn of the century.

... ... ...

In the early 2000s, Australia was ranked in the top 10 most competitive countries in the world. The report also says that we have now been overtaken by New Zealand, who has come in at 18th on that ranking in the 2013-14 report, up five places from the previous year.

If we are serious about the economic wellbeing of this country and the skills that are required, then the education reform proposed by the minister in this bill gives us the opportunity to allow universities to have some unfettered freedom to look at the market forces that prevail in terms of courses. I find it fascinating that, when you read some of the higher education material, to have 29 schools of nursing, across this nation, there are niches that need to be considered in the way in which we skill and develop the young people for the future.

In my first speech in the House I spoke about a couple of things that go to the heart of these reforms and I want to take a moment to quote that speech:

I used education as the way to change my life to get to where I am now and I believe that a quality education is the key to success for any young Australian.

I went through higher education at a time when it was not funded. I used a Commonwealth scholarship. As a country kid I enrolled, after receiving a Commonwealth scholarship, and then, through that process, developed a career pathway that gave me opportunities.

Higher education is important, but it is important in the sense that, if Australia is going to shift its rankings in the economic climate in which we sit, then it is important that we develop the courses that will enable the skilling of young people to push this country to another level in a way that positions us far better economically in the world. All of us have become so used to the lifestyle that we have, and our universities, themselves, support it. When I read about the universities in Australia, the peak body representing Australia's universities calls on the parliament to support the deregulation of Australian universities with changes to the government proposals that will ensure affordability for students and taxpayers.

I would hope that all of us would transcend the politics, the scaremongering, and the examplating that I have heard from speakers because, whilst higher education is important, it is equally important that the reforms enable us as a country to provide the diversity of career pathways that will be needed to take us into a future in which there is a need for adaptability, and a need for us to develop the talent and skill of young Australians who are still coming through. If we reflect back for a moment to 30 years ago, the jobs that existed 30 years ago no longer. We cannot continue to teach today for tomorrow with yesterday's practices. We have to consider the opportunities that reforms will give universities to position us in the competitive market.

When I was overseas I had the privilege of looking at the university world in the United Arab Emirates. The key message I got from each of those universities, in talking with those who were heading the universities, was the freedom for diversity and opportunity to do some unique things outside the constraints of their home countries and to provide courses that enabled young people to go into the next century.
This is a bill that I commend the minister for, because it is time that we had reform. The _Crossroads_ report of the previous government some two parliaments ago did not achieve the full reforms required. As a pro-chancellor at Edith Cowan University at the time I had hoped that we would have gone much further.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (12:52): Like almost everything the Abbott government has done in its first year, the changes proposed to our higher education system in this bill, the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, are more about achieving the government's ideological agenda than simply finding savings. This legislation proposes a radical shift in the way our universities and higher education institutions are funded and the ability of all people to access affordable tertiary education. This is no more apparent than in my electorate of Chisholm, where more than 50,000 students currently study at Monash University's Clayton campus—the largest university campus in the country—at Deakin's Burwood campus and at Box Hill Institute of TAFE. All of these institutions will be grossly affected by this legislation, as will the numerous academics who call my electorate home. I have more PhDs per square metre than anybody should have!

This legislation delivers a $5.8 billion cut to Commonwealth funding for universities—a cut of up to 37 per cent for many degrees—and cuts $174 million from research and training programs. Everyone on this side of the parliament understands that university education is not free. I got my first degree without any HECS and I got my second, my Master of Commerce—though if you listened to those opposite it would seem that we do not have anybody on this side of the fence with training in economics—from Melbourne University, which I paid for. I understand HECS and the nuances of it. Nobody on this side thinks that university education is free. But this legislation takes away the aspirational opportunities from many in our community to even aspire to look at going to university.

As someone with a learning disability, I would have had no hope of getting a scholarship to go to university. My older brother and sister went through school on full scholarships, but my parents said to me, 'Don't even bother sitting; you won't pass'—and I would not have passed. Indeed, when I went to sit my HSC, my school told me I was going to fail and I sat my HSC orally. I would never have got entrance into a university on a scholarship. So should I have been denied? This is what people do not look at. They do not drill down to what this will mean.

This legislation will allow student fees for every single course at university to rise. We will see $100,000 degrees. Do not quibble at that—that is what we are going to see. It will allow non-university higher education providers to pop up and get access to per-student subsidies at 70 per cent of the rate in public universities. We already know the impact of this sort of change. We have seen it in Victoria in the TAFE sector. The TAFE sector has suffered because of the same sorts of changes, where funding is provided to full-profit institutions. In addition, these institutions will not be assessed by TEQSA by the time this is up and running. So where is the quality assurance in all this? It has gone as well.

This legislation also applies a real interest rate of up to six per cent for not only new but also existing HECS people. People who are already struggling to get housing loans—because you have to declare your HECS debt when you apply for a housing loan—are going to find it harder and harder. Everyone with children at home who are currently 22, just imagine—they are going to be there until they are 30. That is because the ability to progress
in life will be put off due to them being saddled with this debt—this debt that will be higher than any credit card debt they will ever experience in their lives. It will be higher than the cost of their first home.

These changes are the epitome of unfairness. They rob our universities of much-needed funds and force dramatically higher costs onto anybody who may seek a higher education. That puts us on a path to an Americanised system—a system that does not provide choice; a system that provides a lesser evil. This will not provide competition—and it certainly will not provide competition in regional areas. It will put the big universities against the small universities. Someone from a lower socio-demographic will choose no university—not a cheaper university.

This is not about ensuring and protecting the quality of higher education in this country; it is simply about privatising it. Deakin University Vice-Chancellor Jane den Hollander said:

Our current and future students will be concerned about fee deregulation, what that means for their futures and how they will manage; our staff will be equally concerned about what competition from the private providers actually means, how research funding will fare and what the implications are for the future of the academy if PhD students are required to pay fees. And we need to think of these matters in the context of the other implications for all of us as citizens of Australia. These matters are connected.

She went on to say that being a vice-chancellor at the moment was like being ‘a canary going down the mine shaft to test the unintended consequences of this policy.’ We are all victims of the unintended consequences of this policy, because education is not only an individual achievement—it is for the benefit of all society. *(Time expired)*

Mr WILKIE (Denison) *(12:57)*: We are a clever country and we are a rich country. Surely we are a clever enough country to understand the value of having the world’s best education system. Surely we are a rich enough country to have the world’s best funded education system. But instead we now have had a succession of governments that have not and are not addressing education, particularly tertiary education, funding as well as we possibly can. The problem actually starts with the previous government, where they ripped $4 billion out of the tertiary sector—so much money in fact that our universities are now underfunded by some $1 billion a year. And now we have these reforms being pushed by the current government which are just going to compound problems for students, particularly disadvantaged students and female students, and compound the problems for smaller universities, particularly regional universities.

These reforms will be unfair to students and will result in dearer courses across the board. They will result in university students having to pay more for their course when they do their course and a hell of a lot more by the time they finish paying off their course—if only because of the changes to the interest rate that will apply to the debt. Adding to that, they will have to start paying off their debt much, much sooner. So students will have to pay more for their course, they will have to start paying off their course sooner and they will ultimately have to pay a lot more for their course. That will fundamentally hurt disadvantaged students.

It will also hurt women, in particular. When you look at their professional profile, you see that some will go to uni, start work, drop out of the workforce to perhaps start a family and then re-enter the workforce later on in their life. But while they are out of the workforce the interest is still accumulating. So they will end up having this debt the whole of their working
life—and, conceivably, even beyond it. It is not like a scholarship is going to help any of these people out. Under these reforms, there will be fewer scholarships available.

These reforms will also hurt smaller universities. It is fine for the big eight to say that these reforms are fine and they support them. But what about the vast majority of our universities that are in regional areas and have campuses in regional areas? Take my own university as a case in point. We have three campuses. We have a campus in Hobart, a smaller campus in Launceston and an even smaller campus in Burnie. The University of Tasmania will be hit very hard by these reforms. If these reforms become the law of the land, the University of Tasmania will have to axe a number of courses—certainly the courses that do not pay for themselves and are not profitable. The University of Tasmania is at very real risk of having to shut down the Burnie campus and even the Launceston campus because both of them run at a loss and are subsidised by cross-payments from the Hobart campus. In a small community like Tasmania, not only are the students being hammered by dear courses that will be more difficult to pay off over their term, but we are likely to have access to fewer courses and fewer campuses.

These are some of the reasons why these reforms are fundamentally unfair and cruel. They will disproportionately impact upon disadvantaged students and universities in regional and rural areas such as Hobart and Tasmania. This is another sign of a government that is cruel. We saw it in the budget—a miserable piece of work which disproportionately impact on low-income and disadvantaged people. And we will now see it in these tertiary reforms, if they become the law of the land. We can only hope that the Senate and, in particular, the crossbenchers in the Senate have the good sense to understand that our universities are already chronically underfunded to the tune of $1 billion a year and that, if these reforms go through the Senate, it will compound the funding shortfall and compound the problem is terribly. It will have a disproportionate effect on students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds and a disproportionate effect on universities in regional and country areas. They should not listen to the big eight. The big eight will do very, very nicely out of this, thank you very much. But the vast majority of universities and university students will be hammered. I will vote against these reforms and I call on senators also to vote against these reforms. (Time expired)

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (13:02): This debate around higher education reform is a critical one for our nation. I have been listening very carefully to the points raised by those opposite. I think it is critically important at this time that we separate fact from fiction. There are three issues that I would like to address in my speech to the House today. The first relates to the claim about fairness, the second relates to the claim about the Americanisation of our higher education system, and the third relates to increased access to higher education. It surprises me that seemingly quite rational people have fallen for the claim that the universality of our higher education system is dead as a result of the deregulation of our higher education sector. Their well-meaning concerns stems from the fact that they think the poor will somehow miss out. But they are wrong.

We are right to be concerned about the poor, but it is wrong to think that the changes made in the budget make it harder for the poor to receive access to high-quality education and the chance at a better life. The reverse is true. For starters, Australian taxpayers—and, by the way, this is not the poor—contribute 60 per cent of the cost of the tuition fees for students.
Students currently only cover around 40 per cent of the cost of their education through the Higher Education Loan Program, or HELP. Despite paying only 40 per cent of the cost of their education, students who graduate with a bachelor degree boost their earnings by more than $1 million when compared with someone who finished year 12 but has no post-school qualifications. These are not my figures. These are the figures quoted by the shadow assistant treasurer, Andrew Leigh. He suggested in his book *Battlers and Billionaires* that this was an area ripe for reform. Deregulation of fees is something that we need to do—to make it more fair for the Australian taxpayer. That is why we have focused on rebalancing this equation, through the deregulation of fees, from around 60:40 to 40:60—the other way around—on average.

There have been a number of claims also made that these reforms will somehow lead to the Americanisation of our higher education sector. But is the comparison with the US remotely analogous? The answer to that is: absolutely not. We have to understand that, unlike Australian students, American students are not subsidised by the taxpayer. American students who do not have finance and do not have the ability to finance their degree actually take out a student loan. These are commercial loans with commercial interest rates, not government loans with capped interest as they are in Australia. American students start paying back their loan when they start to earn an income—unlike students in Australia, who only start paying back their government loan when they are earning more than $50,000 per year.

There are a number of people across the chamber who have a rather elitist view of our higher education sector. They believe it is all about university education. If you truly believe in the transformative impact of education, it is clear that diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degree courses at registered non-university higher education institutions can also improve knowledge and improve skills that lead to better job prospects. Under the new budget arrangements the government's HELP loan scheme will apply to students wanting to undertake this sort of study. This will assist around 80,000 additional students to gain access to higher education.

The people who will be most advantaged by this change are some of the most disadvantaged in our community, giving them access where they had limited or no access before. It also gives more choice to students who previously may not have even thought about higher education as an option.

We in this place have to make serious decisions for the long-term benefit of Australians, not only today but also for future generations. For the system to be truly fair and to be truly universal we need to make sure that our higher education system is constantly improving and not slipping behind as we have seen with recent world rankings. It needs to be strong, it needs to be robust, it needs to be universal and it needs to be fair. That is what our higher education reforms deliver and that is why I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (13:07): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That the motion be now put.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): The question is that the motion be put.
The House divided. [13:12]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 81
Noes ...................... 55
Majority ............... 26

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

Noes

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bird, SL
Bowen, CE
Brodthman, G
Burke, AE
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (13:18): by leave—I thank the Manager of Opposition Business in the House. I apologise for the confusion over the timing of the consideration in detail. He had acted entirely properly throughout the entire process and over an unfortunate confusion that was cut short by a few minutes, and I now move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:21): I rise today to commend the Prime Minister on this very important and significant bill, the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption)
Bill. This legislation clearly demonstrates this government is committed to adoption reform to enable more people to find families. As the Prime Minister and many adoption advocates have highlighted, adoption reform is not simple. This is not a silver bullet but it is a step in the right direction. For too long adoption has been in the too-hard basket. It has been too hard to adopt and as a result adoption has been a policy no-go zone. As the Prime Minister said when introducing the legislation to the House:

It should not be that way—because adoption is all about giving children a better life.

For many adoption is about completing a family. I am so extremely pleased to welcome this legislation. The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens under a bilateral adoption arrangement between Australia and countries that are not party to the Hague convention on intercountry adoption.

The government wants to make it clearer to adopt when it is in the best interests of the child. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past but we do want to remove the red tape and reduce the delays, which do not benefit anyone. It is a red tape that impacts on children who legitimately need a safe and loving home and parents who love them, and on Australians who dream of providing a home with the joyful laugh of children.

I would like to highlight some of the challenges Australia and the world at large currently face with intercountry adoption. These were outlined quite succinctly in the Report of the interdepartmental committee on the intercountry adoption by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, released in April this year. This report has driven these changes we debate today. The report notes that the median processing time from approval of an applicant in Australia to placement of a child has increased from 37 months—about three years—in 2007-08 to 61 months—about five years—in 2012-13. In reducing red tape, it is the hope of the Prime Minister and the government that we can reduce this time, giving more certainty to people engaged in this process. From speaking with many people throughout my life who are considering adoption or have experienced it firsthand, one thing that is clear is that adoption takes an emotional toll on the individual and relationships.

In preparing this report, correspondents writing to the Prime Minister about their personal experience of intercountry adoption say they have experienced anxiety about whether, as prospective adoptive parents, they will qualify to adopt a child from overseas; whether a child will be available from a particular country or countries; if the child has special needs, whether the nature of the child's special needs affect the child's prospects of obtaining a visa to enter Australia; whether enough help is available for the parents to adopt a child with profound special needs; and how long the process might take. It is important that we attempt to overcome some of these challenges.

As the Prime Minister said: 'This will not be a simple process, but this bill attempts to address some of these challenges. In my opinion, any measure to reduce the 10-year waiting period is a good step.' One submission to the report wrote:

… Over twelve months ago, I made an enquiry regarding intercountry adoption. FACS would not even accepts an expression of interest for 12 months … Finally 3 months ago, they accepted it and said that I would be eligible to adopt but that I would need to wait for a pre-adoption seminar to run before I could lodge a formal application … still no news. According to FACS officers they haven’t had enough people interested in adoption to make it worthwhile running a seminar … In the meantime I have
become ineligible for the Colombia program … and it is likely that we will time-out of eligibility for
the India program …

It is heartbreaking that government bureaucracy and red tape could stand in the way of
completing a family. This is the personal experience of local pastors Ric and Naomi Burrell
from Orchard Hills, who explained to me the experience of the process of adopting a child
from overseas. In their words: ‘The kids just need a better deal.’ According to them, every day
is agonising, from the day you are advised you have been approved to adopt a child until the
process is finalised and you can begin to bring your child home. It is just agonising. Ric and
Naomi applaud the Prime Minister for the measures he is taking to simplify the process,
saying: ‘Every step we take that reduces the time taken for us to process these adoptions here
in Australia is to be welcomed.’ They explained how, even once the paperwork was finalised,
internationally they still needed to obtain a passport in their new baby’s country of origin, an
exit visa and a visa to bring their child home to Australia—and on an international passport,
instead of a new Australian passport.

When we heard that these amendments will allow for Australian citizenship and Australian
passports to be obtained before leaving the child’s birth country, they expressed how much of
a relief this will be to families who adopt children into their care in a range of circumstances.
As previous speakers have detailed, under the amendments to be made in this bill children
will be granted citizenship as soon as adoption is finalised. They will then be able to travel to
Australia on an Australian passport with their new families, as Australian citizens. I too am
extremely pleased that these measures we discuss today will address the concerns and
challenges experienced by pastors Ric and Naomi Burrell, and the challenges faced by
families across Australia who are seeking to adopt.

To conclude, I would like to quote the Prime Minister, who summed up the intent of this
bill in his address to the House:

… I hope that this bill and my government’s other reforms to intercountry adoption will provide
significant new hope for parents without children and significant new hope for children without parents.
The government appreciates that this will not be a simple process, but we are determined to
provide relief and reduce waiting times for families who need to adopt from overseas. It is a
noble effort. It was only about a week-and-a-half ago that I was at a barbecue with Ric and
Naomi Burrell, and they were talking about some of their friends who are still going through
the process. Some of these children had to wait an extra three months; some of these people
had to wait an extra 18 months. You are talking about knowing that, at three months of age,
this baby is going to be yours, but you cannot take this baby home until they are two years
old. These are some of the most formative years of a young infant’s life and I think that, in
many ways, to deny the family and the child that crucial time to bond with their parents is
possibly one of the cruellest things you can do to families. One of the most humane parts of
this bill will allow babies to go home sooner so families can be united and which will provide
a family unit to give these little babies a new chance in life. This is such a noble bill and I
commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Superannuation

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:30): Over the last two days, we have seen this government open a new front on its war on young people in Australia. Not content with destroying the dreams of students around the country through plans to burden students with ever-growing $100,000 degrees, this week the Palmer-Abbott government passed legislation to cut the retirement savings of young workers in this country by tens of thousands of dollars. A dodgy deal between 'Tricky Tony' and 'Capricious Clive' now means that the superannuation contributions of young Australians will be frozen at 9.5 per cent for the next seven years.

On top of this, they have abolished the low-income super contribution, taking a further $500 a year out of the pockets of those who need it most for their retirement funds. These cuts will hit young workers hardest. Analysis undertaken by Industry Super Australia shows that, while a worker aged 50 and earning $80,000 a year will lose a total of $15,310 from their super at retirement as a result of these changes, a worker aged 30 will lose over $31,000—twice the amount—from their retirement savings. To add insult to injury, the Abbott government has launched this attack on the retirement savings of hardworking young Australians, while at the same time scrapping Labor's 15 per cent concessional tax rate on earnings above $100,000.

You will never see a clearer example of whom this government stands for. Hardworking young Australians wanting to save for their retirement get the back of the Treasurer's hand and an insult about squirrelling away their savings and, meanwhile, millionaires get tax cuts. This is an arrogant, out-of-touch government. It does not know what working Australians need, and as soon as we see the back of it the better.

Small Business

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:31): Small business is the engine room of the economy and it is a major source of jobs. It encapsulates the spirit of having a go and being prepared to put your ideas on the line, making your contribution to the local economy. I recently had the pleasure of welcoming to Boothby the Honourable Bruce Billson, Minister for Small Business, to host a forum for local businesses. I would like to thank the local small business owners who came to that forum to ask the minister questions, share their concerns and experiences, and give him feedback about how a Coalition government can help make running their businesses easier and more productive.

We then visited the local Mitcham Square shopping centre to speak directly with local business owners. We visited the local bookstore, Mostly Books; the fruit and veg shop, Banana Boys; the cafe; and the Mitcham newsagent. They are all very different types of business, but all have to manage employees, payroll, tax, regulatory compliance and every other aspect of their business with very limited resources. One thing was very clear: the local business owners at the forum and shopping centre seemed grateful that there was someone in cabinet who understood them and whose job it is to be their voice in Canberra. With the Minister for Small Business, they have a minister with direct experience of the difficulties in running a small business who can talk to them on their level and is genuinely interested in their feedback. The government and the Minister for Small Business understand small business and the vital contribution the sector makes to the community—(Time expired)
Superannuation

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:33): This is a government of the top end of town, by the top end of town and for the top end of town. Nowhere is this more evident than in their budget and that dirty, dodgy deal that they did with Clive Palmer over superannuation. They said over and over again that there would be no surprise changes to super and that there would be no deals done with the minor parties. This is another ambush of good people who are just trying to make ends meet and save for their retirement. It says it all about this government in a year of lies and broken promises.

When you go through the list of promises they have kept and broken, you will notice that the only promises they keep are the ones they made to Gina Rinehart. They are a wholly owned subsidiary of the most powerful people in our economy. The latest atrocity is like a funds transfer: straight out of the super accounts of nine million workers and straight into the bank account of Gina Rinehart and the other big miners. When it comes to the low-income super contribution, it comes straight out of the pockets of 28,300 people in my electorate on low incomes and it goes straight into the superannuation balances of 16,000 wealthiest people right around Australia. This is part of a calculated, deliberate attempt to make Australia less fair and to make it less equal. It is another attack on people on low and middle incomes and we will not forget it.

Rotary

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (13:34): I wish to acknowledge today all of the students who recently took part in two public speaking competitions hosted by Rotary clubs in my electorate of Deakin. I applaud the Rotary clubs for providing these young people with a chance to practice an important skill and I was delighted to be able support both events. Congratulations to the students who took part in the Rotary Club of Croydon competition at Melba College, including: Caleb Cowell, Claire Hurley, Darcy Morgan, Scarlett Gooding, Merryn Rowlands, Peerson Lynch, Matthew Lucas, Dylan Maxworth, Nicholas Tellus, Tiana Ingram, Olivia Gersh, Charlee Rennie, Jack Clifton, Joshua Tilker, Nick Kokkolis, Bailey Watson-Karpinski, Kyla Naismith, Charlie Bartlett, Lucy Coucher, Emma Williamson and Maddie Monument. I also want to congratulate all the students who participated in the Rotary Club of Forest Hill's contest at Parkmore Primary School. The students included: Ulani Berman, Paige Davidson, Charlotte Edwards, Jordan Manos, Briget Ewert, Connor Downie, Mahydia Hosseinion, Charlotte Hammond, Saurish Sharma and Zoe Anthonis. Well done to all the students. They were both outstanding nights. Again, congratulations to both Rotary clubs.

Superannuation

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:36): On 6 April 2013, Prime Minister Abbott said:

Our clear, categoric commitment to the Australian people is that we are not going to make unexpected, adverse changes to superannuation.

Again, we have another broken promise from this government, misleading Australians in a sneaky, duplicious deal with the Palmer United Party that will cost our economy and cost workers, particularly low-paid workers. By freezing the increase in compulsory superannuation from nine to 12 per cent and abolishing the low-income superannuation
The government is making it harder for low-income families to save for their retirement. A typical 25-year-old worker on $55,000 a year will now have $9,500 less in their super account by 2025. National superannuation contributions will be $128 billion less over that period.

The most deceitful aspect of this is the abolition of the low income superannuation contribution. Low-income workers—3.6 million people, 2.1 million of whom are women—will pay more tax on their superannuation. So the government is giving a tax break to nine wealthy mining companies but asking 3.6 million low-income workers to pay more tax. How is that a positive reform for our economy? It is not. It will discourage retirement savings and it is a dirty deal that will hurt families and reduce retirement savings.

**National Literacy and Numeracy Week**

*Mrs McNAMARA* (Dobell) (13:37): Last week I joined with students at Tuggerah Public School to celebrate National Literacy and Numeracy Week and to participate in Read for Australia. Tuggerah Public School may be known as 'the little school on the hill' but they definitely have a big heart.

The week celebrates learning and raises awareness of the importance of reading, writing and maths skills. Read for Australia saw parents, teachers, students and school community members take part in a simultaneous reading of the book *Sunday Chutney* by Aaron Blabey. Congratulations to Mrs Duke for her outstanding reading of *Sunday Chutney*, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the students at Tuggerah Public School.

One of the many privileges of my role is spending time in our local schools, meeting with teachers, students and parents, and witnessing firsthand the latest teaching techniques and the outstanding school communities we have in my electorate on the Central Coast. In the age of iPads, iPhones and e-books, it is extremely important that children still experience the joy of reading a book.

National Literacy and Numeracy Week encourages families to embrace the benefits of reading and to cultivate a culture of enjoying books at home. Every day, whether it is in our schools or in our homes, we should all celebrate books, numeracy and literacy with our children.

In closing, I would like to thank the students of Tuggerah Public School, Principal Evan Campbell and Assistant Principal Chad Tsakissiris for welcoming me to their school and joining me in celebrating National Literacy and Numeracy Week.

**Superannuation**

*Ms RYAN* (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:39): Yesterday the member for Fairfax presented the government with a birthday cake and our Prime Minister blew out the candles. Together, they ensured that nine mining companies would pay less tax and nine million Australians would have less superannuation.

The deal done yesterday, like so many things delivered by the Abbott government in their first year in government, hurts families. It kills off the schoolkids bonus to 1.3 million families—a possible $15,000 hit over the school life of a two-child family. It kills off the low-income superannuation contribution and puts off the rise in superannuation contributions to...
the never-never. What is very obvious here is that this government has its hand in the pockets of Australians. This money will not be in workers' pockets. This deal means that workers will have less in their retirement funds. If they are low-wage earners they will be doubly hit—the most disadvantaged again doing the heavy lifting for our Treasurer.

This deal has also meant a hit to small business with changes to tax arrangements. This will be a significant cost to small businesses across Australia, with the government cutting more than $5 billion of direct tax assistance. The Prime Minister cares more about sneaky backroom deals than the retirement incomes of millions of people. What is clear here is that those opposite and Clive Palmer care more for themselves and their mining mates than they do for hardworking Australians.

The member for Fairfax saved nothing but himself yesterday. He saved himself and the mining companies millions.

**Petrie Electorate: Mousetrap Theatre**

*Mr HOWARTH* (Petrie) (13:40): I would like to acknowledge a local theatre in my electorate, the Mousetrap Theatre, for the sense of community it brings to the Redcliffe Peninsula. The theatre encourages locals of all ages to join in plays and pantomimes, providing its audiences with entertainment and its volunteer actors with a chance to develop creativity and confidence. I would like to congratulate the theatre on its recent production, *It's a long way to Tipperary*, which I had the pleasure of attending on the opening night.

The play told the story of World War I through the songs of the period, including parody words written to popular music. I was pleased to be able to secure funding for Mousetrap Theatre for this play, through the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program.

I would like to congratulate the volunteer members at the Mousetrap Theatre, particularly the president, Karen Matthews; secretary, Tanja Stanley; treasurer, Len Thomas; senior vice-president, Ian Warnett; and junior vice-president, Colin Daugherty. I would also like to acknowledge Councillor James Houghton, who helped bring the performance come together and also acted in the play.

I say 'thank you' to the Mousetrap Theatre for recognising the significance of the Anzac Centenary and the service of Australian men and women during World War I, and for sharing this important part of history with local families and seniors.

**Superannuation**

*Ms BRODTMANN* (Canberra) (13:42): Before the election, Tony Abbott said, 'Our clear, categorical commitment to the Australian people is that we are not going to make unexpected, adverse changes to superannuation.' But, thanks to the Abbott government, a 25-year-old earning a typical wage of $55,000 will now have about $9,500 less in their retirement savings by 2025.

Because of the Abbott government, national contributions to superannuation will now be $128 billion lower by 2025. If these are not adverse changes to superannuation, I do not know what are. And, like so many of the Abbott government's policies, the decision to delay increasing the super guarantee until 2025 will have the biggest impact on those who can least afford it: low- and middle-income earners and women. Women live longer than men, earn less than men, take more time out of the workforce and ultimately retire with less superannuation. According to the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, the average Australian
woman retires with around half the super balance of the average man. This decision by the Abbott government is bad for women.

This week is Money Smart Week, but there is nothing smart about the Abbott government denying a comfortable retirement to millions of Australians. This is a disgraceful attack on the retirement savings of Australian workers from a Prime Minister who has never believed in superannuation; from a Prime Minister who believes that compulsory superannuation is one of the biggest con jobs ever.

Russia: Media

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (13:43): I wish to raise my concern about the activities of RT, or Russian television. RT is a soft-power, English language, government controlled media outlet. Seven hundred journalists and an estimated budget of 800 million euros a year helps this propaganda machine reach 550 million people by television. In 2013, YouTube use of RT material exceeded a billion hits. We should be concerned that it could be accessed by a fifth of all subscription TV subscribers. In 2011, after the BBC, RT was the next most watched foreign channel, and in 2012 it was the third most watched in the UK. BBC and Deutsche Welle have Russian language services but they have limited coverage. There is nothing on the scale of RT’s broadcasting to the west going back the other way. This is a great concern, as the English- and United States-accented RT reporters are reading the views of the Kremlin out to viewers as the news.

I know that there is a rising level of concern across Europe and there is talk of establishing a Russian language television media outlet that can broadcast an alternative but balanced view of events on, for example, the Ukraine. It would target mainly Russian-speaking viewers in the former Soviet republics. Such a station could offer employment to Russian and Russian-speaking journalists dissatisfied with the increasing levels of censorship from the government of President Putin.

I therefore encourage EU countries to establish a pan-European Russian language TV channel as soon as possible and I ask that the Australian government provide any possible assistance to that TV station.

Indi Electorate: Renewable Energy

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:45): I believe that rural and regional Australia holds the key to renewable energy. In my electorate of Indi, individuals, communities and businesses are leading the way by installing solar and other renewable energy systems. Fifteen per cent of households in Indi are already running on solar power.

In the past week, 54 of my constituents have contacted me to express their concern about the future of the renewable energy target—that it may be reduced or abolished. Solar and non-solar households have all voiced their support for this bipartisan policy that has already provided overwhelming environmental and economic benefits.

The renewable energy target is important for business and jobs. For example, Bobbi McKibbin from Anything Solar in Wodonga, Laura and Allister Neely from Elect Solar in Wangaratta and Cameron Walker from KDEC in Albury-Wodonga have told me the target is working, and any reduction will leave many businesses stranded, with little hope of recouping their investment.
The Hon. Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, said he would like to hear the community response to the Warburton review. I warmly invite the minister to visit Indi so he can hear just how passionate people are about the renewable energy target and the good it has done—people like Matthew Charles-Jones and the wonderful community group Totally Renewable Yackandandah—(Time expired)

**Capricornia Electorate: Edward Lloyd Park**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:47): I rise to acknowledge a major makeover currently underway at Edward Lloyd Park, at Marian, in my electorate of Capricornia. This important redevelopment is worth $825,000. Marian is a small and proud community located 24 kilometres west of Mackay, in the Pioneer River valley. This is a wonderful part of the vast Capricornia region.

This park project was co-funded by the federal government and the Mackay Regional Council. The new-look park will be transformed into a colourful and modern play area and will be a great asset for the Marian community. The facelift will see modern play equipment added to the park, along with a new shade structure, picnic shelters, barbecues, a drinking fountain, new pathways and extra car parks. Some of the new equipment to be added to the park includes a climbing net and a unique rubber play slope for children.

Mackay Regional Council has expressed its appreciation to the federal government for its part in funding the project. I look forward to this facility benefiting the many families and residents in the Marian community for years to come.

**Superannuation**

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:48): Fourteen times, the Australian public was promised there would be 'no unexpected, adverse changes to superannuation', yet this week we saw an adverse change to superannuation. As a result of what that side of politics has done, $128 billion to $150 billion in national savings has been lost—as a result of the government's decision. If that is not adverse, I do not know what is.

What is the impact? You are made to work longer and get less. You are made to work till you are 70, you get less for your age pension and you get less in your superannuation. And it is an intergenerational whack. It not only hits older generations; current generations will pay too. When you have up to $150 billion less in the national savings pool that is generated by superannuation, that is less money for infrastructure; that is less money for business to invest. That means there are fewer chances of jobs and fewer chances of a better economy—as a result of what those opposite are doing.

It is clear that the savings of ordinary Australians are being affected, that the Clive and Tony make-up hug is crushing the retirement incomes of Australians, and we should not be made to pay for this.

**Barker Electorate: Meritorious Service Awards**

Mr PASIN (Barker) (13:49): I was privileged recently to see Margaret Considine and Nevin Lamont awarded Meritorious Service Awards by the Prime Minister, a rare honour bestowed upon very few people across the country.

Margaret Considine joined the Liberal Party in the early 1970s. She has served in many crucial positions for our party, none more rewarding than when she was campaign manager in
the 1979 state election, for Harold Allison, who was elected and became education minister. Margaret also served as SEC president and many times has been a member of our party's candidate review committee. When asked what her fondest memories were of her time in the party, she nominated the period we were in government in South Australia following the 1979 election. In more recent times—I am deeply humbled and surprised to say—Margaret nominated both my and Troy Bell's election to parliament as a highlight, given that we are both Mount Gambier men born and bred. Margaret's dedication to our party in Mount Gambier is beyond reproach. She is an inspiration to other branch members and a wealth of knowledge, experience and wisdom.

I also want to acknowledge Nevin Lamont for his enduring and loyal service to the Liberal Party. Nevin has been a dedicated servant of the party for over 57 years, in which time he has worked on every single federal and state campaign. Nevin is currently treasurer of the Barker FEC, Mount Gambier SEC and Mount Gambier branch. Nevin comes from impressive stock: he is the grandson of a former member for Barker, Malcolm Duncan Cameron, who served in this place from 1922 to 1934.

I wish to pay tribute to these wonderful friends who are pillars of the Mount Gambier community and of the Liberal Party. Congratulations, Margaret and Nevin.

**Superannuation**

*Ms CLAYDON* (Newcastle) (13:51): This week, the Prime Minister has betrayed tens of thousands of people in my electorate in Newcastle by freezing increases to the superannuation guarantee and by abolishing the low-income superannuation contribution. As former Prime Minister Keating, father of compulsory superannuation in Australia, said this week, the Prime Minister and Treasurer, in cahoots with the Palmer United Party, are undertaking wilful sabotage of the nation's universal savings scheme.

In his own words, the Prime Minister made a clear, categoric commitment to Australians that there would be 'no unexpected, adverse changes to superannuation' when he was in government. But his decision this week to freeze increases to super and abolish the low-income superannuation contribution can be dressed up in no other way. It is undeniably an adverse change to superannuation. The Prime Minister and the Palmer United Party have ripped away retirement savings from 3.6 million low income workers, including 2.1 million women and more than 19,000 low-income earners in Newcastle who will be stripped of the low-income superannuation contribution.

A 25-year-old in my electorate earning a typical wage of $55,000 will have about $9,500 less in their retirement superannuation savings by 2025 because of these changes. Constituents in my electorate have been contacting me about their concerns for super for months. Low-paid workers in aged care and nursing have asked me to do everything I can to save the low-income superannuation contribution and I will. *(Time expired)*

**Corangamite Electorate: Brae Restaurant**

*Ms HENDERSON* (Corangamite) (13:52): I rise to congratulate chef Dan Hunter and his staff for the amazing success they have achieved with their Birregurra restaurant Brae. In its first year of operation, it has been named the Age Good Food Guide Restaurant of the Year. Brae has also been named the New Restaurant of the Year and Regional Restaurant of the
Year in the *Gourmet Traveller* awards. What Dan and his dedicated team have achieved in such a short time is absolutely phenomenal. After his wonderful success at the Royal Mail Hotel in Dunkeld, Dan Hunter is going from strength to strength. And the people of Birregurra—a beautiful town between Geelong and Colac—are reaping the benefits. Business is up in local B&Bs and there is a real buzz about the town.

Of course in the next few years it will be even easier to dine at Brae when the federal and Victorian governments complete the duplication of the Princess Highway between Winchelsea and Colac, a project I fought very hard for and another one of the many important investments confirmed in our budget. Tourism is so important in the Corangamite electorate. With Avalon airport on our doorstep, if you want arguably the best dining experience in Australia, jump on a Jetstar flight and head to Birregurra. International visitors are also starting to flock to Brae. There are even predictions that Brae could end up being one of the top 15 restaurants in the world. So again to Brae and to Dan Hunter I say a very big ‘Congratulations!’

**Diplomatic Representation: Ukraine**

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (13:54): The decision to open an embassy in Kiev is a decision which has emerged from the long work of this parliament. Australia is diplomatically unrepresented in that part of the world, in a country of $50 million people. It is a place where the United States, Brazil, China, Indonesia and other countries in our region have diplomatic representation. Even a country of equivalent population, Malaysia, has a similar diplomatic representation. It is entirely appropriate that Australia, in the circumstances of this behaviour by Russia in Eastern Ukraine, have diplomatic representation there. We have long canvassed this issue in this parliament and I think it is an entirely appropriate response to the undemocratic behaviour we see of Mr Putin and the Russian Federation.

**Robertson Electorate: MAX Employment**

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (13:55): I am proud to raise the important work that MAX Employment is doing to help mature aged workers seek and find meaningful employment in my electorate of Robertson. MAX Employment is an employment service provider on the Central Coast. As part of their work to support older workers in our community, they are hosting a meaningful mature aged seminar on Tuesday, 16 September, at the Gosford RSL Club from 1 pm to 5 pm. It is targeted at Central Coast job seekers aged 50 years and over to help them find work that is meaningful for them, to help them use their current skills and experience and to learn new skills and perspectives. Mature age workers in my electorate of Robertson have so much to offer from their life experience and wisdom. That is why I am proud of this government's commitment to enabling more opportunities for mature aged workers throughout Australia.

Employment training and recruitment group ET Australia will also be at this event. My congratulations go to MAX Employment Gosford business manager Jodie Sainsbury, to Employment Training Australia Corporate and Public Affairs Manager Petrina Waddell and especially to Kay Ryan who, as a 71-year-young full-time employee of MAX Employment, is an outstanding example of the skills, experience and contributions that mature age workers bring and make to the workplace. It will be a great chance to discuss the government's Restart Program, where a new wage subsidy of up to $10,000 is available to employers willing to hire job seekers aged 50 or older.
Superannuation

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (1357): I rise to condemn the government for its shameful decision on superannuation yesterday. Obviously those opposite do not understand superannuation and the great benefits it brings to both infrastructure and to the Australian community, particularly to those who want to have a dignified retirement. We saw yesterday a betrayal in that dirty deed done dirt cheap between the government and the Palmer United Party. Obviously, the Hawke and Keating governments did so much of the heavy lifting when it comes to bringing universal access to superannuation. Those opposite bridled against it then and they have been arguing against it ever since.

This was not spoken about before the election apart from the fact that the Prime Minister, when he was the opposition leader said, 'We will not tinker with superannuation.' Have we heard anyone opposite condemn the Prime Minister for breaking his promise? No. The hypocrisy rings loud. Obviously the Labor Party gets superannuation. We know that the sacrifices were made by workers who decided to forgo wage increases so that superannuation could come in. That was a decision made by the workers of Australia. However, those opposite do not get superannuation and they have betrayed nine million Australians, who will not forget. (Time expired)

McEvoy, Mr Ted

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (13:58): I would like to recognise today Ted McEvoy, a Vietnam veteran who spent 20 years in the Royal Australian Air Force. He has spent much of his life serving others, whether in the military or in the community. Currently he and a group of 20 Australians who are 65 years and older are taking part in the Scooterbor Challenge, an event in which Ted and the rest of the group will be riding on 50cc scooters across the Nullarbor plain from Port Augusta to Perth. The trek, which is 2,400 kilometres, will begin on 9 September and will take two weeks to complete. They will be raising funds for beyondblue. In addition to partaking in the Scooterbor Challenge, Ted also goes to Vietnam every year to teach English to university students. I am proud to have someone like Ted in my electorate who lives to serve. He is the embodiment of what it means to be Australian.

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

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The SPEAKER (13:59): I call the honourable the Acting Prime Minister.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:00): Thank you, Madam Speaker—

An opposition member: Where are they?

An opposition member: They've all gone on leave.

Mr TRUSS: If you wait a moment, you will hear.

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!

Mr TRUSS: I inform the House that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Trade and Investment will be absent from question time today while they conduct a series of trade and security related meetings in India. I will answer questions on their behalf.
Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! I cannot hear what the Acting Prime Minister is saying.

Mr TRUSS: I will also answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as she is attending the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's summit in Wales.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Acting Prime Minister—

Mr TRUSS: The Treasurer will answer questions—

The SPEAKER: Acting Prime Minister, would you—

Mr TRUSS: on behalf of the Minister for Small Business—

An opposition member: He can't hear either. Don't stop him when he's on a roll!

The SPEAKER: I could not hear what the Acting Prime Minister was saying. We will have some silence so we all can hear.

Mr TRUSS: The Treasurer will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Small Business, as he attends the APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial Meeting in China.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Australia Fund

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the government's broken promises on not doing deals with minor parties. Will the Treasurer, right here, right now, rule out creating a government owned 'Australia Fund'—or a 'Palmer Piggy Bank'—as a result of the government's dirty, dirty deal with the leader of the Palmer United Party?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left, particularly the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:01): We are prepared to negotiate to get our agenda through with anyone in the Senate, including any minor party, including the Labor Party.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will desist!

Mr HOCKEY: We are happy to deal with all the minor parties, including the Labor Party, but the minor parties have different attitudes towards different policies, and we have to negotiate our way through to get the best outcome for the Australian people.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr HOCKEY: In relation to the proposal on an 'Australia Fund', which I understand is a private member's bill put forward by the member for Fairfax, let me say this. The Australian government's position in relation to these matters is very clear: we believe that industry, being in the business of—
Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield will desist—right now!

Mr HOCKEY: relying on its own enterprise, should not become reliant on taxpayer support, because ultimately industry assistance is revenue from another person. In relation to the creation of a new industry assistance bank, as is reported today, I can say to you that we will let the independent Senate committees do their job, but in principle—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist, as will the member for Wakefield—or there is no gold star!

Mr HOCKEY: But in principle we do not like the idea of such enterprises. But I can say to you one thing. I say to the Labor Party just one thing: remember Ruddbank. Oh, there's the Swannie smile! Oh, Ruddbank!

Mr Perrett: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask that the Treasurer refer to members by their correct title.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Moreton and I would remind the Treasurer to use the correct titles. Has he concluded his answer? The Treasurer still has the call and he will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr HOCKEY: Well, the former member for Griffith is not here anymore, so—

An opposition member: The member for Lilley!

Mr HOCKEY: I am sorry; the member for Lilley—my old friend the member for Lilley! I tell you what: we all hope there is no upcoming by-election in Lilley, because we want the member for Lilley to stay here for many years to come. We never want you to leave, the member for Lilley. You stay here. You are a constant reminder of the halcyon days of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin will desist!

Mr HOCKEY: And the member for Lilley is a constant reminder of Ruddbank, which was a proposal put forward by the Labor Party to set up a bank—and the first project they identified in Brisbane that would receive support from the Ruddbank went bankrupt within days. It was the coalition that saved Australia from the Ruddbank, and it will be the coalition that honours its principles in relation to these matters.

Infrastructure

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (14:05): My question is addressed to the Acting Prime Minister. Will the Acting Prime Minister update the House on the government's achievements over the last 12 months in fast-tracking vital infrastructure projects across the country? How are these achievements building a stronger economy?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:05): I thank the honourable member for his question. This is a government that was elected to deliver infrastructure, and we are getting on with the job. Already thousands of jobs have been created in building these projects, and there will be
thousands more delivered in construction, and then the stronger economy that is delivered with better infrastructure will ensure that those jobs remain and help build a bigger and better Australia. We are committed to getting on with the job.

In the communications field, for instance, the Minister for Communications has achieved more in delivering the NBN in one year than Labor did in its six. He is getting people connected. Things are really happening.

After 50 years of indecision, we have committed to the site for Sydney's second airport, the Badgerys Creek airport.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will either desist or leave! The choice is hers.

Mr TRUSS: Discussions have already begun with the Southern Cross Airports about who is going to construct this airport and the arrangements which will apply, the design and the operational arrangements.

In roads, we have got a $50 billion road program that is being rolled out right across the country. In the honourable member for Hasluck's city, the work that is being undertaken on the new port access facilities will make a real difference to the movement of freight through Perth. We are continuing and we have speeded up the work around the gateway Perth project so that it is now going to finish months ahead of the schedule that Labor had laid down, and, once more, we will be delivering more roads under that project than Labor had promised.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned!

Mr TRUSS: On the Pacific Highway: we are now working on the last major stage of that project, a 155-kilometre stretch—getting on with the job; producing the results. When it comes to the East West project in South Australia—sorry; in Melbourne—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist.

Mr TRUSS: work is developing to get that project so that contracts can be signed for an early stage. The North-South road—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!

Mr TRUSS: in South Australia, in Adelaide, where the Prime Minister has already turned the first sod, is a project underway. On the Bruce Highway, around 60 projects are either under construction or about to commence. This is a government that is delivering on infrastructure, making a real difference to Australia. Projects that would never have happened under Labor are underway, and we are determined to deliver on our commitment to be the infrastructure government.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:08): I would like to advise the House that we have with us the Rt Hon. Hugo Swire MP from the United Kingdom. He is the Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and he is together with His Excellency Mr Paul Madden CMG,
the British High Commissioner. We also have with us Mr Vincent Tarzia MP, state member for Hartley in the South Australian lower house. And we have with us in the galleries young people, students, who are here for the National Student Leadership Forum. We make all most welcome, particularly those visiting from overseas.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Infrastructure

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:09): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. I refer to the coalition’s promise to have cranes in the sky and bulldozers working on new infrastructure projects within 12 months of its election. Apart from projects that were already conceived, approved and funded by the previous Labor government, can he name one new project—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right and left!

Mr ALBANESE: originated by the coalition that has a bulldozer on it today? Where are the bulldozers? Or was this promise just bulldust?

The SPEAKER: Before I give the call to the Acting Prime Minister—

Opposition members: One—just one!

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: First and foremost, we will have silence. The member for Grayndler will go back to the dispatch box and withdraw the use of the term he used in the last part of his question as unparliamentary.

An opposition member: It’s a country term, Madam Speaker—a rural term.

The SPEAKER: It is not a parliamentary term.

Mr Albanese: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. And if I see any more single fingers in the air, they can leave immediately.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And I think the member for Chifley can be the first to leave, under 94(a).

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: He’s just lucky. The Acting Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:11): The shadow minister talks about projects that were funded by Labor. The reality is: virtually no projects were funded by Labor. When they had projects, it was easy using money that had been put aside as savings by the previous government, or it was money they had borrowed and never had any propensity to pay back.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on both sides!
Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Deputy Prime Minister just opened one—it is called the Hunter Expressway.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter knows that to be abuse of the standing orders. If it is done again he will leave immediately.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence, and that includes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Hockey: What have you done?

The SPEAKER: And the Treasurer.

Mr TRUSS: When it came to roads, Labor's funding either was borrowed money, which they had no capacity to repay—

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will leave.

Mr TRUSS: or it came from the mining tax—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will leave!

An opposition member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: 94(a).

Mr TRUSS: which did not raise any money. So there were no projects funded by Labor. All that is happening now is indeed projects that have been put on the agenda by this government, funded by this government. And I am happy to identify progress on a range of projects where work is actually underway—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler has asked his question and will remain silent.

Mr TRUSS: I mentioned in my earlier answer the North-South Corridor in Adelaide. Construction of—

The SPEAKER: The Acting Prime Minister—

Mr TRUSS: the South Road-Ashwin Parade intersection is underway, and there is earthmoving equipment on the site. It is our project.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I know that this is Thursday and the last of the two sitting weeks, and I know that behaviour usually deteriorates seriously, but we will have no more of it today. We will have some silence and respect for the Acting Prime Minister and then, once the member has asked their question, they are not entitled to interject again.

Mr TRUSS: Let us move to the East West Link in Victoria—is that a Labor project? Geological testing for the eastern section was carried out in early 2014—

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand is warned!

Mr TRUSS: and if you do not believe that there was any equipment on the site, perhaps you did not see the pictures of the protesters tying themselves to the equipment! They were
probably mates of Labor who did not want the project to proceed! But that is another example of equipment actually being on the site. As to NorthConnex, early geological investigations have commenced, and soil sampling equipment is on the site and conducting investigations. On WestConnex, geotechnical works will commence in the next few weeks. On Narellan Road—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It goes to relevance. It was a very specific question.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Those on my right will also be quiet.

Mr Albanese: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was a very specific question about a very specific promise by the coalition about bulldozers, not about early geological investigations.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Acting Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TRUSS: There are bulldozers on the Narellan Road, if that makes you satisfied. That is another example of projects underway. Also, there is heavy equipment, as I understand it, on the South Road-Ashwin Parade intersection. Earthmoving equipment is on the site. I have mentioned five projects already for you where there is actual construction underway. Indeed, our program is on schedule, ahead of schedule, delivering jobs, and will deliver results for communities because this is a program that is $16 billion bigger than what Labor had promised. Once more it is funded. It is not imaginary money coming from a mining tax that is not collecting any revenue.

Asylum Seekers

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection on something that concerns us all. Will the minister update the House on the implementation of the government's full suite of border protection policies and on any impediments that the government has faced in implementing these policies?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:16): I thank the member for Gilmore for her question because she knows that, when this government was elected, we had two very big problems. The first one was that boats were arriving with people at the rate of over 1,500 people per month. That is what we inherited when we came to government. In addition to that, the previous government had left 30,000 people here, onshore, of which more than 23,000, who had arrived after August 2012, had not been processed at all.

We have been doing what we said we would do, and we have been getting the results we said we would get. Fewer people have arrived under this government. Fewer people have arrived illegally by boat under this government than the actual number of ventures that occurred under the previous government over the same period of time. There were 157 people on just one venture this year, and 270-odd ventures themselves with people crammed onto them, boat after boat after boat.

We have continued the offshore processing policy that those opposite, when they were in government, had to be dragged kicking and screaming to. On turnbacks, we implemented the
turnback policy which they said could never work and could never be done. When they see the results of that policy staring them in the face they cannot support it now. The people of Australia know that, if they cannot support turnbacks now after the results they have seen, they will never support them and they can never be trusted to put them in place.

Also there are temporary protection visas and denying permanent visas to those who have arrived illegally by boat. Despite the opposition of Labor and the Greens to temporary protection visas we have continued to deny permanent visas to those who have come illegally by boat. It is interesting to note that over the five years after they abolished temporary protection visas just 150 people decided voluntarily to go home. But in just 12 months when we were denying permanent visas more than 400 people decided to go home—an increase more than 13-fold.

There is another benefit of TPVs which means that we can get on with the processing, because we have a product at the end which is not a permanent visa in Australia to reward the people smugglers and the promise they made to those who came on the boats. In addition it provides an alternative to the policy that we currently have to deal with the post 19 July arrivals and the, around, 500 children that are affected by that which would see them go from the mainland to Nauru. At present, as those opposite seem to be suggesting, they should be brought onshore and given permanent visas. That would compromise our border protection policies and would see the boats come again.

Fortunately, those on the crossbench are interested in looking at temporary protection visas because they know that they provide an alternative.

Mr Burke interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: The member for Watson says that this cannot be done, but it is clear that the Labor muppets are not just in the Senate; it is a whole muppet show across that bench.

Budget

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:19): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the government's broken promise never to do deals with minor parties. Why is the Treasurer willing to cut pensions and family payments but not rule out, as I did this morning, using taxpayers' money to bankroll the Palmer piggybank?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:19): What we do is allow the parliament, as it chooses, to have its inquiries and not predetermine the outcomes. I have made it very clear that our principles are always going to be focused on not supporting initiatives that engage in private sector activities. I wish the same could be said for the member for McMahon. I was kind of expecting this question from the member for McMahon. I thought, hang on, they have been bleating about this so-called Palmer piggybank—for crying out loud.

It was the Labor Party that started the Ruddbank. Of course, it was in March 2009 that the then Labor government tried to give millions of dollars of financing, through Ruddbank, to the 79-floor office building in Brisbane, ironically called 'Vision Tower'. It should have been called 'Mirage Tower' because two months later the company went into voluntary administration. I thought, hang on, no current member of the front bench of the Labor Party would ever support an initiative such as this. They would not do that, surely. Bear with me Australia. On 2GB, Chris Smith was interviewing a frontbencher and he said:
So you will be supporting the proposed 'Rudd Bank' …

Chris Bowen said:

Yes, we think the Australian Business Investment Partnership is very important …

That is what they called the bank, the Australian Business Investment Partnership, ABIP—a bank, Ruddbank. Here they come, in opposition, to the parliament and ask us to rule out speculation put forward by the independent member for Fairfax about a proposal that may or may not ever receive the support of this parliament. Yet, the Labor Party, as complete hypocrites when they were in government, tried desperately to establish a Ruddbank, a bank that would actually lend money to businesses that failed only a couple of months later.

So I would say to you: spare us the hypocrisy. All Australia asks of the modern Labor Party is to have some principles, to be a little consistent and to actually hold a value from government to opposition. We know that we have a Leader of the Opposition who is loyal to no-one and has no principles. But surely on this occasion, given the whole history of the Labor Party with bad banks—from Tricontinental to Ruddbank—the Labor Party is going to go beyond the sanctimony of this.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, recently the Alcohol's burden of disease report found that alcohol kills 15 Australians and hospitalises 430 every day. But Canberra continues to pass the buck to the states, even though the costs of Australia's drinking culture have been so big for so long. Minister, will you hold a national summit involving key health professionals and elected representatives to devise a strategy similar to that for tobacco in order to address this serious problem?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:23): I thank the member for Denison for his question. He raises a very serious issue not only for our country but also for other developed nations around the world. People can consume alcohol responsibly, but some people have drinking patterns which are clearly bad for their health.

The promise that governments should provide to the public is that we will help to educate people and give guidelines, particularly to young people who may be under incredible peer group pressure, about consumption patterns—as you point out, Member for Denison, not just in relation to alcohol but also in relation to tobacco and other illicit drug use. There are very important messages for both the state and federal governments to deliver in this area. For instance, in this last budget we provided $19 million worth of funding to the Good Sports program through which we will reach about 1.7 million Australians to talk about how we can change some consumption behaviour in relation to alcohol within sporting venues—and hopefully that message will then infiltrate its way more broadly into the Australian community.

I might say that this government is more about tangible outcomes as opposed to summits and creating new bureaucratic structures—which was the want of the Labor Party. But there is an important point to make in relation to the premise of your question, Member for Denison, and that is in terms of the buck-passing between the states and the Commonwealth. This is an important issue, because clearly there is a division of responsibility between the states and the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth, for arguments sake, can do nothing in relation to opening hours. We are seeing some evidence now out of New South Wales and other
jurisdictions of trials that have been conducted have provided some promise. I know that
Professor Owler, from the AMA, is very concerned as a physician and as somebody who has
led the New South Wales advertising campaign about consumption patterns and about ways
in which we can reduce presentations to tertiary hospitals. It is very important work that he
has done and it is very important work that has been conducted in New South Wales,
Queensland and elsewhere.

We are very keen to work constructively—not to pass the buck—with the state and
territory governments, and we will embark on that work. But we will do it in a sensible and
tangible way. The AMA is proposing a summit in October this year, and I believe very
strongly that the summit should concentrate not only on alcohol but also on the use of
steroids, particularly amongst some young men, and the ingestion of some other illicit drugs
which play a very important part in the behaviour conducted by some of those people on a
Friday night.

Mr Wilkie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. I am not trying to
cause problems here, but I know that the community would be keen to know whether the
government would consider a summit.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister was most pertinent to the
question and he has completed his answer.

Operation Bring Them Home

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:26): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister
update the House on the role of the Australian Federal Police in Operation Bring them Home?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:26): I thank the member for Barker for
that question. I am pleased to be able to provide an update to the House on the government's
response to the MH17 disaster and particularly the role played by the Australian Federal
Police.

A total of 202 AFP personnel were deployed to the Ukraine and the Netherlands under
Operation Bring Them Home. The first deployment of 23 Australian officials included 10
AFP personnel and they arrived in Europe on 21 July. This included a forward commander, a
disaster victim identification specialist, a chief scientists and intelligence and investigation
personnel. The AFP's deployment was supported by round-the-clock command and control in
Canberra and overseas and family liaison officers were placed in Canberra, Kiev and the
Hague. The AFP conducted searches of the wreckage site five times. The work of the disaster
identification team has allowed the first victims to be returned to Australia, and I attended the
ceremony of the first coming home of the three Victorians last week.

More than 50 AFP personnel remain in the Netherlands and the Ukraine in support of the
ongoing disaster victim identification and the criminal investigation into the murder of 298
innocent people. The Prime Minister's announcement yesterday of an interim embassy in the
Ukraine will provide the support the AFP needs to continue this significant work. I can inform
the House that the rest of the AFP contingent who were in Europe have now returned to
Australia.

The criminal investigation is underway and the Australian Federal Police is working with
investigators from the Netherlands, the Ukraine, Belgium and Malaysia and providing
investigators, forensic experts and intelligence analyst to identify and bring to justice those
involved in the downing of MH17. As everyone will appreciate, this is a large and complex investigation. It is going to take us some time to achieve any outcome, but we will not let the murder of innocent Australians go unanswered.

I am sure the entire Australian community appreciates the taxing and harrowing work that has been done by many across the Australian government, but in particular by the AFP, in investigating this tragedy and working to bring home the Australians who have perished. I thank and commend the officers involved both here at home in Australia and overseas for their tireless work on this mission. I particularly extend my personal thanks to Australian Federal Police Commissioner Tony Negus for his superb leadership during Operation Bring Them Home. As many in this chamber will be aware, this is his last week as commissioner. He has served as commissioner for five years, after a 32-year career in the Australian Federal Police. I am sure that all will join me in extending our thanks for his very successful service to Australia.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Economy

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. Before the last election the Prime Minister promised to create a million new jobs. Given that unemployment is at a 10-year high and his government has done nothing to save thousands of jobs at Toyota, Holden, Alcoa, Electrolux and Rio at Gove, will the Acting Prime Minister, at least, rule out using taxpayer funds to bankroll the Palmer piggybank?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:30): Firstly, the presumptions made by the Leader of the Opposition in his question are wrong. One hundred thousand jobs have been created since we have been in office.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton!

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:30): That compares with an increase of 200,000 unemployed under Labor. So we know we still have a long way to go. There are a lot more jobs that need to be created in this country. To do that, we need a strong and productive economy. That is why we are investing in infrastructure. That is why we have an economic plan for the future to help ensure that our economy is strong and we can therefore create the jobs that are going to be necessary to support our community in the years ahead. The reality is that we are getting on with the job. Progress has been made but there is still a distance to go. However, we are achieving employment growth and we want that to continue into the future. Since the premise of the question from the Leader of the Opposition is completely wrong, the substance of the question is not worth answering.

Budget

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:31): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline the importance of fixing the budget, and how will the repeal of the mining tax help to repair the budget?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:31): It is hugely important that we fix the budget. The member for Bennelong knows that because he has been a very strong advocate of the country living within its means and the government living within its means. As a very successful businessman and an extremely good elite tennis player—and an ordinary squash player!—he would know it is very important that, when you set a goal, you set about achieving that goal.

The goal of this government is to strengthen the Australian economy. The goal of this government is to help create an environment where we have more jobs and better pay. Since we were elected, job growth in Australia has run at three times the speed of the last year of Labor—when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister for employment.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: As will the member for Sydney.

Mr HOCKEY: The fact is that, under the coalition, 15,000 new jobs, on average, have been created every month. Under the Leader of the Opposition, just a year ago, the average was 5,000 new jobs a month. Of course, we saw a surge in the unemployment rate, and the Labor Party was its own worst enemy when it came to jobs. They know that. It was their policies as a government, particularly in relation to the budget, that helped to make life harder, not easier, for businesses that wanted to employ more people. The mining tax is a good example. The Labor Party has never been consistent on the mining tax. They claimed that it was going to be the solution for everything—but it never was.

I thank the member for Lilley for his contribution to this debate.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I should. I am about to do it. I am about to praise the member for Lilley. In an interview on ABC24 just yesterday he said: 'We do know as production ramps up, more goods are shipped out, the mining tax would have raised much more in the years ahead.' Well, the fact is that last year alone Australia exported 181.4 million tonnes of iron ore—7.7 tonnes of iron ore for every man, woman and child in Australia—and, in the last three months, the tax raised 2½c for every Australian. What a great tax that was! But not to outdo himself, he said in the same interview: ‘That tax was so successful, not only would it fund the schoolkids bonus, income support bonus, low-income super contribution, regional infrastructure, increases in super, instant asset write-off, vehicle depreciation and tax loss carry back but it could go on and fund other elements of public policy such as education.' For 2½c, that is a great deal!

Superannuation

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:35): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. The freezing of the superannuation guarantee will mean that an average income earner aged 25 will lose around $100,000 by the time they retire. Can the Acting Prime Minister explain to the students here in parliament today from the National Student Leadership Forum why his government is placing the interests of one billionaire ahead of the interests of nine million Australians?
Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:35): The opposition presumes incorrectly that the mining industry is only of value to those who own mines. The reality is it is a major employer in this country—

Mr Perrett: It doesn't employ nine million Australians, I can tell you that much!

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned! That is the last time.

Mr TRUSS: It provides an enormous boost to the economy. It builds a substantial part of our export income. As a nation we benefit from the mining industry. As a nation we benefit from the investment in the mining sector. As a people we benefit from the mining industry, which pays income tax, royalties and a whole stack of other taxes to ensure that we are able to provide the services and facilities that we want as a nation. So it is completely wrong to suggest that the mining industry only benefits nine people, seven people or whatever number you have suggested.

I also have to say that I find the opposition's commentary about superannuation for low-income earners utterly hypocritical. When Labor were in government they got rid of the low-income superannuation contributions scheme. They took $3.3 billion from low-income Australian worker superannuation schemes. Labor took $3.3 billion away from low-income earners for their superannuation schemes; they have no right—no right—to criticise those who need to make decisions and who need to deliver outcomes because Labor had a failed budget.

Labor had a budget that was spending money that they were not making. The reality is that we had to bring that under control. You have to make some tough decisions from time to time; we have been prepared to do that. But what we are doing is investing in our country and ensuring that the young people—the student leadership group that you referred to—will have jobs and opportunities in great industries like mining into the future, and delivering real benefits to all Australians.

Mining

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Industry. Will the minister advise the House how the government is working to put the right policy settings in place in order to support and regain competitiveness within our critically important mining sector?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom—Minister for Industry) (14:38): I thank the member the Durack for her question and thank her for the enormous work she does for the resources industry, not only in the state of Western Australia and particularly in the seat of Durack but in fact for all Australia. The member has done a fantastic job in taking over from the previous member, Barry Haase, in bringing mining companies to this place to allow members on the backbench in particular, who may not have a mine in their backyard, to see the importance of mining in Australia.

I recommend to the member for Swan—the member for Lilley, sorry—that he actually reconsider the continuous attack that he placed on the mining industry when he was the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer. There were attacks on individuals and attacks on the industry, an industry which the Acting Prime Minister just pointed out employs around a million people directly and indirectly. It is an industry which kept Mr Swan's budget afloat—
as best as any budget under Labor could be kept afloat—by continuing to earn much-needed export income for Australia.

Mr Champion: I surrender, Ian!

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield, far from getting a gold star will soon be in the naughty corner!

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: I am waiting for the member for Charlton, Speaker!

We are facing a challenge in the resources industry at the moment as we transition from the construction of resource projects to the production of resource projects. We need to make sure that that next wave of investment actually happens. We have seen an industry that already pays its fair share of tax. In fact, over the last two years since June 2014 it has raised over—

Mr Conroy: Two years since June 2014?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: Two years to June 2014 has raised over $40 billion for the Commonwealth coffers.

The reality is that we need to make sure that this sector remains strong. By removing the mining tax we have sent a very clear message to those people looking to invest in Australia, that we are open for business. But, of course, all investments in mines requires exploration.

Mr Conroy: You've still got time!

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: I still have time! The reality is that all good mines start with exploration and that is why this government has put in place a $100 million exploration development incentive, which I launched in the member for O'Connor's electorate, to make sure that we have the exploration that ensures that the mining industry remains strong.

Those opposite treated the mining industry as a cash cow—as an ATM; somewhere to go when they ran out of money. The coalition government wants to make sure that the mining industry actually continues to produce the one thing that is very important, and that is jobs—jobs for all Australians.

**Superannuation**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:41): My question is to the Treasurer. The Treasurer's scrapping of the low-income superannuation contribution will mean that a woman earning $37,000 a year will lose $500 for every year of her working life from 2017 onwards. Why is the Treasurer putting the interests of one billionaire ahead of more than two million women on low incomes?

The SPEAKER: It sounds remarkably like a question asked yesterday, but I will give the call to the Treasurer.

Mr Nikolic: Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I refer you to page 562 of the *Practice*, which specifically says that a question fully asked and answered must not be asked again.

The SPEAKER: It is a very good point of order but it does not apply when it is not on the same day. So we will give the call to the Treasurer.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:42): I thank the honourable member for the question.

The fact of the matter is that the best way you can help to grow the pool of superannuation in Australia is to have a strong economy; to have a strong economy with profitable
businesses, improving real value in real estate and people in jobs. From our perspective it is hugely important that we also ensure that we can afford what is going to be a significant growth in superannuation contributions over the long term.

I do want to remind the honourable member for Sydney of a history that she was very much part of. In 2007 Kevin Rudd said that there would be no change to the superannuation laws—not one jot nor one tittle. And we know it is an accurate quote because only Kevin Rudd would say something like that, right? So, one jot and one tittle! In the 2009 budget Labor hit low-income earners earning less than $30,000 a year, and hit them with what was called a 'temporary measure' that was going to cut $1.4 billion from people earning less than $30,000 a year. Strike 1.

Strike 2: they said that temporary measure the next year was going to be permanent and they said that would be an additional $350 million. Strike 2. But in the same budget they hit the low-income earners again. In the 2010 budget they said income thresholds would no longer be indexed by inflation.

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I am just giving you your own history, here.

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. It would be terrific if he answered the question about the low-income super contribution.

The SPEAKER: It is a very wide ranging question when you put in your political content.

Ms Ryan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: When the political content is added to the question it becomes very wide ranging. The member for Lalor is again not in her seat and not entitled to speak. If she wishes to interject, softly, sotto voce, she can go back to her chair.

Mr HOCKEY: In the same budget, they hit low-income earners earning less than $31,920 for another $295 million. Then in the 2011 budget they hit the same people, earning $31,920 or less—another $195 million. Just to finish it off, in the following Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook they hit the same people with another $1 billion hit. In total, when they were in government the Labor Party hit people with superannuation with $9 billion of extra taxes. By the way, if the Labor Party really believe this is hurting Australians they should stand up here and reverse it. Stand up here and say that you will immediately reverse it if you are elected at the next election! Alternatively, say that you will back our PPL scheme, which pays superannuation for women. But spare us the hypocrisy of yet another failed Labor government, because the Labor Party has—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: I think he has finished.

The SPEAKER: Has the Treasurer finished? No? The Treasurer has the call.

Mr HOCKEY: I have finished. (Time expired)

Trade with Korea

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (14:46): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister, representing the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister update the House on the
outcome of the inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties into the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:47): I thank the honourable member for Herbert, who is the chairman of the coalition's trade committee, for his question. The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement is recognised as an agreement of the highest quality. This government was able to achieve this agreement in seven months where Labor had wasted six years. The Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, deserves great credit for having concluded this agreement.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has concluded its inquiry into this landmark agreement and today it reported to the parliament. I acknowledge the work of the member for Longman and his committee on their report. They were satisfied with the agreement and said it will:

... provide substantial economic benefit, not only to Australian business and industry, but also to the broader community.

Modelling shows that it will contribute about $650 million per year to our economy. It will create 1,700 new jobs in the first year and then 1,000 a year from then on. It will boost agricultural exports to Korea by about 73 per cent and other exports by about 25 per cent.

With such an outstanding record, with such predictions about its future, one would have thought that everyone in this parliament would be in favour of it, but, no, Labor actually submitted a dissenting report opposing the creation of these jobs and this boost to income. The member for Wills—let us remember he is a former Parliamentary Secretary for Trade—said we should go back to the drawing board. Can you really believe that? This is an agreement that is going to create thousands of jobs but Labor does not want it.

If you want to uncover the key to this incredible Labor position you just have to go to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, which has of course great influence on members opposite. In its evidence to the committee it said:

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union has had a longstanding policy of opposing bilateral trade agreements. They are against them all, regardless of what benefits there might be! That gives the Leader of the Opposition a great problem, because he is on record as having supported the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement. He said it deserves 'Labor’s support for a more open global trading system'. Really? Those remarks do not seem to be in concert with the those members of the backbench who recommended that this treaty should be rejected.

What we have today, clearly, is a Leader of the Opposition who represents a party that is anti-trade, anti-jobs and anti-growth in the Australian economy, and all of their empty rhetoric needs to be seen just for what it really is.

University Fees

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Education. Last year, the minister said the government was not considering increases to university fees, because:

... we promised that we wouldn't and Tony Abbott made it very clear before the election that we would keep our promises.
Is doubling university fees and threatening a cut to university funding what the minister meant by ‘a government that keeps its promises’?

 Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:50): I am delighted to get a question from the shadow minister for tertiary education. I think it is the first question the member for Kingston has asked me, and it is the first question that the opposition has asked me about higher education since the last election. It gives me the opportunity to point out that the facts as presented by the member for Kingston are quite wrong. The government is not increasing fees for students at universities. We are proposing the largest reform to universities in 40 years, which will allow some course fees in many subjects to come down, and it will be universities that make their decisions about fees, because that is what deregulation means.

 Mr Watts interjecting—

 Mr Conroy interjecting—

 The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton and the member for Gellibrand will desist!

 Mr PYNE: This question also gives me the opportunity to point out that the Labor Party is the party that proposed $6.5 billion of cuts to higher education in the six short years it was in government—$6.6552 billion. I table the list, the table of cuts to universities that the Labor Party proposed, when it was in government, without any other capacity for universities to raise—

 Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question was about doubling university fees and threatening to cut university budgets.

 The SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. I have informed members before that when you raise a point of order on relevance, it is not an invitation to repeat the question. It is totally out of order and the member knows that.

 Mr PYNE: I thank you for your protection, Madam Speaker. It also gives me the opportunity to call on the opposition to give a Gonski. I want my local MP to give a Gonski on higher education.

 The SPEAKER: We do not have props, Minister!

 Mr Pyne: No props? I will table the poster that says: 'I want my local MP to give a Gonski on higher education.'

 Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On a day when opposition member after opposition member gets thrown out, how does he get away with holding that sign up?

 The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

 Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I would like to conclude my point of order.

 Mr PYNE: This wide-ranging question also gives me the opportunity to comment more broadly on the issue of universities and fees and free education. I would point the member for Kingston to one of her former party leaders, Bob Hawke, in *Collective Wisdom*, where he says: 'One of the greatest stupidities was the proposition the Whitlam Labor government introduced of so-called free education.'

 Ms Plibersek interjecting—
Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will desist and so will the member for Isaacs.

Mr PYNE: There is no such thing as free education. It is a question of who pays and how it is paid for.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will desist.

Mr PYNE: The reforms to universities that we are proposing will lift the contribution that students make to their education, from 40 per cent to 50 per cent. It will be a fifty-fifty split with the taxpayer. Right now the taxpayer is paying 60 per cent and this proposal will lift the student's contribution to fifty-fifty.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned!

Mr PYNE: I think that is fair. Bob Hawke obviously thinks it is fair, because he recognised there was no such thing as free education. Paul Keating recognised that as fair, because he was part of the government that introduced the HECS-HELP scheme. That was when the Labor Party was led by gigantic figures—not the Lilliputian leader we have at the moment.

Infrastructure

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister explain to the House why it is important for the government to receive informed advice before decisions are made to fund major projects?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:55): I thank the honourable member for his question. I note that last month I tabled a landmark report by one of our most distinguished public servants, Bill Scales, on the rushed and chaotic public policy process that led to Labor's fibre-to-the-premises NBN. The opposition says that Bill Scales is a mate. Well, he was appointed to not one but two important government inquiries by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard—both the Bradley inquiry and the Gonski inquiry. Over 40 years he has served governments, both Labor and coalition, as secretary of the Victorian premier's department and as chairman of what is now the Productivity Commission. He is one of our most distinguished public servants. And Labor, rather than facing up to the reality of the facts that he revealed in his report of this disgraceful public policy failure, wants to attack him personally by calling him a 'Liberal mate' when in fact he is a man, the chancellor of Swinburne University and one of our most distinguished public servants.

What his report revealed was that in only 77 days, between 29 January 2009 and 7 April, Labor moved from a conventional policy on broadband to one that involved them spending $43 billion in a wholly government owned project. That was the measure of Labor's failure. You have to hand it to the member for Blaxland and the member for Greenway. There they are—they are the ones that are left defending Labor's failed policy, which has been demonstrated to have failed.

The SPEAKER: I simply want to point out that the children on the left will stop waving to the children leaving the gallery.
Mr TURNBULL: I think these children are beyond anyone's ability to reform. The member for Blaxland and the member for Greenway have the unenviable task of defending Labor's failed policy. They must sometimes feel they have found themselves spending not just a weekend at Bernie's but a long weekend at Bernie's, because you can just see the member for Blaxland: 'How's that great Labor policy going?' 'Oh, everything's okay,' he says. Bernie is still alive; the policy lives. They are in total denial all the time, never facing up to the reality of Labor's failure.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. There are a few try-hards in here today who are anxious to have an early mark and get an early plane. Perhaps they can go to the 'naughty corner' as well. We will have some silence while we hear from the ministers who are answering the questions which you are asking.

Mr TURNBULL: The Labor Party is in a state of denial and of course we have the chirruping Leader of the Opposition there, full of melodrama. He does not know whether he is Dudley Do-Right or Snidely Whiplash, with his melodramatic lines of feigned indignation.

(Time expired)

University Fees

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to a media release still on the minister's website—Pyne Online—titled 'Coalition will not cap places or raise HECS'. Given the government is massively increasing university fees, why is Pyne Online lying online?

The SPEAKER: The member may rephrase her question. 'Lying' is unparliamentary.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order: the question did not refer to the minister lying; it is this mysterious Pyne Online website which is lying.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. As I said, the member can rephrase the question.

Mr Burke: Unless the man is a website, it is not unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston will rephrase the question.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:00): I will rephrase the question. My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to a media release still on the minister's website, Pyne Online, titled, 'Coalition will not cap places or raise HECS'. Given the government is massively increasing university fees, why is the minister misleading the Australian people on his website?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:00): It does not rain but it pours. I have now had two questions from the shadow minister for tertiary education. I must admit, she has a much higher work rate than the former shadow minister, the member for Adelaide. I have to say, it is possible that the reason the shadow minister asked me the question is because the taxpayers did get value for money for her undergraduate degree because she finished hers, whereas the shadow minister started two and the taxpayers paid 60 per cent of the cost for both of them and neither of them were finished. So you should get back to university and finish both of those.

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr PYNE: It is on your website. It was on the ALP website.

Mr Burke: There is no way in the world that is relevant to the question.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—
Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! And the member for Lingiari will withdraw that comment.

Mr Snowdon: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business's point of order is quite valid. The minister will return to the question.

Mr PYNE: I am delighted to get a question from the member for Kingston about higher education because it gives me the opportunity to refute both of the statements she made. Firstly, we are actually expanding the demand-driven system in the reform bill to sub-bachelor courses, diplomas and associate degrees so that tens of thousands more young people will get the opportunity to do those pathways courses into undergraduate degrees. They are mostly used by low-socioeconomic-status young people, mature-age students and first generation university goers to get to university. It is a reform that I would have thought Labor would have supported—expanding opportunity to more students.

The second thing, of course, is that the shadow minister repeats the calumny she raised in the previous question, which is that we are planning to increase fees. We are doing no such thing. We are deregulating. And thank you for promoting my website, Pyne Online. The more people who are looking at it the better. It has some very good information, and if only you looked at it more often you would have a much better idea about policy and good policy at that from this government. We are not, of course, increasing HECS. What will happen is that universities will reduce fees in some courses. They will make decisions about other courses and will add a value to the services they are providing to students. They will earn that revenue and they will build the biggest Commonwealth scholarships fund in Australia's history, because somebody has to pay for universities. We are asking students to pay fifty-fifty. Labor wants it to be free. I would remind her of the former leader of her party, Paul Keating. He said in 1995:

There is no such thing, of course, as “free” education. Somebody has to pay … the majority of whom haven’t had the privilege of a university education. Ask yourself if you think that is a fair thing.

More than 60 per cent of Australians do not have a university education, and you are currently asking to pay more than 60 per cent because you want free education. We recognise that those people deserve a fifty-fifty split and that is what we will give them.

Home Insulation Program

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister advise the House of the findings of the royal commission into the failings of the Home Insulation Program? What can we all learn from this report?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (15:04): I want to particularly thank the member for Brisbane, who represents a state which was most affected by this disastrous program. As you progress through the pages of the royal commission, two critical findings...
emerge. The first of those findings, the central finding, is as clearly set out as it could be on page 3, where the royal commissioner says:

In my view each death would, and should, not have occurred had the HIP been properly designed and implemented.

In short, the commissioner said these four tragedies were avoidable. He went further and made the point that, after the program had commenced and even after the first of the tragedies, the lessons were not learnt. In particular, Commissioner Hanger said:

… despite electrical safety issues being raised squarely as an issue after the death of Mr Fuller, insufficient action was taken to prevent further tragedies—had it been, I am satisfied that Reuben Barnes’ death could have been avoided.

In short, the lessons which could have saved these young lives were evident and obvious but unlearned.

Against that background, there have been some who have questioned whether the commission was worth it. I would say to those in this House who have made those statements to listen very carefully to the words of the families, because, since we last addressed this issue, I have had the task of speaking with further family members. As one family member said to me, ‘If this report helps save just one life at some time somewhere in the future, then it will have been worth every single cent.’ That is a very powerful lesson. The second central finding which was made by the commissioner is that this program had a devastating impact on businesses:

The effect of the losses was to devastate many long-standing businesses (some family companies in effect) and to cause as well personal financial collapse and severe despair and emotional harm;

So the implications spread far and wide. The lessons were clear. The government of the day did not listen to advice, overruled advice and sought to act in haste. The lessons were also clear that we need to listen and work with a professional public service, and we will listen to what they say and we hope that this never, ever happens again.

Abbott Government

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:08): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. It has been one year since this government began its assault on Australian families, jobs, hospitals, schools and pensioners. No wonder Australians are angry at this government, who spent every day in the past year breaking its promises. Why should the Australian people have to pay the price for a Prime Minister who lied his way into office?

The SPEAKER: The member will rephrase the question, removing 'lied'.

Mr SHORTEN: No, I won't rephrase the question.

The SPEAKER: Then I will rule it out of order.

National Security

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (15:09): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Defence. I refer the minister to Australia's continued draw-down of operations in Afghanistan and the return home of Australian Defence Force personnel. Will the minister inform the House of the action that the government is taking to support the rehabilitation of those personnel who have been wounded whilst on active service?
Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (15:09): I thank the member for Bass for his question and for his notable military service, including combat operations in the Middle East. Defence Force has now been involved in continuous operations since 1999. The decision to employ combat forces overseas is, for any government, a grave responsibility that this House well appreciates. It is also a responsibility that both sides have taken seriously in supporting the rehabilitation of our wounded warriors when they return home.

Much has been done in recent years by governments of both persuasions to assist those of our personnel who have returned from service. Notably the Support to Wounded, Injured or Ill Program put forward by the Chief of Army is a fantastic initiative that seeks to continuously support the services we provide to our wounded and to increase and improve the rehabilitation services.

Our Soldier Recovery Centres at each of our major combat brigade locations have been assisting in the management of complex cases and are seeing some really fine results; and, of course, the transition centres have been running with a focus on those returning to civilian life.

Importantly, as a continued part of the campaign to assist our wounded, ill and injured diggers, an Australian team will depart Australia today to participate in the Invictus Games. This is an international adaptive, multi-sport competition. It will be held in London from 10 to 14 September for current and former military personnel who have been wounded or injured or have become ill serving their country. Championed by His Royal Highness Prince Harry, or Captain Wales, the games promote the role that can be played in physical and psychological rehabilitation. It is about inspiring our wounded, our injured and our ill and their families.

Thirty-six Australians will go, and they will join 400 other wounded, injured or ill soldiers from around the world. The government, enjoying the support of the opposition, wholeheartedly support this great objective, and we believe the games will inspire and support the rehabilitation of our current wounded warriors. Participants from 14 nations will all join in, including soldiers from the US, the UK, Canada, Germany, France, the Slovak Republic and Afghanistan. Four hundred athletes will compete in a range of adaptive, multisport competitions: athletics, archery, indoor rowing, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby.

The government is incredibly proud that the RSL has decided to join and sponsor part of the team of 36 and are putting forward some third of a million dollars to assist. I thank the RSL, on behalf of the parliament, for it. Each competitor will be accompanied by a family member to highlight the important roles that family and support networks play.

It was a privilege to launch the team last week, and I am sure I speak for the House when I wish all of our wounded warriors good success but, more importantly, good rehabilitation in the games and beyond.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Budget

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:12): In response to a question about the mining tax I said, 'last year alone Australia exported 181.4 million tonnes of iron ore—7.7 tonnes of iron ore for every man, woman and child in Australia'. That was, in fact, just in the
June quarter—the same June quarter that delivered 2½c per man, woman and child from a mining tax for each 7.7 tonnes of iron ore. In fact, in the whole year Australia exported 652 million tonnes of iron ore, or 28 tonnes of iron ore for every man, woman and child in Australia. It was still a disastrous mining tax.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:13): 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**

**Abbott Government**

The SPEAKER (15:14): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Grayndler proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government’s year of broken promises, cruel cuts and wrong priorities.

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**—

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (15:14): I am pleased to move this matter of public importance today to speak about the year of broken promises from those opposite—broken promises on health, broken promises on education, broken promises on pensions, broken promises on the petrol tax and, this week, a broken promise on superannuation. The promises of the coalition are treated like plates at a Greek wedding: they are smashed at regular intervals; they are smashed one after the other.

Today I want to talk particularly about infrastructure, on which they said two fundamental things. The first was that, for projects with a value of about $100 million, there would be a proper cost-benefit analysis. The second was that there would be cranes in the sky and bulldozers in these new infrastructure projects that they allegedly were going to fund and create. Today we asked the Acting Prime Minister about these projects, and he could not name one. He could not name one—

Mrs Griggs: Five—he named five.

Dr Jensen: Five.

Mr ALBANESE: because there is not a single project commenced that was not in the May 2013 budget. Not one.

Dr Jensen: He named five. Five.

Mr ALBANESE: The crowd opposite says five. Well, one of the ones he named was the Torrens to Torrens project. Here I am, in this picture I am holding up, at the beginning of construction in August 2013! Another one was the east-west project, which those opposite thought was in South Australia! Many Melburnians would like it to be in South Australia, because in Melbourne it is about as popular as the Ebola virus. It has had no cost-benefit analysis. It is a project that is on the road to nowhere.
Those opposite could not name a single new project. In place of that is the magical infrastructure re-announcement tour: the Perth gateway project, North West Coastal Highway, Bolivia Hill, the Inland Railway, Tiger Brennan Drive. They are going around the country re-announcing projects that are already under construction. In terms of their imagination, you have to give them credit, because, for some of the re-announcements, they have come up with a new strategy: just give it a new name! So the F3 to M2 link, signed off on in June last year, has become NorthConnex. The Swan Valley bypass in Western Australia has become NorthLink. Giving it a new name does not make it a new project.

Those opposite stand here and they say they are not projects; the money was not real. But they go to opening after opening—the Hunter Expressway at the end of last year or, just a few weeks ago, the Gold Coast light rail project. It was opposed by the local member, Mr Ciobo, but he was happy to be on the first trip!

Mr Briggs interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: The assistant minister for infrastructure, at the table, was happy to go to the opening of one of the Gateway North projects, even though they pretend that it is new. Sometimes they just forget!

The Treasurer this week stood up and said, 'We've got this new investment, the Regional Rail Link.' Seriously? Funded in 2009, at its peak more than 5,000 workers were employed as a result of that project. There are new stations at places like Footscray West, with new projects opened on the way to Ballarat, on the way to Bendigo, on the way to Geelong. But it is no wonder the government think it is new, because during the election campaign the Prime Minister said, 'The federal government doesn't fund public transport projects.' Where did he say it? He was in Melbourne—a $3.225 billion investment.

The member for Petrie has tried to claim the Moreton Bay Rail Link as a new project as well. One of the classics, though, I think, Madam Speaker, is that as you go to the airport this evening you will pass the Majura Parkway. Now, every parliamentarian saw when construction started on that, but that has not stopped the government claiming that as a new project as well. Sometimes they pretend it is new where the funding is actually less, like the Midland Highway in Tasmania. They have ripped $100 million out of that, but they claim that it is somehow new money.

Of course, there was no new money in the budget for infrastructure. What the government did was ripped money out of projects that had been properly assessed and approved by Infrastructure Australia, like the Melbourne Metropolitan, and the Cross River Rail project in Brisbane. They took money from properly assessed projects and gave them to projects that had no cost-benefit analysis.

It is worse than that, because they made an advance payment of $1½ billion to the East West Link project. One of the alleged five new projects that the Acting Prime Minister named today, it is not only not in South Australia; it is also not under construction and it is not under contract—and the Victorian government is desperate to try and put it under contract. So those opposite gave $1½ billion to it. The infrastructure minister's assistant said very clearly that they would make payments based on milestones. Here is a project, the second stage of which will not commence for at least two years, if ever, and they say they have paid $1½ billion in advance. They paid $2 billion in advance to WestConnex.
Mr Briggs: Are you against it?

Mr ALBANESE: This is why you do proper planning—

Mr Briggs: Are you against it? Are you against it?

Mr ALBANESE: Listen and you might learn something.

The SPEAKER: The assistant minister will desist.

Mr ALBANESE: Hear about one of my constituents, Vince Crow, of Haberfield. He got two letters signed by the senior project manager of WestConnex on 26 June 2014. He got two letters signed by the same bloke, in different envelopes. One of them said his home 'needs to be acquired to construct the project'. The other letter, on the same day, says that it will not need to be acquired by the New South Wales government. That is why you do proper planning. That is why you make sure that you get it right.

In Western Australia, the Perth Freight Link project has not even been approved by the WA government. They did not know anything about it and, when asked about it in their estimates process, the representative said that it was a project that simply was not up to scratch and they were not in a position to make any of the information available on that project. The former WA state MP in the chamber, I am sure, knows that that is the case.

Today we have new legislation introduced by the minister saying that there will be cost-benefit analysis for projects of more than $100 million. I thought, this could be pretty good; maybe they are getting it, except that when you look at the legislation you give the money first and then you have the cost-benefit analysis. It is for projects which have already received $100 million. The reason projects like the Hunter Expressway received funding, and Majura Parkway, was that we did that cost benefit analysis, it was published on the website—in the case of Majura Parkway a BCR above three, in the case of Hunter Expressway a BCR above four—we published it as a result of our process. Those opposite just do not get it.

The first they did when they came to office was to abolish the Major Cities Unit. Those opposite do not believe in integrated transport plans. What they have funded are projects—in the case of East West the best BCR that has been published is 0.8. What that means is that for every dollar invested you get 80c back. That is their view of proper analysis. What we have seen from those opposite is the withdrawal of public from public transport, a withdrawal of engagement in cities, the Urban Policy Forum has not met, a withdrawal of rail freight projects with not one new rail freight project announced in the budget for the first time since 2006.

Mr Briggs interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: Inland rail was in the 2009 budget with $300 million to commence this year. They do not have a single new project under construction. They have no ideas and no plans.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:24): I love September. September is the time of footy finals. This weekend the AFL footy finals begin and there will be some fantastic games. There will be a terrific game at Adelaide Oval on Sunday with Port Adelaide versus Richmond.

Mr Albanese interjecting—
Mr BRIGGS: I'm coming to you, Son! That will be a cracker at the great Adelaide Oval on Saturday. My Mighty Blues did not make the finals this year, unfortunately. There are, of course, local footy finals on, too, and the SANFL finals in South Australia. We will see the Mighty Double Blues this weekend playing against South on Saturday at Adelaide Ovals also. What happens at footy finals time, at the end of the season in September, is that many of the players on the sides who do make the finals—many who have been around and some have been absolute stars of the game, some have been dominant forces for over a decade—think about whether it is time to go on. They think about whether their body can handle another pre-season, whether their capacities can keep up to the modern standard of the game, whether they are able to make the effort yet again to push and get through to the start of another season and battle up, particularly if their side is not likely to make the finals for some time. They think to themselves, 'It might be time I retired, before it becomes really sad, that I am nowhere near the player I once was when I was the dominant play for a decade, maybe it's time that I retire. Maybe it's time to give someone else a go. Maybe it's time to think whether it is worth spending more time at home, away from the hard yards of the training track. Maybe it's time to retire. Maybe I can't do it again.' For people who are looking at this pre-season and thinking about it, if their side is not likely to make the final next year, the draft picks will not home, that they might go home over this break and think to themselves, 'Can I go on again?' The reality is, some players just lose it.

That happens in politics, too, would you believe. There is a parallel with politics. There are people in politics who did at one time contribute substantially to the national debate. At times they contribute to the national debate in a substantial way. In fact, they tried to save a government. There were some reflections in a recent book by Paul Kelly which talked about some advice which was given on a certain night in June, advice which should have been followed. He was a very smart political operator who understood that what the factions were doing that night would destroy two Prime Ministers—I think that is the exact quote. That was a time for a former senior player to think about whether it is time to retire.

We see the complaints desk on the other side, those who cannot bring themselves to accept the fact that the government changed 12 months ago, that they cannot handle the fact that a new government is getting on and delivering on infrastructure across the board when it comes to government. They really need to start to think about whether it is time to give another young, up-and-coming player the chance to have a go.

All we just heard from the member for Grayndler was from someone who has refused to accept the reality of what happened 12 months ago. We know the anger. We heard the screaming just then and all the anger coming through. We have heard the anger today where he is yelling at business leaders, 'You're too bloody polite.' We have heard about the phone calls to industry associations after the budget when they praised the government's infrastructure agenda, criticising them heavily about what they had said publicly about the infrastructure commitments made by this government.

The reality is the opposition have put themselves outside the mainstream debate. They are no longer relevant. It is absolutely clear that the Labor Party continues to take the tactical advice from geniuses like the member for Batman who put themselves completely outside the debate.

An opposition member interjecting—
Mr BRIGGS: You are the guy who refused Anthony's advice on the end of June 2010. You are the one who avoided Anthony's advice so let's go back to what Paul Kelly wrote this week.

Ms Bird: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The assistant minister, having come to the front bench, should know that he has to direct comments through you, that you have been doing none of the things he has been accusing you of, and he should refer to people by their titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Cunningham for her advice. The assistant minister should of course refer his remarks through the chair.

Mr BRIGGS: What this government has done in 12 months is get on and deliver infrastructure for the 21st century, across the country. In the budget, there is a $50 billion commitment to infrastructure—new projects across the country that will drive jobs growth, that will drive productivity growth, that will ensure that we have a stronger economy. We have talked about many of them today. WestConnex stage 1, which we committed to in the election, is moving on at a rapid pace, and serious construction work will get underway soon. That is another project that the member for Grayndler is obviously opposed to.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: Because we are going through a proper process, Member for Grayndler, to ensure we get the best outcome. We brought WestConnex stage 2 forward by 18 months, with the use of the first ever federal government concessional loan. That is another project that will get underway in a real hurry. Serious construction will be underway next year.

This opposition has made itself so irrelevant to the debate. It is now opposed to all these projects across the cities. We will make it very clear to people in these cities that the opposition is opposed to the East West Link, that it is opposed to WestConnex. We have members from Victoria nodding their heads in furious agreement that they are opposed to the east-west project. When the Victorian government signs contracts in the coming weeks, they will know—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: Yes, they will. Don't you worry about that. They will sign contracts in the coming weeks and they will ensure that we have a fantastic outcome for the city of Melbourne, lifting productivity, lifting outcomes.

Mr Giles interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! The member for Scullin should be aware that, if he wants to interject, he should be in his place.

Mr BRIGGS: This opposition has put itself so far out of the debate it is not funny.

In addition to that, we have had a Productivity Commission review into public infrastructure which found that the infrastructure system that this government was left with was broken. The best example of how it was broken is the NBN. The Productivity Commission goes through, comprehensively, what a disastrous series of decisions were made by the former government when it came to the NBN and the amount of waste that has been revealed by the Minister for Communications when it comes to that policy.
We are getting on with delivering on our commitments. We said we would build infrastructure, and we are getting on and delivering on infrastructure. We said we would stop the boats, and the boats have all but stopped.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: We said we would fix the budget, and we are well underway, Member for Lingiari, with fixing the budget. It is breaking their hearts. It happens to all oppositions, but they have realised this week—after a year—'Hooley dooley; we're in opposition. The reality is: we're irrelevant.'

Mr Conroy: Not for long if you're in charge!

Mr BRIGGS: The member for Charlton says, 'Not for long.' We will see. If you continue to behave as you do as an opposition now, you will be in opposition for a very long time.

The reality is, we have got on. We have stopped the boats from arriving, and the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is to be given enormous credit for the work that he has done. He was told by those on the other side that you could not do it. Those on the other side, who broke the system in the first place, said: 'You can't do it. You can't stop the boats. What they're saying won't happen.' And we have delivered it.

We said we would fix the budget. We are working through our way fixing the budget. We have abolished the carbon tax, even though those on the other side desperately want to bring it back. And this week we delivered upon abolishing the mining tax as well. We are getting on and delivering infrastructure across the country. We are creating jobs. We are building a stronger Australia. What we will continue to hear from those who want to call names, who want to yell out, who want to try and knock everything, is complete opposition.

A couple of weeks ago the member for Grayndler said in a speech that, if the Labor Party is elected at the next election, he wants to put more money into public transport projects. Well, he is going to have to tell us which projects are going to go, which taxes are going to rise or how much more they are going to borrow.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (15:34): This week is a year since the Abbott government was elected, and what a dismal year it has been for millions of Australians. Let us just have a look at where exactly so many Australians are at the moment. I want to draw the House's attention to a particular commitment that was made before the election by the now Prime Minister, in a press release on 4 September last year. The now Prime Minister said:

Within five years I am confident that our economy can deliver at least one million new jobs; and two million new jobs within the next decade.

As the member for Grayndler pointed out in his speech on this MPI, in the infrastructure sector there has been a complete and total failure of those opposite to meet the commitments that were made before the election. Twice today they have failed to be able to indicate one project that was actually commenced under them in government and is now under construction.

Let me take members to the reality of what has happened in the employment sector, and then I want to particularly touch on my own portfolio area, of vocational education and skills. We have seen unemployment now having risen to the highest level it has been at in a decade. In 10 years, we have not seen unemployment at 6.4 per cent. Now we do. How on earth could the Treasurer have made any sort of claim in question time today that that delivers on a
promise to create a million jobs? There are people in communities across this country who are facing increased levels of unemployment. In particular, as the Brotherhood of St Lawrence has recently documented, young people are looking at increased youth unemployment. How on earth they could take any comfort from a government that promised a million jobs before the election and now thinks that having the highest level of unemployment in a decade is a good outcome I do not know.

They are now putting increasing expectations on people who are unemployed at the same time as they slash and burn the programs that provide the pathway for people to get into jobs. Let us look at the Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers programs, both well regarded—I am sure there are many of my colleagues who avoid, like the plague, people in their electorates who are running those programs, because they know that they are effective, well-designed programs delivering real pathways into jobs. They were slashed in the last budget.

Today I had the opportunity, with the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Canberra, to visit some apprentices at CIT at Fyshwick. At that place, we met a lot of apprentices who were studying in the first, second or third year of their apprenticeships. Around 20 per cent of them were mature-age apprentices who were actually retraining and looking at changing their long-term job future. Those apprentices have seen $1 billion ripped out of the support provided to them and future apprentices in the last budget—$1 billion, with no replacement and no view to future support for apprenticeships.

Ms Scott: That is completely not true.

Ms BIRD: I will go through it for the member opposite, who says that is not true. Are you saying to me that there was not $1 billion in the budget taken out of apprenticeship programs?

Ms Scott interjecting—

Ms BIRD: Okay, then I will outline for the member opposite what exactly you did: a $20,000 loan—I am sure apprentices are so thrilled! Let me tell the member opposite: you abolished the Tools For Your Trade—

Ms Scott interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! The member for Lindsay knows that if she wishes to interject she should be in her seat. The member for Cunningham has the call.

Ms BIRD: Stop encouraging the member to make a fool of herself, Deputy Speaker! Let me tell you: not only did you abolish the Tools For Your Trade program, but let me name the four other programs that you abolished in the budget for which there was no replacement. No. 1 was the Apprenticeships Access Program. I was out in Western Sydney as a minister visiting the Motor Traders' Association who ran the Apprenticeships Access Program, and they were busily telling me how important and significant it had been for Western Sydney to have that pathway for disadvantaged young people. Then the Apprenticeships Mentoring Program was abolished. The Apprentice to Business Owner Program, helping them to establish small businesses, was abolished. These programs were all abolished on your watch.

(Time expired)

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (15:39): The Australian people do not have short memories; they have long memories. And when you
come into this place and talk about broken promises, we must remind the Australian people of the broken promises of those on the other side during the six terrible years of the Labor government.

One of my heroes is Ronald Reagan, and do you know what he said about the Democrats? He said their view of government is: if something moves, they tax it; if it keeps moving, they regulate it; and if it stops moving, they subsidise it! Well, that could be said about those opposite.

So I want to give the House 10 graphic examples of broken promises by those opposite. No. 1 is the economy and the $667 billion worth of debt; after 400 promises that we would enter surplus, we never saw it. Remember when the member for Lilley came into this place and said, 'Tonight I announce four years of surpluses'? They never were.

We saw cheques to dead people—$900 cheques; 27,000 people living overseas received a $900 cheque.

Ms Scott: How many dead people received them?

Mr FRYDENBERG: Twenty-one thousand people—dead people—received cheques from those opposite. And would you believe: in 2012-13, a number of years after the global financial crisis, some 12,000 people kept receiving their $900 cheques.

There was the carbon tax on which the then Leader of the Opposition, Julia Gillard, went to the Australian people and said: 'There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead.' Then there was the mining tax, which we were promised would bring in $49½ billion and produced just $340 million worth of revenue.

Then there were the boats. We were told by those opposite that they would also stop the boats. They gave us an $11 billion budget blow-out when it came to the boats—there were more than 50,000 unauthorised arrivals and, tragically, more than 1,000 people lost their lives at sea.

Then we saw the red tape, when those opposite said there would be one in, one out. We saw 21,000 additional regulations from those opposite.

Then we had the NBN, which had just started—a $4.7 billion infrastructure project—and then we had an independent analysis find that it had blown out by $29 billion. After just six years of the Labor government, the rollout was only three per cent and less than 100,000 Australians had access to the NBN.

Then we had the free trade agreements which we were told would eventuate with China, Korea and Japan. None of them did, under the Labor Party. It took us to deliver the free trade agreements.

Then we had the commitment from those opposite that they would protect the defence of our nation and support our soldiers and our men and women in uniform. But, under the Labor Party, we saw defence spending fall to just 1.56 per cent—the lowest level since 1938.

Then we had the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, go to the Australian people and to the region and say, 'I will create an Asia-Pacific community, because this will allow me to grandstand and to promote my best interests at the expense of Australia's best interests.' And what happened? That never eventuated because those in the region were never consulted.

Then we had, in health, the commitment to 64 superclinics—

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CHAMBER
Ms Scott: How many patients have they seen?

Mr FRYDENBERG: Well, they were never developed, and never delivered. Then we had a broken promise on private health insurance. More than $4 billion was wasted. We had waiting times for elective surgery go up under those opposite, and then we had the deferral of putting medicines on the PBS just because those opposite had no care for the health of our nation.

Then, as for small business, 400,000 jobs in small business were lost by those opposite because they recycled their ministers for small business just like it was pass the parcel. There were six ministers for small business under those opposite. That is not a lot, when you compare it to the nine ministers for education that those opposite had, or the five ministers for regional development, or the three foreign ministers, or the three prime ministers.

We are very proud, on this side of the House, because we have repealed the carbon tax, we have repealed the mining tax, we have stopped the boats, we are on the way to budget repair, and we know that, with the changes through the Senate, we have been able to deal without the help of the Labor Party, and we have the best interests of Australia at heart and we have been able to deliver for the best interests of the Australian people.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (15:44): For 12 months now we have had a government in a shambolic state. They promised a government of no excuses and no surprises, and for 12 months we have been enduring surprise after surprise and excuse after excuse.

There is a miscellany of broken promises I could touch upon today, but I would like to begin by making the point that one of my favourite aspects of the broken promises is not so much the egregious breaking of the promises but a government that refuses thereafter to admit that it has broken a promise. Time and time again we have seen this government stand up before audiences of pensioners, veterans and others and insist to their faces that they have received no cut. Of course, all that achieves—and your action faces tell the story—is that the anger grows, and the anger will come and bite you.

Just last week in question time the Prime Minister contradicted the Minister for Veterans' Affairs with respect to the Australian War Memorial. Before the last election the Prime Minister was, of course, desperately keen to speak highly of the War Memorial, and said: … the Coalition will take the action necessary to preserve, protect and enhance the Australian War Memorial.

Now, of course, the War Memorial well and truly wishes that you had never taken an interest in its business and that you had never taken an interest in its work because, after having taken an interest in its work, all you have done is slash and burn it. The Prime Minister said last week:

I want to stress that the $800,000 that he refers to has not been cut.

Has the $800,000 just magically disappeared from its budget as part of the great coalition fairy story of what happened to its commitments to the people of Australia? At the same time that the Prime Minister was at the dispatch box insisting that there was no cut, that the $800,000 was a made-up fairy number, we saw in the Senate the veterans' affairs minister talking about the funding cut and saying, 'I did not make this cut with any joy.' At least, in
Senator Ronaldson’s defence, he knows a cut when he sees one and he understood the bad news that he was delivering. The Director of the Australian War Memorial said:

… the Department of Veterans Affairs informed the memorial last week that it has found it necessary to cease funding the travelling exhibition program effective immediately …

So, a cut is a cut. The work of the War Memorial has been slashed. The Prime Minister, who came into this parliament desperate to associate himself with the work of the War Memorial, has stood here and managed to oversee an $800,000 cut in its business.

That $800,000 cut to the work of the War Memorial absolutely affects it, because those travelling exhibitions have now been cut. Those travelling exhibitions—belittled as they were by the Prime Minister, who described them as ‘small exhibitions’—have accomplished great things for the War Memorial. They have been seen by over 3.8 million Australians in their 17 years of work. Those opposite, who insist time and time again that they represent regional Australia, show absolutely no interest in the fact that it is these travelling exhibitions that take the work of the War Memorial to regional Australia and to our classrooms. Now, of course, the coalition have thrown it overboard without so much as a ‘by your leave’. This action, in the Centenary of Anzac, is an outrageous decision.

It does not end there because the broken promises spread much further. The veterans' community has been aghast at the blows inflicted upon it by this budget from this government. For a government that said, 'No surprises and no excuses,' our veterans have endured both because, after having insisted that you would look after veterans, after insisting that you would look after military pensions, what have we actually seen? We have seen the abolition of the MSBS superannuation scheme for our serving military, which is a remarkable decision that will go to the retention of our military people.

Worse yet, the pensions of some 280,000 veterans, a total of 310,000 payments have now been cut. After spending years and years in opposition lecturing us on this side of the House about the virtues of triple indexation, no sooner had you found yourselves on the Treasury benches than you defied your own rhetoric, you overthrew your own words, and you abolished triple indexation for our veterans. We know that only one year in 10 is CPI the superior calculation. So, in nine years out of 10, you have now made sure that our veterans get paid less. Year after year after year we are now going to see the living standards of our veterans suffer because of your mean-spirited and cruel budget. It is a mean-spirited and cruel budget that has, of course, been a surprise and an excuse to our veterans' community.

I could go on and talk about submarines, and about the fact that David Johnston promised to build and assemble 12 submarines in Adelaide. We have seen that promise turn to dust. (Time expired)

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (15:49): I only wish that the member for Batman had gone on to speak about submarines. He could not have got any lower than he just did in that speech. There was only one thing that the previous government had that was better than this one and that was the member for Batman.

Being here today is like watching tenants about to be evicted from the house. They have taken over a brand new, shiny, fully-paid-for house, and over the six years that they were in charge they have let it crumble down. The pink batts are smouldering in the ceiling, the children are huddled around the one laptop. Remember that? One laptop for every child. They
managed to get about 25 per cent of them delivered before they became obsolete. They are looking around wondering what happened to the Fuelwatch and the GroceryWatch websites.

This MPI is about a party's wrong priorities, and what we saw with the previous government were certainly wrong priorities. From a television show on the ABC we saw a knee-jerk reaction when the live cattle trade was removed. We saw, not only a relationship with one of our most valuable neighbours to the north severely damaged, but the entire industry, an entire section of Australia, nearly wiped out economically because of their lack of priorities when looking after Australian industry.

We saw how the BER program worked in my part of the world at the school in Louth. It was a wonderful program as they now have a classroom for each child. We have four children, so they built another classroom. Unfortunately, one of the kids left, so now we have four classrooms and three kids, but it is a great program. A young contractor in Dubbo could not get paid because of the mismanagement of the BER program. He took his crane out on a Sunday and pulled down the shelter shed and took it home because of the mismanagement.

We saw the pink batts program, where every shonky and dodgy dealer within three or four continents converged on Australia and absolutely ripped off pensioners—mainly people who were too frail to go out and have a look for themselves. When the family member turned up, the batts were still bundled up and not even spread out. It was an absolute disgrace. We had Fuelwatch and GroceryWatch and we had a mining tax that came with $17 billion of expenditure and $600,000 of income. It was an absolute disgrace.

The member for Grayndler spoke in his opening address about breaking plates at a Greek wedding. What we saw with the previous government was a Greek tragedy. We saw the previous government take the strongest economy in the Western world and turn it into a Greek economy. What we saw was an absolute disgrace. The member for Grayndler asked, 'What about some projects where we can see some bulldozers in action?' I can take him to one: the Moree bypass. It was funded with $55 million when John Anderson was the minister and it was completely botched and squandered by the then Labor government in New South Wales. It was left to Warren Truss and Duncan Gay to come up with the funds for the Moree bypass. It was an absolute disgrace by the previous government.

This government is getting on and doing the job. Another example is the inland rail. We now have an implementation committee. We are now seriously building that link from Brisbane to Melbourne, which will be the 'steel Mississippi'. It will revolutionise not only freight transfer in Australia but also build economies through western New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. We now have free trade agreements. So when that railway line is built, we will be able to export produce from western New South Wales straight into Korea, China and Japan. We now have a government that has a vision for the people it represents.

What about the carbon tax? Under the previous government, we had a tax that made everything that we produce more expensive than the products of our competitors—with Australian farmers having to pay more for their fuel, fertiliser and freight than their American counterparts—for no environmental gain.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Mr COULTON: Don't talk rubbish to me. We have two Conroys in this place, and I am not going to say which one is the most clever. We have a Conroy who delivered an NBN and
I do not think the other Conroy has much ability to do much more! This MPI is an absolute farce. (Time expired)

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (15:54): Today's MPI is about the broken promises of the Abbott government in its first year—and what a litany of broken promises it is. The most famous of them all is the promise to be a no surprises and no excuses government. What an absolute rubbish, rubbish, rubbish statement that is. There have been plenty of surprises and nothing but excuses from this mob opposite, who want to turn up every question time and blame Labor. Well, news flash: you have been in government for a year, and it is time to start taking some responsibility and start talking about what you are doing for the Australian people.

And let's talk about what you are doing for the Australian people. What are you doing for the Australian people? Those are the surprises that we have been amply provided with by the Abbott government. Like the promise of no surprises and no excuses, there were some other very important promises made. They were promises that were made in an attempt to convince voters that they had nothing to be worried about in electing an Abbott government. Unfortunately, voters had plenty to be worried about in electing an Abbott government. There were promises like: there will be no cuts; there will be no changes to the pension; and there will be no cuts to higher education. Those promises were so ridiculous!

I might add that there were a few promises made in my by-election campaign earlier this year, and one of them was there was not going to be a GP tax—"We are not considering a GP tax." I remember that pretty well. I was a candidate for a by-election and I had the Prime Minister and the foreign minister swan into my town to tell voters, 'There's nothing to see here; there ain't going to be a GP tax.' I was apparently scaremongering about it—and then what happened? Was there a GP tax? Yes, there was a GP tax—and it is a GP tax that is going to hurt people's ability to go to the GP and will see people not going to the GP when they should. And what is going to be the outcome of that? That will mean bad health outcomes for people in this country. It is reckless policy, and that mob over there ought to be ashamed.

What else have we seen from a government who promised before the election that there would be no changes to pensions? Today I got a message on my Facebook page and it said the following: 'Terry, will you please stand up for we pensioners today in parliament?' Yes, I will stand up for pensioners today in parliament, because no-one on that side of the House is going to stand up for pensioners. What are they going to do for pensioners? They are going to change the indexation rate so that every time the pension is indexed it gets harder and harder for pensions to meet the cost of living for pensioners—something which those opposite ought to be ashamed of.

So, not only are they going to slug pensioners with a GP tax and slug people with the petrol tax increase that they want to impose on people; they are also going to make it harder for pensioners to meet their costs of living. They are going to overturn a change that Labor brought out in 2009—a change to help pensioners meet their costs of living. That mob want to take it away from pensioners. We will stand up for pensioners. The people on this side of the House will stand up for pensioners, because we care about pensioners—unlike that mob over there, who think they are born to rule.

When you stand up in this House and say that Labor were a tenant of government—you are claiming that Labor were a tenant when we held government—the implication is that your
mob are the landlords. Your born to rule mentality is exposed for everyone to see. You think you own government, but I have news for you: the Australian people are the landlords of government and they are going to pass judgement on you for these outrageous broken promises that you have made. You ought to be ashamed.

Ms Henderson: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just reminding the member opposite that she needs to direct her statements through the chair and not by screaming 'you' across the chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): I thank the member for Corangamite. I will remind the member for Griffith that she ought to direct her remarks through the chair.

Ms Butler: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. With the greatest respect, Deputy Speaker, the Abbott government has broken its promises and is not standing up for the people of Australia. But, as I was saying, the Australian people own this place. The Australian people are the landlords when it comes to government—in this flawed analogy that was just raised in the context of this debate—and these broken promises will not sit well with the Australian people. What about the broken promise on higher education? What about that broken promise? We heard in question time today the broken promises of this government—(Time expired)

Mrs McNamara (Dobell) (15:59): I am proud to be a member of a government which is keeping its commitments to the Australian people. Sadly it has not dawned on the change of government deniers, Australia's greatest whingers who sit opposite, that we are doing what we have said we would do. We have scrapped the carbon tax, we have scrapped the mining tax, we have stopped the boats, we are building the roads of the 21st century and, most importantly, we are repairing the Australian economy, which was burdened with the greatest debt and deficit disaster this nation has ever seen. Australians are grateful to have a mature government that is delivering on what we said we would do and not addicted to the 24/7 media cycle. The people of Dobell are finally being treated with the respect they deserve.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Mrs McNamara: I knew I would get a reaction from the member for Charlton. I think he is becoming obsessed with me! Unlike the former government and the members opposite, this government is not ashamed to have the member for Dobell among its ranks. Unlike the former government, who are more interested in paying their legal bills than investing in skills and training, this government is doing everything it can to repair the damage in Dobell. The former government tried to forget about the people of Dobell and sweep our issues under the carpet. They hoped that, like a bad dream, they would awake from the Craig Thomson nightmare. Unfortunately for those opposite, the people of Dobell well remember the legacy bestowed upon them by the Labor government. And finally they have a decent member.

Ms Hall interjecting—

Mrs McNamara: You can say that in here, but say it on the steps outside!

Mr Frydenberg: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: that was a despicable slur and I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Conroy: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: it was a factual statement; the member for Dobell has been a witness at ICAC.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): There is no point of order. To assist the House, I ask the member for Shortland to withdraw.

Ms Hall: I find it hard to withdraw something that is factual.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Shortland to withdraw.

Ms Hall: To assist the House, I withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Shortland. The member for Dobell has the call.

Mrs McNAMARA: The legacy bestowed upon the people of Dobell was above average unemployment; one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in Australia; only one in two students completing secondary education; and only 16 per cent of people engaging in tertiary education. That is a shame—and that is factual! The people of Dobell now have a government that is proud to stand by their side and fight for their needs. As the member for Dobell, I am committed to increasing local employment opportunities for our school leavers and job seekers—and that is a fact. That is why, prior to being elected, I fought for and secured $2.7 million of funding for new skills training centres. These centres will ensure school leavers in Dobell have every possible chance of securing an apprenticeship or traineeship with a local business and work towards long-term sustainable employment.

The new Work for the Dole scheme will see job seekers provided with an opportunity to work in the community and, while doing so, acquire the soft skills and work ethic necessary to break into the workforce. Earlier this year I gladly welcomed the Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP, the Assistant Minister for Employment, to Dobell to launch the government’s new Work for the Dole scheme. By launching this new and improved scheme in Dobell the government confirmed its commitment to the people of the Central Coast.

Ms Butler interjecting—

Mrs McNAMARA: Will someone please put a tea towel over that and stop that squeaking! Our desire is to see more jobs and a more prosperous future. Unlike the former government, we have listened to the needs of the people of Dobell. We promised to deliver $3.3 million to restore Tuggerah Lakes to its former glory—and we have delivered. We promised $700,000 to complete the reconstruction of the Norah Head boat ramp—and we have delivered. We promised a $370,000 investment in CCTV equipment to keep our streets and community safe—and we have delivered. And our commitment to the Tuggerah sports precinct will deliver economic benefits to the Central Coast. This government is delivering, and we will continue to deliver. Those opposite just whinge, whinge, whinge, whinge. If they took the time to listen, they might understand something. It is about being a good member and delivering— (Time expired)

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (16:05): There is an old saying that 'a week is a long time in politics'. Well, surely for those opposite, 12 months has been an absolute eternity. This has been the worst 12 months of a commencing government since Federation. They have walked away from so many of the commitments they made in the lead-up to the election and they have broken so many of the promises they made to the Australian people—where do I start? The only thing I can say for sure is that, if the Australian people take note of what the government has done in the last 12 months, they will be finished—of that, there is absolutely no doubt. Health, education, pensions—work through the list. It is one thing to say
circumstances have changed, it is one thing to say there are issues the government has to deal with, but the bottom line here is that, since the election, this government has gone out of its way to offend the Australian people and walk away from the things they committed to in the lead-up to the election.

Today we spoke about education and the circumstances around the commitments made at Pyne Online. To say 'All we're doing is deregulating, and that makes no difference' shows absolutely no understanding of the higher education sector—or, alternatively, it is a deliberate attempt to lie. That is what they have done—they have lied to the Australian people. The fact is that, when you deregulate fees, you will see a situation where fees increase—although there may be movement around, you will see fees going up. It is also very clear what has been said with respect to HECS. It is one thing to say 'Yes, you can still pay it,' it is one thing to say 'It's still a lower interest rate,' but it is another thing to admit that you said you would not change it but you did. And it is another thing to ensure that you understand the feelings and the circumstances of the students out there with respect to what they will be dealing with in the future.

Just the other day I was in a parliamentary committee meeting in the member for Reid's electorate. We met there with a large group of year 11 and year 12 students. They were asked what they thought was important—what the issues were that they cared about. Almost every single one of them put their hand up when asked the question, 'Are you concerned about the government's proposals around HECS? Are you concerned?' They all put their hands up. Frankly, they put their hands up because they have genuine concerns.

It is all right saying that you can put it on a loan to the never-never and that it is okay—you will not have to pay it back for a long time, and only then if you earn an awful lot of money. But the bottom line point is this: it will have an impact with respect to who goes to university and it will particularly have an impact on students from disadvantaged areas because they will react to the circumstances around their communities, their peers and their families in making a decision to try to earn some money now versus trying to earn a degree to earn more money later. That is an example of where this government just does not get it.

Then you go on to other areas like health—no cuts to health. There is $50 billion in health cut away from state budgets. It is all right to say, 'We're not cutting it. Oh, the states can put it back in.' That does not work; it does not work that way and they know that.

Then you go on to things like the way they have gone on about pensions and indexation, and the continual chant from the other side, 'Pensions will keep going up.' Again, if you understand the mathematics at all of the nature of the way pensions are actually adjusted and consumer price index versus male total average weekly earnings—the nature of the difference in the movement of those two indicators over a 10-year period—you know that if you proceed with this measure what you will have done effectively is to cut the pension payments to elderly Australians, to sick Australians and to disadvantaged Australians for years and years to come. This is by figures estimated, over time, of up to $80 a week and if the same sort of movement occurred in those indicators as did over the last four years it could be as much as $1,500.

The bottom line is this: there have been broken promises by this government—there has been a litany of them. It is a litany of broken promises and they will need to go out there and
explain them a lot better than they have so far, because we all know that this budget has been a disaster with respect to the attempts that have been made to try to sell it. Frankly, they have a lot of work to do in the next two years to try to recover this first 12 months. So, whether it is education, whether it is health, whether it is university fees or whether it is promises about a million new jobs—and I do not know where they are coming from—the bottom line is that this government has a lot to answer for.

I will give one thing that the Prime Minister said that I think will be true—I will go along with him on this: on Tuesday 3 September last year he said:

I expect that people will be very harsh on a new government that doesn't keep its commitments.

Well, Prime Minister, I think you got that one right. (Time expired)

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (16:10): I rise to make a contribution on this MPI by reminding members opposite and the Australian people that we have had an incredible number of achievements in the first year.

We have repealed the carbon tax, a tax that in my region in Geelong and Corangamite was completely toxic. It was a tax that lost jobs, a tax that drained small businesses of confidence and a tax that caused a $1.1 billion hit on manufacturing. Members opposite know this.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms HENDERSON: The member for Charlton knows this; this was an insidious tax in a proud manufacturing centre like the city that I represent in part—Geelong. This was an extremely damaging tax and we have proudly repealed that carbon tax. The Australian people know that, come hell or high water, in the next election we will see the carbon tax return under Labor. Labor has made that clear and we are determined to fight those taxes that cause such damage to our economy and to jobs growth.

We have repealed the mining tax—another toxic tax so damaging for jobs, so damaging for productivity and so damaging to our economy. We have effectively stopped the boats. We have saved the Australian taxpayer billions of dollars in stopping the boats and we can see from the members opposite when the minister stands before them and talks about our achievements that it is an absolute and utter embarrassment to them. It is an embarrassment: the way in which they flip-flopped on that policy for six years. We said we would do it, we are doing it and we have done it.

We are building the roads of the 21st century. Our infrastructure Prime Minister knows how important it is to invest in local communities and particularly in the regions. And we are fixing the budget—and, oh boy, what a job that is! The member for Griffith invited us to take responsibility. We are taking responsibility, because as the member for Lilley said to Senator Carr, the situation that members opposite created when they were in government was 'fiscally ruinous'. 'Fiscally ruinous': they were the words out of the former Treasurer's mouth. Six hundred and sixty-seven billion dollars of debt; $191 billion of cumulative deficits after promising they would deliver four consecutive surpluses! Members opposite have failed fundamentally to—

Ms Butler: Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, I rise on a point of order. The member well knows that it was actually the Treasurer who doubled the deficit, increasing the deficit to nearly—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Corangamite has the call.
Ms HENDERSON: It is unfortunate that the member opposite does not understand the standing orders. That is not a point of order.

I just quickly want to touch on the broken promises we have heard about the carbon tax and the surpluses, and the promise for a company tax cut which, again, was another broken promise that we are delivering on. Again, this is so important for small business.

There were the cruel cuts. Look at what we are proudly doing in our budget. I heard a member the other day saying, 'Get rid of the budget.' Our budget is delivering the National Disability Insurance Scheme—

Mr Conroy: We'll pay for it—

Ms HENDERSON: You are laughing! Absolutely—with the headquarters. Under your budget you delivered a $44.9 million cut to NDIS support packages, which we reversed in our budget. We funded it within the agreed funding envelope as well, all the way through until it is a $22 billion scheme. And we are very proudly hosting the NDIS headquarters in Geelong. It is a very good example of our government listening and caring and, yes, working with the previous government in a bipartisan way. But the scare campaign that members opposite ran in relation to the funding of the NDIS was an absolute disgrace.

The twisted priorities: we heard the member for Grayndler claiming today—twice, and claiming falsely unfortunately—that no infrastructure projects we announced have started, that there are no bulldozers. I want to correct the record and make members opposite aware, even though I think the member for Grayndler is aware, that the Great Ocean Road project, a fantastic project in our region, is underway with $25 million from the federal government and $25 million from the state government. That is a project that Labor opposed. They did not understand how important it is for tourism. Another project is the East-West Link, which is so important for our economy; it is creating 6,000 jobs. It is an absolute disgrace that you are standing in the way of a project that is so important for jobs for our region. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! The time for this discussion has concluded.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Approval of Work

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (16:15): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Development and construction of housing for Defence at RAAF Base Darwin, Northern Territory.

I referred this project to the Public Works Committee on 5 June 2014. The overall project cost is approximately $53.36 million, including GST, contingency and escalation costs, but excludes the land cost, as the land is already owned by the Commonwealth. The proposal involves the creation of a new on-base housing precinct through the redevelopment of previously developed urban land. The project will provide 80 new on-base dwellings, address in part a shortage of housing for the Australian Defence Force members in Darwin and
improve the quality and condition of housing on the base. The dwellings are designed to be sustainable and appropriate for tropical conditions and to enhance the amenity and sustainability of the housing precinct and address current substandard infrastructure.

In its report, the Public Works Committee has recommended that these works proceed. Integrated civil construction is expected to commence in October 2014 and be completed by November 2016. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for its consideration and support for this project. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (16:17): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Social Services, Australian Capital Territory.

The Department of Social Services currently leases space in multiple buildings across Woden and Tuggeranong in the Australian Capital Territory. The term of the lease of the department's main building will expire on 5 December 2016, with no option available under that lease to extend the term. The proposed fit-out of the new leased premises will provide capacity for the co-location of approximately 70 per cent of its staff based in the Australian Capital Territory. This proposal will enable a reduction of more than $7 million in annual outlays, already in the forward estimates, on leased office space in the Australian Capital Territory from 2017 onwards.

In its report, the Public Works Committee has recommended that these works proceed concurrently with the base building as an integrated fit-out. The proposed integrated fit-out works are scheduled to commence in January 2016 with practical completion scheduled for 1 October 2016. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for its consideration and support for this project. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Industry Code Penalties) Bill 2014
Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2014
International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014
Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014

Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.
Mr RANDALL (Canning) (16:20): In the time left, I will try and summarise my contribution. The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 amends the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to enable children to apply for citizenship in their country of origin in instances where they are adopted by Australian citizens under a bilateral arrangement. Bilateral arrangements relate to those countries that Australia has an adoption arrangement with but are not signatories to the Hague convention on intercountry adoption. These countries are South Korea, Taiwan, South Africa and past adoptions from Ethiopia. This more streamlined approach will mean these children will no longer require a visa to enter Australia. Instead, they will already be Australian citizens by the time they reach Australian soil. This is a common-sense approach that gets rid of bureaucracy.

Current arrangements mean that children adopted under a bilateral arrangement from a country that has not ratified the Hague convention are required to apply for and be granted a visa to travel to Australia. These visas are not cheap, costing something like $2,370, and they take forever, sometimes more than 12 months, to deliver—this is from evidence given in the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption. It is very clear that this process has to be streamlined and that it has to have the bureaucracy and red tape taken out of it. The report states that whilst they are technically classified as uncapped visas the demand for child category visas, including adoption visas, currently exceeds the planning levels set by the government. The imbalance is considered to be a key contributing element to the delays in processing child category visas.

The amendments to this bill will enable a child to be issued with an Australian passport, facilitating their travel to Australia as an Australian citizen, a process that would take far less time and money to complete than the current arrangements, which I have already mentioned.

I believe that it is right that children now adopted under bilateral agreements will have the same rights to Australian citizenship as those adopted under The Hague convention arrangements. I applaud the Abbott government on their swift action to rectify this issue, which has been raised by the interdepartmental committee. There is no reason why a non-convention country that is willing to enter into an intercountry adoption agreement with Australia and is able to provide evidence to support its adherence to the standards and safeguards required under The Hague convention should not be free to do so. This legislation facilitates that. Not only will the considerations of this bill benefit both the children and families concerned but it will also serve to foster good relations between Australia and other nations of the world.

It should be noted that the key decision-making framework will remain the same, despite the amendments to the bill. The amendments act to expand the scope of the current Hague convention provisions so they will cover adoptions in accordance with bilateral arrangements. The amendments contained in this bill are only a small step by the Australian government to streamline intercountry adoption, set against the backdrop of what could potentially amount to being a comprehensive form of intercountry adoption process. In other words, this is basically the first step. By amending paragraph 19C of the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to include the phrase ‘or prescribed overseas jurisdiction,’ the government has chosen to extend the eligibility for citizenship to persons adopted in accordance with bilateral agreements. Further amendments under this subsection have inserted a new definition for ‘prescribed overseas jurisdiction’ which, in my view, is a vital component of the reform. It is the combination of
these two particular amendments that ensures eligibility for citizenship will apply to persons adopted under current bilateral arrangements and to persons adopted under the bilateral arrangements entered into by Australia into the future.

It is my experience that there are many good constituents in Australia generally, and I certainly have a number of these in the electorate of Canning, who have taken it upon themselves to adopt children from overseas. We know that in Australia there are people who cannot have children, for whatever reason, whether it is for medical or accidental reasons, disease or just a sad fact of life. Since the advent of the pill and other things like that, there are not that many children who are now up for adoption within Australia. There are people out there who are heartbroken that they cannot have children around them. So they are forced to look overseas to fill this heartaching gap.

The probity of these issues has to be surrounded by all of the necessary checks and balances. We will not go into the recent surrogacy issues. That is why there has to be probity and this bill provides that to parents and to those dealing with other countries. It is the government's commitment to continue with intercountry adoption dialogue with other countries, because at the moment we only have a small range of these dialogues going. But it should be extended. For example, I know people in my electorate who are trying to adopt a child, in this particular case, from China. It is difficult because we do not have the protocols in place with China or, for example, the Philippines. So this ongoing dialogue must be fostered because we need to make sure of that when children become available in some of these countries. This particular child was found on the streets of China. She was taken because, as you know, girls are not highly valued in China, particularly under the one-child policy. That has split this good family, who are of Chinese origin but are now Australian citizens, as part of the family have to stay in China to look after this baby while they continue their business and their active citizenship in Australia. This matter cannot be facilitated because we do not have an agreement with China. It would take extraordinary intervention, I suspect by the minister in this case, to look at it on a case-by-case basis. But we are trying to streamline this process with a whole range of countries.

To demonstrate how tough it has been, Australia has one of the lowest adoption rates in the world. The Hague convention's private website stated that, in 2008-2009, Australia only adopted a total of 129 children from non-Hague countries. This compares very, very poorly with that of 7,216, the total number of adoptions in 2009 into the United States from non-Hague countries. It is not very hard to see why Australia needs the amendments to this bill.

I note that this issue was brought forward and precipitated by Deborra-Lee Furness and her husband Hugh Jackman, whom I would like to congratulate. In The Sydney Morning Herald, in December 2013, there was an article where Deborra-Lee Furness addressed the National Press Club and one of her statements was about Australia's very low adoption rates. She has been championing this issue. And can I also congratulate our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. I know this issue has bipartisan support in this parliament, but it needs to get through here because there are people out there—potential parents and potential children—waiting for this legislation to be enacted so they can be joined.

Imagine going overseas and you find a child, and it is still a baby. All of us want to have an intervention into a child's life as early as possible, yet if you are held away from this child for more than 12 months, how do you look after that child? Do you stay in the country of
adoption? Do you spend an awful lot of money getting someone else to do it? This is good legislation, it is the right legislation and it is legislation which, as I said, I know that both sides of this House will support. So the sooner this journey happens, the better. There are some people who have fears in relation to child exploitation as a result of intercountry adoption but, as you can see from the cessation of our agreement with Ethiopia, we did something about that because of some of the concerns.

The Australian government and all of us here are fully committed to the best interests of the child. Furthermore, Australia's current bilateral agreements with a handful of countries are evidence of the fact that we need to get on with this.

As my speech draws to a close, I want to congratulate all of those involved. As I said, I want to congratulate from the Prime Minister down and those advocating for this legislation. Obviously, in doing so, I support this great initiative.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*The SPEAKER (16:30):* I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Aged Care**

*Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:30):* One year ago, the Prime Minister promised there would be no surprises and no excuses from a new coalition government. But, one year later, what have we seen? A new GP tax, increases in the petrol tax, cuts to pensions, cuts to schools, cuts to hospitals, cuts to superannuation and cuts to universities. One of the nastiest surprises and one of the most egregious broken promises is the heartless decision to cut the Dementia and Severe Behaviour Supplement—no warning, no consultation, no solutions; just finger-pointing and more excuses from the government.

There are more than 330,000 vulnerable Australians living with dementia. By 2050, there will be almost one million. As our population ages we will need to do more, not less, to address the challenge of dementia and support those affected by it. This government is burying its head in the sand and simply trying to walk away from a condition that already affects so many Australians. The previous Labor government did the heavy lifting to make the aged-care sector more sustainable and fairer, with wider community consultation and sector support. In contrast, the Abbott government has dumped the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement; slashed the $652.7 million from the Aged Care Payroll Tax Supplement; made cuts to pensions which will affect the aged-care sector revenue streams; demolished the $1.1 billion Aged Care Workforce Supplement; and abolished Health Workforce Australia, which has been doing so much to meet the challenges of an ageing workforce.

Rather than take responsibility and show leadership, those opposite have sat on their hands and pointed the finger of blame at Labor. The oversubscription of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement happened on their watch. It would have been picked up if it was a challenge when they came to government, but they failed to release the books, the incoming brief that they had received, when they came to government. It was an issue in late 2013 and it should have been addressed in MYEFO, but it was not addressed in MYEFO. It was not mentioned in the Commission of Audit and there was nothing in the budget. Do those opposite really believe that the Australian public will accept that the oversubscription was only noticed in June this year?
The Minister for Social Services and his assistant minister need to stop the finger-pointing and pathetic excuses. They need to step up and show some leadership. What we need is an explanation from this government. Why did they wait until after the budget, after aged-care providers had made their plans, hired their staff and implemented their own budgets? If it is good enough for aged-care providers operating on tight margins and limited staff, then surely it is good enough for the government to keep its eye on the ball. This is incompetence and ineptitude.

Globally, humanity is ageing at a faster rate than ever before. It is a wonderful achievement—the facts that, thanks to technology, thanks to better living standards, thanks to medical breakthroughs, this is happening. But it bring challenges. The Prime Minister does not even recognise dementia as an economic issue. Over 12,500 Australians signed a petition earlier this year asking the Prime Minister to put dementia on the agenda of the G20 summit in November. British Prime Minister, David Cameron, personally placed dementia on the G8 agenda, but apparently the Australian Prime Minister does not think it is worth doing. Dementia costs the world economy $6 billion annually. The Australian Prime Minister informed the petition leaders, the Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing, that the G20 was an economic forum and the priorities were around boosting growth and creating jobs. If his minister and assistant minister had bothered turning up to a roundtable in relation to the workforce, led by Leading Age Services Australia this week, they would have seen that dementia and aged care will have a major economic impact in Australia.

If the Prime Minister, the Treasurer or any minister of finance, trade, employment or social services had bothered to come to the launch of Blueprint for an ageing Australia, they would have seen that the ageing of our population is a social and economic asset. Maybe if they thought about the fact that ageing created opportunities, new consumer demand across the world and across the region, they would have seen addressing issues in relation to older consumers as a major export opportunity. Aged care, dementia care and ageing issues have significant social and economic impacts, but this is a short-sighted, backward-looking government in relation to this. Then again, it was the coalition government which fired the Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing which produced the blueprint.

On behalf of Labor, as their ageing spokesperson, I welcome the blueprint. I congratulate Everald Compton and his team, including former Labor Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, for the work they do. The blueprint should be a wake-up call for the Prime Minister whose unfair budget makes it harder for older Australians. Labor knows that senior Australians are not a burden. This government has no plans to address issues facing senior Australians beyond cutting. Labor will stand up for young Australians and senior Australians, not just—(Time expired)

Abbott Government

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (16:35): Following on from that very negative contribution, I say there is great bipartisanship on issues like dementia. However, it is timely for me to talk about the achievements of the government one year in. If the member reflected on the negativity that he brought here, he would be better off to look at some of the balance of what has been going on in the last year since the election of the coalition government. I would point my electorate and the Australian community to many great achievements, including the removal of some of the worst taxes and regulations that we have seen in a generation. The mining tax
was repealed this week, which is very good for Australia and it is a great commitment of the government. It really threatened sovereign investment in Australia without delivering any revenue for the government. The carbon tax is gone and what that means is that electricity and gas bills now arriving will show the benefit of getting rid of the carbon tax, and there is relief from electricity and gas prices for small businesses in particular but also families, backed by ACCC vigilance to ensure the benefits are being passed on. That will be a very good thing. We have seen that the ACCC will take to task any company that does not pass the carbon tax back to the Australian community.

In one year we have seen the smashing of the people-smugglers business model. That has been one of the most important achievements of the government, because billions of dollars was being pumped into the proceeds of organised crime—people smugglers who were taking money from vulnerable people, often sending them to their deaths at sea. The ending of people smuggling has, I think, been one of the greatest achievements, ensuring that we can in an orderly fashion take refugees from United Nations camps around the world and also take special humanitarian visas from situations like the crisis in Iraq.

The benefits of processing all of the existing backlog of asylum seeker applications will also mean that there will be no children in detention once those applications that were left to us by Labor are finalised. Indeed, there will be very few people at all in any detention centre in Australia once this government is through the enormous backlog of claims that are still to be processed.

More directly, in Sydney we have seen great achievements by the federal government and, for the first time, we have a government that is committed to building a second airport at Badgerys Creek for our biggest city and biggest economy—Sydney and New South Wales. What this means for Sydney is a massive infrastructure upgrade. The government and the Prime Minister have taken a very important approach and that is: infrastructure first, prior to the airport being developed. That means better roads, better rail connections and planning ahead of time to bring forward that important economic driver—a second Sydney airport, a Western Sydney airport, an airport that will be so important for the jobs and opportunities for young people from my electorate in Western Sydney for years to come.

We have seen important road projects like WestConnex already in the planning phase and ready to commence. This important connection within Sydney will provide job opportunities but will also relieve families from the tremendous amount of time they spend commuting in Sydney. NorthConnex, more particularly to my electorate, is going to be one of the most important connections for freight trucks travelling north-south between the Central Coast and Sydney. This is going to reduce cost, time and pollution and will be of great benefit to the community. Of course, the government is providing hundreds of millions of dollars for NorthConnex.

In addition to all of these significant achievements that are underway within one year in my city, we have also seen red-tape reduction. For the first time we have got a government that is committed to smaller government—an actual process twice a year to reduce the amount of regulations imposed upon business, to look for those things that government can do less, not more, to get out of the way and allow small business in particular to grow and create jobs.

While we recognise there is still a lot more to be done to enable those hardworking small business owners that generate most of the employment in this country more freedom and
more ability to compete against big business, we are well underway in reducing red tape. In particular, I am pleased to play a role in reducing green tape in this country as well, and I note that the Minister for the Environment has been working very hard to ensure that environmental approvals are met, that big projects can get underway and that we can compete internationally for that capital.

Lastly, I note that the reforms that the government is bringing in higher education are perhaps once-in-a-generation reforms that will transform the education sector. That is the view of important people like the Group of Eight and commentators like Paul Kelly. They mean that we will have a world-class education sector. One year in, we are working very hard. There is a lot more to do, but the achievements are already delivering benefits for the community.

**Media Freedom**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:40): In 2004, Zack de la Rocha, from Rage Against the Machine, dedicated this poem to journalists around the world:

Eyes Upon The Eyes
You're the eyes upon the eyes
and upon the batons
that pound voices and bones
that erase memories of home
You're the eyes upon the eyes
in the days before the fall
you're the eyes upon the eyes
that are watching us all
To witness the barricades and
the wire they place around our hearts
your document is proof that
there is a fire in the dark
You're the eyes upon the eyes
in the days before the fall
and it's your eyes that stop
their lies from burying us all.

I want to acknowledge the spirit and courage of US journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, who were seeking to bring to light the humanitarian crisis faced by the people of Syria, when they were captured. Their deaths and the plight of others being held by IS has shown in the most brutal fashion the danger faced by journalists working in many parts of the world.

In June we witnessed the incomprehensible sentencing of Australian journalist Peter Greste and his Al Jazeera English colleagues, Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed. After an unfair trial, each member of the trio was sentenced to between seven and 10 years in an Egyptian prison—simply for doing their job. A former UN legal colleague and friend, Amal Alamuddin, who represents Mohamed Fahmy, has written about this in a recent article for the
*Huffington Post* entitled 'The anatomy of an unfair trial'. These travesties are only a few well-publicised instances adding to the disturbing trend of decreasing press freedom worldwide.

More than five years have passed since the brutal assassination of newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunge from Sri Lanka. This frank and fearless journalist, then editor of Sri Lanka's independent *Sunday Leader*, was gunned down in broad daylight. Due to increasing threats and violence directed against him, Lasantha had, incredibly, already accepted his murder by the government as inevitable and, just days after his death, the newspaper that he founded published his chilling posthumous editorial on the state of affairs in his country. Lasantha hoped that his murder—which remains unpunished to this day—would be seen 'not as a defeat of freedom but an inspiration'. He wrote:

The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy of your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shirk it.

Sri Lankan journalists and media organisations continue to work in a climate of fear and violence. The Committee to Protect Journalists ranks the country fourth-worst for places where the murder of a journalist is likely to go unpunished.

Last year, it is known that 70 journalists were killed, but I fear that many more acts of oppression, intimidation, violence, and disappearances not only of journalists but also of other human rights defenders have gone unreported because the reporters have themselves been targeted and silenced. One of the consequences of such repression is that wider questions as to the absence of the rule of law and democratic institutions are increasingly stifled.

In its report *Freedom of the press 2014: A global survey of media independence*, Freedom House finds that media freedom has hit its lowest point in a decade. Reporters Without Borders has noted 'a tendency to interpret national security needs in an overly broad and abusive manner to the detriment of the right to inform and be informed.' In Ethiopia, for instance, the 2009 anti-terror proclamation has been used to justify the arrest of journalists and members of the political opposition. This retrograde trend is not confined to lawless or war-torn regions. The rise of prosecutions of journalists in democratic countries such as the USA and even Australia in the name of national security or the 'war on terror' may be the thin edge of the wedge.

Last month, the government introduced a bill containing a new offence punishable by five years jail for any person who discloses information relating to special intelligence operations. This would apply even if the disclosure is in the public interest. Combined with inadequate whistleblower protection and the lack of shield laws, this will likely have a chilling effect on media freedom, stifling the ability of journalists to gather news and report fully.

Without all the information, the community cannot make fully informed judgements or demand accountability, and that is corrosive of good government. Studies have shown there is a strong correlation between low media freedom and poor political knowledge and participation. The decreasing plurality of voices in the Australian media landscape, the potential further reduction through government changes to cross-media ownership laws and the cuts to funding of the ABC and SBS are extremely concerning trends.
I again pay tribute to Steven Sotloff and James Foley, to Peter Greste and his colleagues, and to journalists everywhere for their commitment to the truth.

**Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program**

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:45):** If we based our hopes for future generations on media reports alone, it would be understandable to feel pessimistic and concerned. However, I recently had the privilege of again participating in the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program—in which, Madam Speaker, I know you are a regular participant—and one of the standouts for me was the number of young men and women who took so much pride in being key members of the Royal Australian Air Force and, even more significantly, those who worked long hours to support the pilots, maintain the aeroplanes and operate the RAAF bases. Indeed, without their crucial contribution to a myriad roles—from security, fuel quality, cleaning and catering to maintenance, air traffic control and refuelling, to name just a few—our Air Force would be grounded.

It is my involvement with the ADF Parliamentary Program that has really brought home to me the day-to-day challenges that face our Defence Force. Through this program, members and senators develop a better appreciation of the outstanding work undertaken by the men and women of the Australian Defence Force. It is a unique opportunity to get out from behind a desk and briefly experience the challenges of life in the Navy, Army or Air Force, while developing a broader understanding of the capabilities of the Australian Defence Force.

For a week in August this year, I joined some of my parliamentary colleagues on Exercise Pitch Black in the Northern Territory, where we experienced the challenges of life in the Air Force. Pitch Black is the Royal Australian Air Force's largest and most complex exercise, which enables them to train with international air forces in the Northern Territory every two years. As part of Exercise Pitch Black this year, representatives from Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Australian air forces, with support from New Zealand, ran operations from RAAF Base Darwin, while at RAAF Base Tindal, near Katherine, other Australian Air Force personnel worked alongside their counterparts from the United States and French New Caledonia. I must say how impressed I was with RAAF Base Tindal.

Participants in Pitch Black engage in a range of activities, including offensive and defensive counter air missions, joint airspace control, attack control and combat support. The planning, implementation and briefings associated with the exercise were very impressive; but, for me, even more interesting were the post-event analysis and debriefings. I wish to particularly thank our group escort, Wing Commander Read-Jones; the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown; RAAF Base Darwin commander Wing Commander Wesley Perrett; RAAF Base Tindal commander Wing Commander Mark Larter; and all our wonderful RAAF men and women who were so generous with their valuable time and especially their patience.

There were many highlights during the week, including being in the back of a Hercules as an advance group parachuted out the open back; standing outside on the top of Darwin air traffic control tower at night as the fighter planes took off with their afterburners aglow; piloting a Hornet jet fighter—well, a simulator, at least, which was probably just as well, as my landing could have been very expensive otherwise; and inspecting the capabilities of the new Wedgetail patrol planes at Tindal. Another unexpected special moment was when Air Force Three landed to refuel on the way to Sydney with US Secretary of State John Kerry on
board and a hitchhiker he had picked up overseas: our own Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop.

This was the fourth opportunity I have had to participate in the ADF Parliamentary Program and each time I have enjoyed developing a broader understanding of the roles and capabilities of the Australian Defence Force personnel, and forging friendships with the dedicated men and women of the ADF. Between wars and peacekeeping, the Australian Defence Force has made a remarkable contribution all over the world. The ADF Parliamentary Program gives us all the opportunity to get a small sample of their role and experience, their contribution and their point of view. Especially valuable is the opportunity to talk to our troops and get the benefit of their insight. My understanding of the Defence Force and of the demands we make on our troops—and, importantly, what great men and women they are—has been truly enriched by my experiences as part of this program.

I place on record my appreciation to all the service men and women involved in Pitch Black 2014, particularly for their patience and consideration. I have been delighted this week to have the opportunity to host Squadron Leader Aleisha Broadhead on a reciprocal basis, and she joins us on the floor of the chamber this afternoon.

**Health Data Linkage**

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:50): In late July, I was invited to a lecture at UWA. It had an intriguing title and I thought I would rock on down. The title was 'Health, political arithmetic and public accountability: bringing down the great Commonwealth-state data divide'. Now, I did not expect to be immensely entertained, but I thought it would be worthwhile and that as part of my duty I should listen to an argument about the political arithmetic involved in health care, because we know what a massive difficulty it is for both Commonwealth and state governments to manage the growing healthcare budget. But I have to say I left that lecture absolutely amazed that such complete and utter insanity could prevail in Commonwealth-state relationships.

The lecture was in fact a valedictory lecture from Professor D'Arcy Holman, a fabulous epidemiologist who has given over three decades of service to Western Australia. Professor Holman, along with other luminaries like Professor Fiona Stanley, really have pioneered health data linkage in Western Australia. They started this in the 1970s and went to a new level in 1995 where they were able to connect all the available health and related information for the WA population in such a way that enabled them to deeply and utterly penetrate this data. Professor Holman says:

Data linkage uses a combination of computers and protocols to create anonymous links between pre-existing health data-bases.

The links mean that the journeys of individuals through the health system can be followed anonymously over many years and thus their risk factors for major diseases, and the use and outcomes of health services can be evaluated using anonymous information. It was once said that putting WADLS in the hands of an epidemiologist is like putting a particle accelerator in the hands of a physicist; both of them cause a paradigm shift and open up a new era of knowledge.

He went on to set out the various insights they had been able to develop through using this data.

They then pointed to the great data divide and said that in Australia, unfortunately, data is divided between two different jurisdictions. They have the Great Wall of China separating the
two. The state covers date in relation to hospitals—births, deaths, mental health, cancer, birth defects et cetera—whereas the Commonwealth uses the data on GPs, specialists, diagnostic tests, medicine and aged care. Unfortunately, the general stance of the Commonwealth to WA has been that they would not allow their data to be used. So we could not link up the data we had from hospitals with the Commonwealth data we had of GP visits of what drugs were being prescribed.

Professor Holman then set out a number of very graphic and powerful examples of how using the WA data had led them to a particular result. Why was it, for example, that schizophrenics were dying at such alarming rate from heart disease? They had presumed from their data that perhaps people with mental illness did not access health services. Once they got a very small window of opportunity when the Commonwealth came on board and gave them data they were then able to analyse the data and realised that that was not the cause at all. In fact, people with schizophrenia were attending health services more regularly than the general population. The problem was that they were not being prescribed statins. They were barking up the wrong tree. Until they had access to this data they were not able to make really profound discoveries about how we can get better use out of our health services.

This is an absolute disgrace and the Commonwealth bureaucracy must be made to come on board and share this important data for the benefit of all Australians.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:55): It is a Monday morning, Madam Speaker, and I am in Princes Way, Drouin. People are coming out of the early morning light. I am sitting in my car waiting for Michelle Grattan or Paul Bongiorno to come on Fran Kelly's national program, to give me an early morning fix. It is Vietnam Veterans Day. I have been invited by the local Vietnam veterans to be at Drouin cenotaph at eight o'clock to say a few words. I recognise Gary Elliott and his wife Elma. I see a lady and reckon it is Heather Sell. I see a mobility trolley drift in and then another mobility trolley drift in. People driving along Princes Way would not have had a clue why these older people seemed to be gathering around the cenotaph. The people walking on the footpath would not have had a clue what these people were about to do. One of them had a wreath. They were setting up a microphone. They were going to make it quite special.

I said to Peter Liefman, 'Why am I here? Where are the councillors? Where are the other people who normally attend these functions?' He said, 'No, Russell, we're only inviting you, just you.' They did not care whether I was Labor, Liberal, Green, free man or Democrat; they wanted their local federal member to join them there on that Monday morning. I was there representing this parliament and I was proud to be there. I was honoured that they asked me. I said a few words but they were totally and absolutely inadequate for the service that the people who were gathered, them and their families, gave to this nation in the Vietnam War—totally inadequate but I did the best I could.

Then Peter Liefman said, 'I'm going to read the ode but I want to say a few words first.' He said a few words and then said, 'I want to read this part of the ode.' I listened very carefully because then, in strong words that echoed around the cenotaph and through that early morning street, where no-one was moving, although the traffic was still flowing, Peter said:

They went with songs to battle, they were young—
Then he hesitated and I realised that this man was talking about himself—
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow—
We have all seen people who are a glow—
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted—
And he made this point—
They fell with their faces to the foe.
He was making his point in that early morning light in Drouin that they were courageous young men from this country who we sent to the Vietnam War. Then he said:
They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.
With that, as happens at every one of those services, they pressed the button on the machine to play the obligatory cornet. We waited and we waited but it did not work. We waited some more. They said, 'We'll fix this.' Then they pressed the button and the last post was played.
Madam Speaker, we owe an unfathomable debt to all those who have served this country in all facets of war. We just heard the member for Ryan talk about the embedding of the armed services within a program you have played a very major part in over time. I want to recognise those Vietnam vets at that place, in Drouin, that morning, remembering their friends and remembering what they had been through. I was very proud to be the member of parliament in Drouin that morning representing you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER (17:00): It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted and the House stands adjourned until Monday, 22 September at 10 am.
House adjourned at 17:00
NOTICES

Mr Randall to move:
That this House notes that:
(1) dung beetles:
   (a) provide an important service to Australia’s agricultural sector; and
   (b) act as a biological solution that assists in fly control and enhances livestock health;
(2) the work of dung beetles acts to enhance and improve the nutrients in soil, leading to natural fertilisation and reducing nutrient runoff;
(3) greater recognition by industry of the beetles’ importance may lead to further widespread adoption;
(4) investigation and research into the introduction of two new species of beetles from France and Spain may provide opportunities to expand the beneficial impacts of dung beetles by increased activity during the spring months, and this could bridge the existing activity gap prior to the activity of native beetles in the summer months; and
(5) agricultural research and development organisations could provide important support in researching the benefits and quarantine implications associated with importing these two new species.
REQUEST FOR DETAILED INFORMATION

Mr Conroy to ask the Speaker—Since 7 September 2013,

what (a) has been the cost of the fit-out of ministerial offices (including Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries), and (b) is the breakdown of these costs by category of expenditure, including but not limited to, furnishings and information technology.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr E Jones) took the chair at 09:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Steel, Mr Kurt

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (09:30): I rise to talk of Mr Kurt Steel. In a political life you will encounter the odd adversary. That is the unfortunate experience for many young people who approach our Labor movement, beaming with the urge of change. So it is rare that someone might emerge from the cauldron of student politics, local activism, Young Labor leadership, a national political campaign and the political affairs of the Australian Capital Territory and its Labor Party branch with more friends and admirers than when they started. It was not Kurt's skills, which were many. It was not his competence, which was momentous. It was his authenticity, his honesty and his warmth. Canberra is a colder place today. Kurt Steel was 25, a true believer, a dedicated patron of many campaigns and, more recently, a press secretary to my friend Andrew Barr. He was a leader at the University of Canberra Students' Association, in Student Unity, in Young Labor and throughout the works of the Labor Party here in the ACT. He did it all without any of the impulse and aggression that members of Young Labor and its associated efforts are so often accused of. Rather, he did it with grace and with a grin, and he enjoyed it. Here was a man who was not afraid to be normal, who never forgot who he was. Here was a man whose eyes we could trust and whose smile we could share. Kurt was worth it. Labor has lost one of our brightest stars on the other side of the world. More importantly, a loving Canberra family has lost a young man who had so much more to give. On behalf of those who knew Kurt and who worked with him, who rallied with him, who looked up to him and who loved him, I am sorry. I send my condolences and I wish him peace in rest.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure we all agree with those sentiments. I thank the member for Batman.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (09:32): The ADF parliamentary exchange program offers a unique experience for Australian Defence Force members to shadow a member of parliament and for members and senators to have firsthand experience of ADF operations and military bases and to spend time with ADF personnel. This week in parliament 17 ADF members from Army, Navy and have shadowed parliament to members. We have all seen them around the corridors and in the chambers and we have talked with them at functions this week. I have had Flight Lieutenant Naomi O'Neill, from the Air Force, in my office. This gives them a behind-the-scenes look at how parliament operates and the role of members and senators. It increases their knowledge of the Australian parliamentary system and of the operation of the House and the Senate and provides an inside view of the workings of our offices, of our roles and responsibilities, of our participation in committees and of the complexities that we have here. ADF members I have spoken to have told me they believe it is a privilege to be welcomed into the inner hub here in parliament and that the program provides them with an opportunity to see how policy is developed and how procedures happen. Of course, it allows members of parliament to ask questions of them and for the
military to understand what happens. We know that when we as members of parliament make decisions that impact on the lives of ADF members and their families they are the people that are affected by our decisions. They are extremely proud to wear the uniform and serve our country, whether on fixed bases or deployed on operations. As members of parliament, we are directly aware of the impact of the decisions we make on these people and their lives and of what they put on the line. They put their lives on the line for our country and our strategic interests. I encourage every member of parliament to take up this opportunity to engage with this valuable program, which has reciprocal benefits for both the parliament and the ADF. I was at Williamtown air base this year on my program. I recognise and thank Wing Commander Peter Cluff, Group Captain Bernard Grealy and all of those at Williamtown air base, who made me incredibly welcome.

I now have a very good and very sound working knowledge of that base. Particularly with the issue of the JSFs ahead, it was something that I was determined to do. As always, I am incredibly impressed by the people that we have in our defence forces. I cannot speak highly enough of them and their commitment and the work they do for our country and our strategic interests. I commend the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Exchange Program and the wonderful people who are here with us this week.

**Holt Electorate: Multiple Sclerosis**

**Mr BYRNE** (Holt) (09:35): I rise today to congratulate the team behind the Casey 24 Hour Mega Swim, which took place on Saturday, 5 July and on Sunday, 6 July at Casey RACE, in Cranbourne. The 24 Hour Mega Swim began in 2001 and was initially held at the Fitzroy pool, in Victoria. The 24 Hour Mega Swim was devised by Carol Cooke, who had a vision of bringing people together to raise funds for those living with multiple sclerosis, which is otherwise referred to as MS.

MS is a debilitating and lifelong disease affecting 21,000 Australians, and currently there is no cure for MS. The symptoms of MS are unpredictable, and they vary from person to person. They may include tiredness, blurry vision, loss of balance and muscle coordination, slurred speech, difficulty walking, short-term memory loss, tingling and numbness, or in severe cases tremors and paralysis.

Conducting an event such as the Casey 24 Hour Mega Swim raises awareness about MS. It also raises much-needed funds to assist with treatment and for research to find a cure. Funds raised from this 24 Hour Mega Swim contributed to MS Australia's Go for Gold Scholarships, financial assistance programs and providing services to directly benefit those living with MS.

The 24-hour swim is a competition in which points are awarded to each team. Each team receives one point for every $10 raised and one point for every 500 metres swum. In this year's Casey 24 Hour Mega Swim seven teams competed. One hundred and two people— which is a good number—participated, swimming over 530 kilometres and raising over $21,000. The winning team was the Electric Eels. This team swam 90 kilometres and raised $5,268—of which team member Fiona Stewart herself raised $2,003. The youth award for the event went to Josh Hutchins from the Electric Eels. Josh is 11 years old, and he swam 330 laps in a 24-hour period and raised $1,330 for MS, an incredible achievement. The best-dressed team were a team called the Kings Krushers, who dressed in green wigs and capes—which is pretty interesting around Cranbourne! They raised $3,144. The 100-metres sprint was won in 59 seconds by a young man from the Electric Eels called Sam Russo.
The 24-hour swim was a huge success, and it was because of clubs like the Kiwanis Club and the YMCA Casey RACE. There is also a gentleman who participated in organising the event who was ill, Norman McLennan; his wife, Karen; and his son, Nick, who just happens to work for me. The Berwick Kiwanis Club is a great club, and the fact that Nick's dad would be there working under tough circumstance to make the event such a success says a lot about him, and I commend him for his efforts.

O'Connor Electorate: Roads to Recovery

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (09:38): I rise today to speak about the Roads to Recovery program and the financial assistance grants that greatly benefit the 43 local governments in my electorate of O'Connor. Recently, we have had some welcome announcements including the successful passage of the Land Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill 2014 through the Senate, allowing this vital $2.1 billion Roads to Recovery program to continue.

The Roads to Recovery program was first introduced in 2000 because the Howard government recognised that councils, particularly those in rural and regional areas, are faced with significant problems maintaining local roads from within their existing funding. Local roads are an essential feeder to other parts of the transport system, especially in O'Connor with farming and the resource industry being so integral to the region. Since its inception, Roads to Recovery has helped governments begin to address the backlog of local road maintenance to improve safety and transport efficiency and stimulate economic development across the country.

Shortly after the announcement was made last week, the Mayor of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Ron Yuryevich, told the *Kalgoorlie Miner* that Roads to Recovery is one of the best programs that has ever come out of Canberra, and the money allocated to the city would be used for construction as well as maintenance of roads across the entire network. The 2013-14 Roads to Recovery allocation to the 43 O'Connor local governments was $18,952,000, and I hope to see this number grow in the 2014-15 allocation. The City of Albany spent their $1.9 million on eight separate projects, and the Shire of Esperance was awarded $1.26 million in untied funding, allowing the council to fund six projects ranging from $48,000 to $650,000.

A few weeks ago we had the first quarterly distribution of the financial assistance grants. The recently released 2014-15 allocations saw O'Connor receive a 1.8 per cent increase on last year's figures. A total of $75,509,000 was allocated across the 43 local governments in O'Connor. Like Roads to Recovery, the financial assistance grants are untied grants allowing councils to use funds according to local priorities. The big winners from this year's financial assistance grants were the Shire of Cranbrook, with a 36.5 per cent increase from last year; the Shire of Wandering, with a 15.4 per cent increase; and the Shire of Yilgarn, with a 7.2 per cent increase. In fact, 37 of the 43 local governments received an increase in their financial assistance grants this year.

On 1 October 2014 the program guidelines for the $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund will be released. The fund aims to promote economic development through investment in infrastructure projects at a local level. I know a lot of local governments are eagerly awaiting the program guidelines. Along with the release of the program guidelines on 1 October 2014 is the opening of the first round of applications. I am looking forward to seeing my local governments target local priorities with Roads to Recovery and the financial
assistance grants, and I urge all O'Connor local governments to apply for all funding available to them.

**Calwell Electorate**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (09:41): Today I would like to speak about two very significant events that have occurred in my electorate. Firstly, I congratulate three local outstanding students who have excelled academically and, secondly, I congratulate Craigieburn Library, which has been recognised with an international award.

Three students of Sirius College in Broadmeadows—Saba Gul, Ridvan Atlihan and Halil Erciyas—were amongst the top 500 students across the nation to receive an Australian student prize in the 2013 academic year. The Australian Student Prize recognises academic excellence and achievement of students in senior secondary years. In recognition of their efforts, Saba, Ridvan and Halil have received a certificate and $2,000 in prize money from the Australian government. Saba and Ridvan both achieved a near-perfect score of 99.9 and 99.8—that was their ATAR score—in the 2013 VCE results and were among the top 21 students in Victoria. They have also received the all-round high achiever awards at the 20th annual Premier's VCE awards ceremony.

Sirius College coordinating principal, Mehmet Koca, said the college was very proud of its high achievers who have succeeded and excelled in their community. They have made their school and family very proud and we thank their families in particular. I also want to make the point that all three students have now graduated and are enrolled in biomedicine at the University of Melbourne. All three are third generation Australians of Muslim faith and of Turkish background. In particular, they make their community very proud.

I am also very proud of the fact that our library, the Craigieburn Global Village Library, has been named the International Public Library of the Year at an awards ceremony which was held in France on 17 August this year. The library, which is located within the Hume Global Learning Centre, was able to beat libraries in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark to take out the inaugural International Public Library of the Year 2014, an award which is given by the Danish Agency for Culture. The award has been sponsored by the Danish Agency for Culture and is established as part of a model program for public libraries which aims to generate new ideas about how the design of public libraries can change to meet the changing needs of today's society.

I am very proud of the Hume Global Learning Village. It is an icon in our electorate. It was an infrastructure project that received $9.5 million from the former Labor government. It is now up and running and provides an incredible service to our community, not just among young people but right across the spectrum from the nursery to the third age. Congratulations, Hume Global Learning Village.

**Davistown RSL Club**

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (09:44): I am delighted to announce in this chamber this morning that Davistown RSL Sub-Branch has been awarded a $4,000 grant from the federal government as part of the Saluting Their Service commemorations program so they can upgrade the surrounds of the war memorial at the Davistown RSL Club, otherwise affectionately known as the Davo. I advised the President of the Davistown RSL Sub-Branch, Walter Sheargold, of the grant earlier this week. He said that this grant will actually enable
them to completely refurbish and rejuvenate the war memorial and the area around it. As part of the upgrade, I am advised that the RSL subbranch will install four new plaques representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and combined services. It will also go towards developing a new tiled walkway up to the wall where the memorial stands. Wal was telling me that these new tiles will hopefully mean that it will be harder for people to slip over when they are making their way up to the memorial to lay a wreath, particularly in the rain.

The Davistown RSL Sub-Branch has around 140 members, and it plays a vital role in our community on the Central Coast. They meet every second Sunday of the month, but they are out and about in the community all the time. Their memorial has stood for around a decade in memory of those men and women who have given of themselves for our country and who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the democratic freedom we enjoy today. The Davistown RSL Sub-Branch is confident that the memorial will be ready in time for a special Remembrance Day service on the 11th day of the 11th month. It is a great credit to the subbranch committee for their work in securing this grant, so I would like to acknowledge the president, Wal Sheargold; the secretary, Ron Thomas; and the minutes secretary, John Green, who I am informed did all of the hard yards in getting the grant application together.

It is a fantastic example of how the Saluting Their Service grants program assists communities to commemorate those who have served and those who continue to serve our nation. The Davistown RSL Sub-Branch is one of a host of defence community organisations across the country who will share in Australian government funding. Each recipient can use the grant for commemorating significant military anniversaries; building or restoring memorials; preserving and displaying wartime and military memorabilia; and establishing local honour boards, plaques and flagpoles. This, of course, helps to ensure that the service and sacrifice of generations of Australian personnel are remembered and demonstrates our continued respect for the current generation of sailors, soldiers, air men and women serving us today.

I encourage more local community and ex-service organisations on the coast which are interested in applying for future grant funding rounds to do so. It is an ideal opportunity to remember and respect the service and sacrifice of Australia's service men and women and to promote a deeper appreciation and understanding of the role they played in shaping our nation. Details of how to apply are all contained on the Department of Veterans' Affairs website. I commend Senator Michael Ronaldson, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, for his continued work in this area. I invite him to the Davo to see the memorial for himself.

**Barwon Community Legal Service**

Mr MARLES (Corio) (09:47): I speak today to raise my concerns over the new funding arrangements that the federal government has imposed on our community legal centres. Community legal centres such as the Barwon Community Legal Service, in my electorate of Corio, deliver an important range of legal services to assist those most in need, from legal information and advice to community legal action. But their role in a strong legal system goes far beyond this. An integral part of what these centres provide lies in their role as advocates for reform. They stand as strong, independent bodies best placed to draw on their specialist expertise and experience to advocate for complex reforms and deliver targeted programs to support their client base, who are vulnerable to the flaws they identify in our legislation. Additionally, they frequently instigate invaluable community awareness initiatives, which are
also threatened by these unfair funding agreements. Restricting the Barwon Community Legal Service to only providing front-line services to clients simply does not make sense. This huge restriction misses the opportunity for legal professionals to feed back their firsthand insights into how the legal system could better deliver for our community.

Furthermore, effective community legal centres deliver initiatives to both empower those who are vulnerable to exploitation and raise awareness of broader community issues which the legal system faces. An excellent example is the success of the Do Not Knock campaign instigated by Victoria's Consumer Action Law Centre and implemented in Geelong by the Barwon Community Legal Service. The campaign recognised that some people were being ripped off in their own homes by some salespeople using high-pressure tactics to sell them overpriced products that they did not need, did not want and could not afford. Addressing the specific needs of our local community, the legal service ran workshops which educated newly arrived migrants about how to assert their rights to not be approached by or to refuse persuasive salespeople who sought to take advantage of them.

The Executive Officer of the Barwon Community Legal Service, Nick Hudson, believes that a consequence of these new arrangements will be to place greater stress on the delivery of their services and result in the inefficient use of resources. Their being able to work with the government to assist in law reform is invaluable because theirs is an experience from a local and a considered base. Nick Hudson says, 'If you cannot fix the big things, you need to keep patching up the little things, which ultimately is unsustainable.'

Unsurprisingly, the Abbott government is trying to make this invaluable work almost impossible for our hardworking legal professionals. By prohibiting the use of federal funding for all forms of advocacy, the government is effectively attempting to gag our legal services. At the same time, since the Liberals have come to government, the Barwon Community Legal Service has received large numbers of requests to provide submissions to a broad range of inquiries. On the one hand, the Abbott government is seeking the expert advice of our community legal centres, but, on the other, it does not want to listen to them. It makes no sense. I sincerely hope that the Abbott government reconsiders this unfair and illogical funding arrangement.

**Dobell Electorate: Returned Service Personnel**

*Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (09:50):* As Australians, it is our duty to remember the sacrifice of our national service men and women—the sacrifice that today means we enjoy rights and freedoms envied around the world. Although the battlefields have fallen silent, the effects of war are indelibly etched in the lives of our returned service men and women and their families. While we share the hope that future generations of Australians are not subjected to the horrors of war, it remains our responsibility to understand the sacrifice of war and the magnitude of loss from generations past. As we approach the Centenary of Anzac, we can be proud that as a nation we proudly commemorate the service, sacrifice and achievements of our military personnel.

There are thousands of organisations across Australia which dedicate their time year round to helping our returned service men and women. One such organisation is the National Servicemen's Association of Australia, more commonly known as the Nashos. Founded in 1987, the Nashos are Australia's second-largest ex-service organisation. Throughout Australia, the Nashos represent those called up for service in the Defence forces between
1951 and 1972. The Nashos are committed to promoting the health and welfare of national
servicemen, including those who returned from the Vietnam War.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my local Nasho branch, the Tuggerah
Lakes Nashos, who work tirelessly to enhance the lives of our local returned servicemen and
their families. The branch was established in 2002, and at the time the inaugural president, Mr
Kelson, stated, 'We want to bring national servicemen together and have social outings, work
on community projects and "chew the fat".' The Tuggerah Lakes Nashos have 96 members,
who continue to work on community projects and support one another. In addition to the great
work of the Nashos, members of the Tuggerah Lakes Nashos are extremely fortunate to be
supported by the SWANS—Supporting Women Assisting National Servicemen. Through
their president, Janice Toussard, the SWANS provide much-needed care to Nasho members,
and I congratulate them on their contribution.

I had the privilege of attending the 2014 memorial service held at the Entrance North
Sensory Gardens, where servicemen and their families joined to remember their fellow
comrades. A highlight for the Tuggerah Lakes Nashos at the memorial service was the
presentation of their new certificate of membership by New South Wales Division President
Norm Mallard. I would like to thank Marine Rescue Tuggerah Lakes and the Tuggerah Lakes
Show Band for their involvement also in the memorial service.

Upon my election as the member for Dobell, the Tuggerah Lakes Nashos kindly extended
an offer for me to become one of their patrons. It is an honour I gratefully accepted. I would
like to pay special tribute to President Barry O'Keefe, Vice President Barry Bradshaw, Vice
President Len Blundell, Secretary Bob Fitzpatrick, Treasurer Noel Brown and fellow patron
Tom Picot OAM for their contribution to our nation and the Nashos. I commend their work
and the work of the Tuggerah Lakes Nashos to the House.

Maynard, Mr Jim

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (09:53): It was a pleasure last Saturday to attend the Tregoar
Festival, an annual event that has been a terrific drawcard for our local community and allows
us to showcase much of the local talent in our area. But this year's event was bittersweet
because an enormous force behind the festival and our community could not join us. Jim
Maynard, a friend to both me and my predecessor Roger Price, was not just a great supporter
of the Labor Party but a tremendous champion of Tregoar. Jim, sadly, passed away last Friday
after a stoic battle with cancer. He was 82.

Jim and his wife, Margaret, brought their young family to Sydney from their home in
and his upbringing close to the famed Bow Bells, but he was equally as proud of the place his
family would call their new home, Sydney. To the end, Jim never lost that broad English
accent. After a brief settling-in period in Matraville, in East Hills, the Maynards would settle
in Western Sydney, and there they would remain. They were one of the very first residents of
the then new suburb of Tregoar. Jim's daughter Teresa says that they had the very first house
in Shackleton Avenue and watched the suburb develop around them.

A fitter and turner, Jim proudly worked for Qantas. He retired at 65, but keeping still, with
Jim, was never a possibility. Always active in the community, he gave time across 44 years to
the Tregoar Public School P&C, and he would help with the running of Tregoar Festival,
working hard with the organising committee. Sometimes he would just drop by to see how his community was going. For example, the Tregear Presbyterian church let me know how he would just stop by Pressie Cafe to see who was there, what was happening and what he could do to help. Jim loved his garden and his club life, but most of all Jim Maynard loved to give of himself.

One of the last engagements that allowed Jim and me to share time together was as part of a push with the shadow health minister, Catherine King, to get an MRI for Mount Druitt hospital—something Jim was deeply passionate about because he was one of those who needed that unit, and he was forced to travel elsewhere for diagnosis and treatment. If there was a cause to champion, Jim would be there. That was the fabric of Jim Maynard.

To Jim's children, Michael, Roy, Neil, Teresa and Kathleen, and all the grandkids, we say we are sorry for your loss, but we also thank you for sharing your dad with us. Your father's life was rich in many ways—an innings both long and filled with many memories of community service. He was typical of what Western Sydney stands for: hardworking, a family man, who, when others suggested it was time to put the feet up, decided instead to channel his energies into projects that made life easier for others.

His family tells us that they were having some difficulty finding an available church for Jim's funeral—which happens to be held this morning—but his late wife, Margaret, must have had the final word because the service will be held shortly at the historic Saint Bartholomew's church, Prospect, the place where she is buried. Jim will join her there—a fitting end for a great Western Sydney story.

Riverina Electorate: Board Diversity Scholarship Program

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (09:56): I was delighted yesterday when I learned that two Wagga Wagga women, Simone Jolliffe and Genevieve Smith, had won scholarships through the federal government's Board Diversity Scholarship program—very well deserved awards indeed. More than 300 rural and regional women applied for the scholarships, following applicants' successful completion of a company directors professional development course. I was really pleased that two locals were successful. It shows the impressive diversity, the capability and the leadership skills of women right throughout the Riverina.

Simone Jolliffe helps run a dairy and irrigation farm at Euberta. Indeed, in February this year she was appointed to the Australian Dairy Farmers Board. The ADF President, Noel Campbell, said Mrs Jolliffe owns and runs a 220-cow dairy farm in Wagga Wagga with her husband Neil. She is a busy lady. She has three young children. She helps milk the cows. She is showing rural leadership. She is very deserving of this award.

Genevieve Smith was recognised for her important work with the Wagga Women's Health Centre. She is an expert in information technology and, when she is not running after her two kids, she is organised enough to help out with Riverina Bluebell, a mental health awareness program. She is also involved in the Children's Medical Research Institute, which runs a very successful Christmas fair to raise funds for valuable medical research. As I say, they are both very deserving recipients.

I welcome the government's announcement of $650,000 over two years to empower more rural women to obtain positions on boards. Yesterday's announcement was made by the
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Michaelia Cash. It will see a record 140 scholarships awarded for a broader range of professional development than ever in the past. These important grants aim to see more female leaders in every industry, every business, every city and every region in Australia. It is great news for the Riverina region. It is great news for the recipients Simone and Genevieve, and I know they will bring a broad range of skills back to the region, as well as enhancing their own professional development.

Senator Michaelia Cash is to be congratulated on promoting this particular initiative. The coalition has some very, very powerful and really forward-thinking women in the upper house, not least of whom are my Nationals colleagues Fiona Nash, the Assistant Minister for Health, and Bridget McKenzie, who is doing some great things in the field of education. I do congratulate both Genevieve and Simone on these wonderful awards. I also congratulate Senator Michaelia Cash for promoting these awards. And I congratulate all rural women recipients of these and good luck to them for the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the parliamentary secretary, and there are a few capable women in the House of Representatives as well.

In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

STATEMENTS

Iraq

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:00): This parliament is again debating the question of when we should intervene as a sovereign nation to assist another sovereign nation where lives are threatened. This is an issue on which I have spoken in this place before in the context of our involvement in Afghanistan and on which I expect to rise again in the future. The question of Australian intervention overseas has a long history. In 1991, Bob Hawke quoted Neville Chamberlain from 1938, when Chamberlain had said, 'Why should we be concerned with a faraway country of which we know little? Hawke said the response to Chamberlain's question was provided by the horrific events that followed. He said to the parliament, 'The great lesson of this century is that peace is bought at too high a price if that price is the appeasement of aggression.'

There are times when the international community has made mistakes in intervening. Many have argued we should not have intervened in Vietnam and in retrospect, I think, almost everybody agrees we should have intervened earlier in Srebrenica and Rwanda.

In the context of considering Iraq, the intervention in 2003, as the member for Sydney has pointed out, colours every debate. The decision to rush to war is, I think, broadly recognised to have been a mistake in 2003 and the errors should weigh heavily on the shoulders of all of us. In 2003, the lack of international support and the lack of support from the majority of Iraqi peoples were factors which played into the mistakes that occurred in the intervention in Iraq. The question today when this parliament is discussing the government's decision to supply weapons to the Kurdish Peshmerga is whether this is the right way in which we should intervene.

Everyone in this debate recognises that IS is a brutal force. They have engaged in mass killings of men and women and children. They have engaged in the brutal slaughter in medieval fashion of journalists Steven Sotloff and James Foley. IS have killed Christians, Yazidis, Sunni and Shiite. It claims theological underpinnings but no religion supports the
rape of women, the killing of children, the murder of innocents. IS poses a clear danger to
Iraqis who wish to live in peace. According to the UN refugee agency, around 1.2 million
Iraqis have been forced to flee their homes.

Labor have said very clearly that we do not want regular forces on the ground in Iraq and
we welcome the Prime Minister ruling out sending Australian combat troops to Iraq. My
views on this, as those of the member for Sydney, are shaped by former Labor Foreign
Minister Gareth Evans, who has been instrumental in shaping the notion of a responsibility to
protect. He argues that a set of criteria ought to apply to considering any instance of
Australian involvement in assisting those at risk in other countries.

The first of those criteria is just cause: is there a threat of serious and irreparable harm to
human beings? It is very clear that this is a looming genocide. The second is right intention: is
the intention of the military action to prevent human suffering or for other motives? I think it
is clear in this instance that the main intention of the military action is to prevent human
suffering. The third is final resort: has every other measure besides military intervention been
taken into account? It is clear that, without weapons, there is a real risk that Iraqi security
forces will not be able to hold off IS and protect the people in the Kurdish regions. The fourth
is legitimate authority. We have been advised in this case that the proposed actions have been
authorised by the government of Iraq.

The fifth is proportional means: are the minimum necessary means being applied to secure
human protection? This is clearly met by humanitarian drops of food, water and medicine. As
for arming the Peshmerga, that is the most challenging to the tests I have mentioned so far,
but is my view that, without arming the Peshmerga, it is difficult to see how they will be able
to protect themselves against the ruthless advance of IS.

The sixth criterion is reasonable prospect: is it likely that the action will protect human life
and are the consequences of this action sure not to be worse than no action at all? Again, we
cannot be absolutely certain of this, but the advance of IS does pose an existential threat to the
people in the Kurdish regions of Iraq.

My views are also shaped by the words of the UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon,
who said:
The international community must show solidarity.
Not a single country or any organization can handle this international terrorism. This has been a global
concern. Therefore, I really appreciate some key countries which have been showing very determined,
decisive actions …
He went on to say:
… without addressing this issue through certain means, including military and counter-terrorism
actions, we will just end up allowing these terrorist activities to continue.
That view is an important one to take into account in considering Australia's action in the
region.

My views on 'responsibility to protect' are shaped too by Michael Ignatieff, a professor at
the Kennedy School at Harvard while I was there, who also has been a very thoughtful
scholar about the challenges for international law in considering when to intervene in another
nation for humanitarian reasons. The tests which he has laid down in his writings are, I
believe, met in this instance.
In order for there to be lasting security for the people who are threatened by IS, it is absolutely vital that the Iraqi government govern for all Iraqis. The mistakes that were made under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki are mistakes that I hope will not be repeated under Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. I think it is vital for a lasting peace in Iraq and for its people to be able to continue their lives in safe and secure circumstances that the new Iraqi government be as inclusive as possible. Eli Berman and David Kilcullen, two eloquent writers on counter-terrorism, have made the point that the growth of insurgent movements is so often fuelled by a failure of government to provide the basics—electricity, education, health care and welfare services—where that failure can turn young men to extremism for moral and material sustenance. So it is vital that Australia assist for humanitarian purposes, and I call on the government to rethink its short-sighted cuts to Australia's foreign aid budget.

Australia is a country which under Labor moved towards providing a more generous level of foreign aid; the new government has cut foreign aid. Ultimately, foreign aid is an important underpinning of security which ensures that we are more rarely called upon to make interventions such as this one. As the member for Sydney has noted, the response from Australia to the Syria crisis has been miserly indeed. The United Nations has called for $6½ billion; we have given just $30 million. (Time expired)

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (10:10): To date, this year, more than a million Iraqis have been forced to flee from their homes. We have witnessed the dreadful human tragedy of beheadings, crucifixions and mass executions beaming into our living rooms via television and onto iPads. Peoples and cultures which have existed for thousands and thousands of years are presently faced with extermination. Women in the tens of thousands have been forced into sexual slavery. The United States President, Barack Obama, has labelled what is happening at the hands of the ISIS movement a potential genocide. I am so pleased that our Prime Minister refuses to call it a state, because it is not. Let us call it what it actually is, not what it claims to be. It is evil. It is terrorism. It has been described by the United Nations as a terrorist group. The United Nations has accused ISIS of committing mass atrocities and war crimes. This is not a debate against a religion; this is a topic for discussion against terrorism, as it ought to be.

I would like to read the words of an Australian Army general to departing troops, who were heading home after a deployment. I think the words of this major-general need to be listened to very carefully. They need to be followed. He said:

When you all arrive, I ask people to do three things. I ask you all to be brilliant at the basics, to work as a team and to see the bigger picture. The thing I want to reflect on most, not only the fact that you were all brilliant at the basics and you did your job, but how you have worked as a team. Across the Army, Navy, Air Force, you have all worked together. You worked providing logistics support, whether you have been providing intelligence support, whether you've been driving people around, you have all been supporting each other. It's been fantastic. I want to say 'thank you' to you, but I also want you to go home and do something for me – I want you to go to your families and say 'thank you' to them. Whether you've got a wife, children, husband, partner, sister or brother. Even if you're a tough guy and you've been over here on your tour and you know you can carry yourself – they all worry about you. And every moment you're away they care for you. They think about you and they worry about you. Please go home and pass on my thanks and our thanks for their support. Without them doing all the work, keeping your family and everything going at home, we would not be able to do the work we do here. So thank you for your service. Have a great trip home. You have enjoyed your time here. You have worked hard. But also, when you go home – one final thing – be prepared for another war. There are plenty of wars
out there and plenty of conflicts waiting for you. Don't rush to it. Don't charge into it. It will find you in its own good time but I can assure you it will find you. So go home and have a break. Recharge. Repair. And be rested ready for the next one.

So again thank you.

Those words are not warmongering. Those words are not promoting war for war's sake. Those words are from an Australian Army general who knows the reality of the situation. He knew the reality then; it still exists today. And they fit in perfectly with what the Prime Minister said just the other day, and said very eloquently:

… peaceful democracies, peaceful pluralist democracies like Australia shrink rightly and understandably from reaching out to these conflicts but just because we would prefer to stand aside from these conflicts doesn't mean that these conflicts will stand aside from us.

His words dovetail in with what the major general said.

What Australia is doing is providing humanitarian airdrops. We have done that twice. We are providing logistical airlifts of equipment, including military equipment. There is no talk at the moment about combat troops on the ground, and hopefully that will not need to happen. But we are doing what we can and what we have been asked to do, and we are doing it very well—in a very dangerous situation, I might add. We should always, always applaud the brave men and women of our Army, our Air Force and our Navy for doing what they do not just on our behalf but for the people for whom they are serving.

I would now also like to quote from the member for Bass, Andrew Nikolic, who was the commandant of Kapooka, the army recruit training centre near Wagga Wagga, in my Riverina electorate. He was the commandant there in 2004 and early 2005, before he went to Iraq. He said:

… there's been a fair bit of hyperbole from Mr Wilkie—more attention-seeking behaviour from him. But let's talk about the facts. The fact is there's nothing in the Constitution or defence legislation that requires the executive to engage in endless debate with Mr Wilkie and Mr Bandt or to first get a vote through parliament.

And that is correct. He was asked by the ABC's Leon Compton: 'Are we going to war in Iraq again?' And his response was:

Absolutely not. What we're doing is we're responding to a humanitarian crisis. We're acting to prevent what many people can see has the potential to become a genocide, as we've seen, through dropping humanitarian supplies to people in mountain tops in Mount Sinjar, in the drops to Shiah Turkmen residents of Amerli in northern Iraq, and this has been done with the permission of the government in Iraq. In coming days we'll have C17 aircraft involved in airlifting equipment and supplies to Erbil in the Kurdish part of Iraq, and these are things that we need to do to stop the spread of ISIS or ISIL, or whatever they call themselves, and engaging in the sort of activities that we have seen on our TV on a daily basis.

I quoted the member for Bass because he knows what he is talking about, unlike the Greens, unlike the member for Denison. When it comes to these sorts of things, he has been there. He has seen it. He has served. He knows what he is talking about. I know that he, in his heart of hearts, has the best intentions for Australia and for the northern Iraqis very much at heart.

On Saturday, at the Federal Council of the National Party, an urgency motion—the very first, in fact—was moved:
That this Federal Council implores the Federal Government to urgently increase the humanitarian intake of vulnerable religious minorities from northern Iraq and Syria—as well as calling for an increase in foreign aid to northern Iraq and a boost to the humanitarian refugee intake, as I said. That was passed as an urgency motion. It was moved by the National Women’s Council of the Nationals and seconded by Queensland Senator Barry O’Sullivan, and it was passed unanimously, as it should be.

The Greens would have parliament decide our response to assistance in northern Iraq. But this action is, as it always has been, the decision of the Executive Council, and ultimately the Prime Minister of the day, based on—of course—the advice from our highest ranking military chiefs. This is how it should be. I am not quite sure what the Greens would have us do. They go around and they say things such as what was said by Senator Whish-Wilson:

I think we need to find better words than ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ because, to me, this implies a very one-sided view of the world.

As both major parties, Labor and the coalition, hold sensible discussions over national security, the Greens use the Senate to call for ‘terrorists’ and ‘terrorism’ to be dropped from the vocabulary because it encourages extremism. I mean, what would the Greens have us do? What would Senator Milne have us do? Would she have us debate the merits or otherwise of what we absolutely need to do—and that is humanitarian assistance—whilst they wring their hands and do media doorstops on this, or would they have our Army, our Air Force and our Navy get in and do the job that we asked them to do and that the Iraqi government has asked them to do? That is to provide much-needed assistance to people who are in a desperate plight—people who are facing death. As the Prime Minister said, this is not a state it is a death cult. If the Greens got that through, what would their next step be? Would they then request to go back to their branch party meetings whilst again wringing their hands, eating tofu, drinking chamomile tea and basket weaving while they decided what we should do to help the people of the world?

That is what this is about. It is actually providing much-needed assistance. It is not about—as the Greens would have us believe—making grandstanding mileage out of this very important human tragedy. We need to act; we are acting. I commend both Labor and the coalition for supporting this absolutely-needed assistance. And I certainly commend those people who are providing that valuable assistance.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (10:20): Firstly, I want to express my condolences to the families and friends of the many people who have been killed in cold blood in recent months by members of the Islamic State, with their killers revelling in their cowardly, sickening and medieval brutality.

Secondly, I want to agree with and endorse the comments made by Gareth Evans concerning Iraq. He writes:

THE current Western military intervention in Iraq is not 2003 revisited, and Australia is right to be part of it. The action is being taken at the request of the Iraqi government, …

... ... ...

Its objective is explicitly humanitarian, to protect civilian populations immediately at risk of genocide or other mass atrocity crimes from the marauding Islamic State militant forces, who in their march across Iraq have already perpetrated atrocities unrivalled in their savagery.
He goes on to say:

The intervention is not based, as was the attack on Saddam Hussein, on generalised human rights concerns, or beliefs—later proved completely unfounded—about that regime’s possession of weapons of mass destruction or support for terrorist organisations.

... ... ...
... it is completely consistent, in a way the earlier action was clearly not, with the principles of the international responsibility to protect (R2P) people at risk of mass atrocity crimes that was embraced unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 2005.

He describes the generally-accepted criteria for the responsibility to protect as being five things:

... the atrocities occurring or feared are sufficiently serious to justify, prima facie, a military response; that the response has a primarily humanitarian motive; that no lesser response is likely to be effective in halting or averting the harm; that the proposed response is proportional to the threat; and that the intervention will actually be effective, doing more good than harm.

He continues:

All these bases seem to be covered here. The available evidence is that the many thousands of men, women and children in northern Iraq—Shi’ites, Kurds or those perceived as Sunni apostates—remain at risk of genocidal slaughter by the advancing Islamic State forces.

I also agree—not for the first time, by the way—with the London lord mayor, Boris Johnson, who has written that we have a responsibility to help the Kurds in Iraq. He said:

... it is obvious to most sane and rational people ... that one of the results of the end of Saddam and the Ba’athist tyranny has been the power vacuum in Iraq, and the incompetence that has allowed Isis to expand with such horrifying speed.

He says that the Kurds in Iraq:

... have a democratic system; they are pushing forward with women’s rights; they insist on complete mutual respect of all religions.

As he says:

It would be an utter tragedy if we did not do everything in our power to give succour and relief to those who are now facing massacre and persecution, and to help repel the maniacs from one of the few bright spots in the Middle East.

He concludes by saying:

Yes, we have got it wrong before; and yes, we cannot do everything. But that doesn’t mean we should collapse into passivity and quietism in the face of manifest evil. These people need our help.

And I agree with that.

I now want to make some broader remarks, because the problem of violence in our world is by no means confined to Iraq and, frankly, we need to do better. What awful news we hear: the beheading of journalists; the shooting down of the Malaysian civilian plane; and the conflict in Gaza, with Palestinians shooting rockets at Israeli civilians and Israeli bombs killing Palestinian children. These events, and many others, suggest that the world is not becoming a safer place; and I do not think that it is becoming a better place. I believe that making the world safe for civilians is core business for anyone who is involved in public policy. If the world is unsafe then everything else becomes unimportant.
So how can we make the world safer for civilians? I think there should be United Nations peacekeepers in Iraq, in Syria, in Ukraine, in Gaza and around the world wherever there is conflict and wherever there are civilian lives at risk. Australia will hold the United Nations Security Council presidency for a month in November. What should we be doing with this rare and important opportunity? Like others, I am dismayed and often disgusted by events in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Afghanistan and Ukraine. I know the people of North Korea are brutalised by their leaders and that drug lords in Mexico and Colombia routinely put on public display the bodies of those that they have executed. The antics of Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and other violent fundamentalists make me sick. I do not believe in unilateral action of the Coalition of the Willing kind. As we have seen only too clearly from Vietnam to Iraq, that only makes matters worse with violence begetting violence.

But I do not believe that we can just sit here and shrug our shoulders and say that there is nothing we can do about it. I do believe in collective international action to solve problems, and of course we have the United Nations established precisely to solve international problems and to seek to improve on the abysmal record of the first and second world wars. I know that it does a lot of good, but the level of global violence suggests that it needs to be doing much more. Why does it not do more? That would be because the big powers, members of the UN Security Council, with a veto power over UN action, are prepared to turn a blind eye to cover up the sins and misdeeds of their allies and supporters. No-one has clean hands here—not the United States, not Russia, not China. All three of them are guilty of putting up with outrageous conduct when it is done by one of their supporters and all three are willing to use their veto power in the Security Council to stop the UN from taking meaningful action.

Over my years of political life I have come to realise that a key measure of political integrity is what political leaders are prepared to tolerate by way of misconduct from people in their camp. At present the big powers, instead of working together to put an end to war and political violence, are prepared to tolerate way too much. Of course, getting the big powers to lift their game is no easy matter, but I make three observations that might help. First, people concerned about global conflict should seek to breathe new life into the responsibility to protect. This doctrine took a long time to develop and was very quickly put into cold storage after Libya, but it does have the potential to save civilian lives and we should demand that the UN Security Council uses it when outbreaks of violence occur. Some people might think that this will require a lot more resources for the UN, but it is nonsense to think that we do not have these resources readily at hand. The US, Russia and China have massive numbers of troops and equipment at their disposal. All that is required is for some of these resources to be used in the international peacekeeping effort.

Second, we should be wary of the way that trade agreements and global trading arrangements act as a handbrake and make countries reluctant to tell home truths to their trading partners. Countries around the world should not allow their independence and self-sufficiency to become so compromised that they cannot say what needs to be said or do what needs to be done.

Third, our attitude matters. Everyone has to be willing to put the weights on the big powers and demand action from them. It is not good enough to let them blame this or that rogue state or rogue general or rogue religious leader. We should tell the big powers that we know they can fix the problem, if they genuinely want to, or, if they cannot, that the world is willing to
help out. It is not an easy road to hoe, to be sure, and often inconvenient, but far superior to Coalition of the Willing type unilateral action, which has proven to be disastrous, and far superior to fatalism and meekly allowing this violence to continue or trying to pick up the refugee pieces. That is an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff when what is needed are more fences at the top. An ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure and we should use our time in the sun chairing the Security Council to advocate that.

At present we are too fatalistic about the sins of the big powers. We think that there is nothing we can do about them. Many countries, Australia included, attach themselves to one or other of the great powers and rely on that to keep them safe. I am not saying that we should detach ourselves from the US alliance; that is not my position at all. What I am saying is that being part of an alliance does not mean we are obliged to turn a blind eye to misconduct. Indeed, we often do our friends a favour when we point out where they are going wrong.

I have put the focus squarely on the UN and the Security Council, but anyone who thought that in doing so I am trying to put roadblocks in the path of international action or delay international action would be very wrong. As I indicated earlier in my remarks, I believe that international action is absolutely necessary. I note that the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has said that international action is urgent, and he is right.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (10:30): I thank the member for Wills for his comments, the latter part of which I substantially concur with. There were other aspects, which I might take up at another time. But I want to speak today in support of the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq. He made the statement earlier this week outlining the commitment that Australia has made to supporting an international approach to combat the advances of a group that poses the greatest threat to life and liberty in Iraq and the Middle East in recent memory. The situation in Iraq is nothing short of dire, and I regret that in the week that has passed since I last spoke on this matter no light at the end of the tunnel has been realised for millions of Iraqis and the matter has, regrettably, continued in a very dark direction.

The self-styled Islamic State, which neither represents Islam nor is a 'state', as the Prime Minister has said, is purely a jihadist group that seeks to gain power through torture, oppression, rape, slavery and summary executions. I have never witnessed innocent women and children treated in the brutal way that we have seen. I have never witnessed people who have been detained being summarily executed in the way we have seen in the case of the several journalists from the United States to date. This group acts in contrast to the teachings of all substantial religions. It seeks to destabilise the fledgling democracy in Iraq.

President Obama has called the situation a potential genocide, and I do not think this terminology should be cast aside as some form of hyperbole. Time seems to erase, at least from our immediate memories, the horrors of the world that we have witnessed. When we search our memories, we recall some of these atrocities. I am very familiar with what happened in Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge. I was in there shortly after that genocidal regime was deposed. And the Rwanda genocide: I witnessed many of the churches with ceilings shot out, many families that had been so terribly affected. And the Srebrenica massacre: I have been to that area of the Balkans. The list goes on. We lament what we have seen, but I have not seen, even among those situations that I have mentioned, anything as appalling as we are witnessing now.
The situation in Iraq is one in which we may, if the jihadists are able to go unchecked, find ourselves lamenting very much our own failure to have done something to address it. We must not allow that to happen. The Prime Minister announced that Australians have been involved in providing humanitarian relief and logistic support. These requests have been met primarily through the work of the men and women of our Australian Defence Force, and for that we are very grateful. I firmly believe that no Prime Minister comes into office with a desire to send our Defence Force personnel into an overseas theatre of war to be at risk of potential harm. But there are times when this is absolutely necessary. The Prime Minister has acted only on the very best of advice, with the support of his colleagues in this place—perhaps except for the Greens. He has made a decision that would arguably come as one of the toughest that a leader ever has to face. I would stress that these decisions are not made lightly. The decision to commit our forces to this international effort has been backed by the United Nations chief, Ban Ki-moon, who has said:

… without addressing this issue through certain means, including some military and counter-terrorist terrorist actions, will just end up allowing these terrorist activities to continue.

I think these words should be heeded by us all. I know that there is some concern that any return to Iraq will see a long war without positive results. It may engender something even worse. I understand this concern, but I would note that, from the events that we have seen, this incursion is very different to the last time that Australian forces entered Iraq. I do not believe the world has ever seen an organisation before that has acted with such barbarism. Never before have we seen a group so cruel not only to its enemies but also to its own people. This is not a situation that the world has responded to in previous times. It is not a situation, in my view, that calls for a delayed response.

For the Greens to be suggesting that these are not terrorist acts and that we should find some other language is, I think, one of the cheapest political arguments that I have ever seen. It is quite deplorable. I find it difficult to understand. To date the Labor Party has been very strongly supportive of the measures that have been taken and of seeing the importance of us having a sense of unity in dealing with this absolutely appalling situation. No person in a position of responsibility could ignore the advice being received. The plight of those currently in Iraq demands our help. I think it should be offered. Australia has, as a strong and prosperous nation, a responsibility to help defend the defenceless. We must, as a nation that desires peace—a thriving democracy that is an example to the rest of the world—support other nations to grow in peace and prosperity, and to have the same tolerance and understanding of different people, different races and different religions in the way in which we, here in this country, appreciate. I do not think we can afford to falter on this matter. We cannot stand by idly on the sideline and lament another genocide.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (10:37): I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the decision by the government to provide assistance in the fight against Islamic State. But I am disappointed that the opportunity for parliamentary consideration remains a fundamentally token gesture. We have had more than a decade to reflect on the folly of 2003. Yet nothing much has changed. The executive function of the Australian government should not be unfettered in this area of decision making. It is simply too complex and its consequences too serious for that to be the case. At this point, let me be clear, I do believe these circumstances, with Islamic State perpetrating atrocities in a widening zone within Iraq, raise a legitimate
option of Australia's involvement in an international humanitarian response. But, there are
two key matters that should be resolved every time there is reason for Australia to consider
military involvement or action in circumstances where our security is not directly under
threat.

The first is the question of the basis on which we are involved. For, clearly, Australia
should not make a military commitment without a legitimate basis for doing so either in the
form of a UN Security Council resolution or through an appropriately constituted request
from the Iraqi government. There is no UN resolution on this matter, though I note the
supportive statements from the UN Secretary-General on international cooperation to address
the threat in northern Iraq. I am concerned, however, that there has been no apparent attempt
by Australia, as a member of the Security Council, to bring this matter before the United
Nations. As a country that played a pivotal role through Labor's Doc Evatt in drafting the UN
Charter, which provides for the Security Council to have the primary responsibility for
international security, and as a nation that fought so hard to have a seat at the table, it is
surprising that we would not raise the matter in that forum for urgent discussion, if not
resolution. I note that Don Rothwell, Professor of International Law at the ANU, has made
comments this week to the effect that Australia, as a member of the Security Council, has a
responsibility to address the council.

On the issue of a formal request from the government of Iraq, the conflicting versions
presented by Iraq's ambassador to Australia in the last few days on this point are far from
reassuring. The ambassador initially suggested that the delivery of arms to the Kurdish
regional government was akin to a foreign nation supplying weapons to the Victorian
government without the sanction of the national government in the case of a threat to
Australian sovereignty. Later, he adjusted his position. In any case the analogy is valid, and it
begs a sequence of questions about our involvement and its potential consequences. What are
the possible side-effects of arming the Peshmergas in Kurdistan? Does this increase or
decrease the likelihood of a stable and unified Iraq? Can we be confident that the supply of
arms will not subsequently be the source of further conflict, civil war or atrocities?

The complexities of the situation in Iraq and the region are brilliantly described by Peter
Harling in an article entitled 'IS back in business' in Le Mond Diplomatique this week. Surely,
these issues deserve to be aired and examined more fully both within forums such as the UN
and here in our own parliament. Yet, at present the community is being asked by the
government to take these decisions on trust. Just look where that got us in 2003.

Finally, in terms of the basis for our involvement I acknowledge the doctrine of the
'responsibility to protect', which aims to save civilians from imminent genocidal danger in
situations where their government is not able or willing to do so. This principle was explained
in an article in The Australian on Tuesday by former foreign minister and former head of the
International Crisis Group Gareth Evans, who deserves significant credit for helping to
achieve the unanimous adoption of R2P by the UN General Assembly in 2005.

Mr Evans observed that the generally accepted criteria for a military response in the
context of R2P are the three elements: legality, legitimacy and likely effectiveness. He
considered that the request of the Iraqi government was sufficient to satisfy the legality
requirement in the absence of a UN Security Council resolution. He then noted the criteria for
legitimacy and likely effectiveness as being that the seriousness of the atrocities that are
occurring or are in prospect must justify a military response; that the response has a primarily humanitarian motive; that no lesser response is likely to be effective in averting the harm; that the proposed response is proportional to the threat; and that the intervention will be effective, doing more good than harm. Mr Evans considered that 'all these bases seem to be covered here'—a positive judgement to be sure, but also a rather tentative one. Mr Evans cautioned that it would be very difficult to make a case for Australia to do more, saying that to do so would be to take us back into uncharted waters, while to do any less would abdicate our common humanity.

I note too, the view presented in The Conversation this week by Kevin Boreham—a lecturer in international law at ANU—that, while humanitarian missions by the Royal Australian Air Force in Iraq are in accordance with international law, continued political scrutiny of further Australian military action in a highly fluid situation is wholly justified.

The need for continued political scrutiny is the second fundamental issue to be resolved when Australia considers its military involvements. I have consistently argued—including in my first speech to parliament—for parliament to have a properly structured role in any decision to send Australian troops to war in the absence of a UN mandate. Questions about the basis and extent of military involvement in the struggle against Islamic State and the possible consequences are being asked and debated across the world. Why are we not doing the same in the House of Representatives as a precursor to the commitment of military assistance rather than here in the Federation Chamber as an afterthought to that commitment being made? I do not advance these issues in the interests of nit-picking or nay-saying but in the interests of avoiding the serious and harmful mistakes that have been made in the past, most notably in 2003 and before that in Vietnam.

The courageous speech by Labor leader Arthur Calwell as Leader of the Opposition in 1965 when the government had made the decision to send Australian troops to Vietnam contained a cautionary message: 'When the drums beat and the trumpets sound the voice of reason and right can only be heard in the land with difficulty.'

In Tuesday's The Australian, Russell Trood, a former senator for whom I have great respect, suggested—and I acknowledge that this view is supported by the majority of my Labor colleagues—that the prerogative of Australian executive government, when it comes to making military commitments in the national interest, should effectively be absolute and that any form of parliamentary approval process would constitute an abdication of the natural authority of the Prime Minister and an outsourcing of the responsibility placed on a government by its electoral mandate. To my mind there are two issues with this argument.

The first is that executive power in our system of government does not exist separately from the parliament. Indeed, executive authority is effectively derived from and constituted by a workable parliamentary majority and is technically supplied by the recognition of that majority by the Queen's representative in the Governor-General. The majority is formed by members who are each elected to parliament in their own right and who each have the power of precisely one vote in the House of Representatives—including the Prime Minister.

The second is the idea that by winning an election—that is by having the support of enough members of the House of Representatives—the Prime Minister, with or without consultation involving her or his cabinet, somehow acquires the right to a species of executive power that
cannot or should not be legislatively constrained or otherwise made subject to parliamentary process. In my view, that is a position without constitutional basis or logic.

Finally, I would note that the argument advanced by Russell Trood and his colleague Anthony Bergin, that parliamentary approval could be subject to the whim of minor parties, of course only applies if one of the major parties does not support military involvement. If this is the situation then perhaps the case for military action has not been well made out—as with Vietnam, and Iraq in 2003.

On the same page of the same paper, Gareth Evans, as mentioned earlier, gives his reasons for believing that Australia's involvement is right and that it is consistent with the responsibility to protect doctrine—again I do not disagree. But that is not the same thing as accepting that the Prime Minister and cabinet ought to make that judgement alone. Indeed in 2006, the UK House of Lords select committee, in a report titled Waging war: parliament's role and responsibility, concluded:

… the exercise of the Royal prerogative by the Government to deploy armed force overseas is outdated and should not be allowed to continue as the basis for legitimate war-making in our 21st century democracy. Parliament's ability to challenge the executive must be protected and strengthened. There is a need to set out more precisely the extent of the Government's deployment powers, and the role Parliament can—and should—play in their exercise.

This is not about abrogating the decision-making authority of the government of the day—it is about ensuring that our government, any government, makes the best and most responsible decisions, especially when it comes to life and death matters like this. The parliament is the most direct expression of the will of the Australian people and that fact should be honoured and respected.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (10:46): I rise to commend the Prime Minister for his passionate statement to the House on Iraq and Syria. I also praised the crucial work the Australian Defence Force is doing, along with other nations, to take a stand against the evil so-called 'Islamic State'.

Australia is working with the United States of America, Britain and France—at the invitation of the Iraqi government—to assist with humanitarian air drops and to help with logistical support, like delivering military equipment to Kurdish forces fighting Islamic State extremists.

We are morally obliged to assist the humanitarian needs of these persecuted people and it is in Australia's best interests to do so. In Australian newspapers we are seeing images of inconceivable evil—of children being made to hold severed heads, people being marched to their death and shot through the head and of people lying in pools of blood in city streets. We are seeing videos, like that overnight, of another journalist being murdered by Islamic State radicals.

I cannot imagine going through this terror, let alone seeing my family, friends or neighbours running for their lives. But there are people—like the tens of thousands of Christians and people from the ancient Yazidi minority—who are being forced out of their homes and into hiding in the mountains in the Kurdish region. They are in fear of their lives—terrorised by Islamic State extremists, who know no mercy. The Islamic State wants to wipe these people out. The women are being used as sexual slaves and the men are murdered on the
spot—this is genocide and it is evil. These extremists conveniently and incorrectly use their Muslim belief to satisfy their own twisted urges of rape and murder.

I support the government's decision to provide humanitarian aid, because no-one should be subjected to the horror that is happening now. But this horror—this terrorism—is spreading. Previously, it has spread to the US with the destruction of the World Trade Center; we witnessed the London bombings and the Bali bombings; and now, about 60 of our own Australian citizens are fighting with Islamic State across Iraq and Syria.

As the Prime Minister said, the government is boosting counterterrorism funding by $630 million and updating our laws so they keep pace with evolving technologies and the developing threat. Over the weekend the Prime Minister confirmed that these resources will assist the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Office of National Assessment and the Australian Customs and Boarder Protection Service. The Prime Minister also confirmed that biometric screening is being rolled out and installed at all our international airports, and that the monitoring of the national security watch list will be boosted by the border force counter-terrorism units.

Yesterday in question time I asked the Minister for Justice how the additional funding for the Australian Crime Commission will assist in the fight against home-grown terrorism. He outlined how the range of measures were designed to tackle home-grown terrorism. I also support this government's new national security laws that will strengthen our ability to arrest, prosecute and jail returning foreign fighters.

Terrorism and extremists like Islamic State are not problems restricted to the Middle East. It has become our problem because it is affecting our way of life. Tougher antiterrorism laws mean data needs to be collected—our emails, phone calls and extra security at everything from airports to sporting matches.

I believe we must stay our course in defeating extremists like Islamic State, because terrorism and extremism cannot be fought with passive acts of humanitarianism. We have to be prepared, we have to be united and we have to understand that the threat is not mainstream religion—it is extremism that knows no bounds. These terrorists—these extremists—despise us for how we live. They have no freedom, no democracy and no unity. We do, and I am glad that we do. They are the strongest things a civilisation can have.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (10:52): I rise to support the motion of the Prime Minister, his speech and the support provided by the Leader of the Opposition in the main chamber.

It is very easy at this point in time in our history to wonder whether the world has ever been less stable. There is some weight in that question, with conflicts now raging in the Middle East, including in Iraq and Syria; a number of conflicts on the African continent; and what is developing as a state-on-state conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. And, of course, closer to home there are very significant strategic tensions in our own region.

But when we reflect on the 19th and 20th centuries we see a much more grave picture, with up to 40,000,000 lives lost during the 20th century—mainly in the first and second world wars but also in conflicts like in Korea. If you go back to the 19th century the list is very long—various revolutions and wars of independence: the Franco-Prussian War, the War of
1812, the Anglo-Afghan wars, the Anglo-Zulu War, the Sino-Japanese wars, the Boxer Rebellion, the Boer War and the Crimean War. The list is very long.

Thankfully, things have changed as we have made our way into the 21st century. I do not know that human nature has changed much, but certainly I think that we have matured as human beings. And we do have far more developed international and rules-based systems which help and guide us through periods of strategic tension and difficulty and, indeed, the outbreak of conflict. That is not to say that we can rest on our laurels. We have to be forever vigilant to ensure that we secure what I think the whole global community wants, and that is a peaceful world in which we can all live in peace.

So these are serious times, and Australia has to be very cautious about the role it plays as not only a middle power but a middle power which has quite successfully in recent years enhanced its role as an international player in the global community. We should tread very cautiously as we deal with each of these questions which are before us.

I think it is fair to say that there are a number of questions we need to ask ourselves before committing ourselves to military operations: first of all, whether the action is supported broadly in the international community and, of course, whether the action is authorised by the host country, the country involved; whether that military intervention is likely to do more harm than good, of course; whether there is a responsibility to protect—that is, protection from things like ethnic cleansing and genocide; and whether it is likely that the failure to act will lead to a proliferation or spread of fundamentalism and acts of terror, including on our own shore. I think that in the case of northern Iraq, all those boxes are ticked and it is absolutely correct that Australia should be playing a part in an international coalition of forces to do all we can to secure our longer-term peace in that part of the world. Syria is a far more complex picture. Again, Australia will need to be very cautious about how it responds responsibly to questions which will inevitably emerge out of Syria.

Australia will have to be very careful about concurrency issues here. We remain involved in military operations in a number of parts of the world, including, still, Afghanistan; now northern Iraq; and potentially, if you can believe what the media is reporting today, Ukraine. Australia has a somewhat limited capacity. We are very fortunate to have one of the best defence forces in the world and I pay tribute to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who, in any way, are already playing a role in some of these points of tension around the world or who will play a role at some point in the coming weeks and months.

But it is difficult for a small force like Australia to be participating in more than one operation, let alone three or potentially four operations. We do need to be cautious and we do need, collectively in this place, to commit ourselves to spending at least two per cent of GDP on our defence forces—at least two per cent of GDP—and do it more quickly than the current government currently plans to do. That is not a criticism in any sense; it is just a show of support from me, and I hope many in the Labor Party, that that aspiration is a very important one and one which we need to meet as quickly as possible.

I just want to say something else about Ukraine. Ukraine, on any measure, is emerging as a state-on-state conflict. And state-on-state conflicts are somewhat different from the humanitarian responses we are seeing typically now in Iraq. They are not counterinsurgencies per se, but a very different beast. Many Australians, quite rightly, ask questions about the merit of our participation in Afghanistan. I, as the minister at one point and, of course, in
every position I have held in this place, have argued those merits. I think there were very solid reasons for us to be in Afghanistan, and I absolutely believe that we did the right thing to be participating in Afghanistan.

You can imagine the weight of the questions coming from people if we were to involve ourselves in what is effectively a state-on-state conflict so far from our shores and so far from our immediate sphere of influence, and you can imagine how weighty those questions would become if we were to lose more lives in Ukraine, which of course we have already so tragically done.

I want to say something about parliamentary authorisation of military operations. I reject it. We are a strong and robust democracy and we have strong conventions which remain unchallenged in this place with respect to these issues. The people who sit on our National Security Committee of Cabinet are duly elected people of the Commonwealth of Australia, in that sense expressing, hopefully, the will of the Australian people. They are people who have access to intelligence and other information, which of course is critical to making these very tough decisions—information which could not possibly be made available to members of the broader parliament, including the House of Representatives and the Senate.

I recall being at a meeting of NATO ministers in Scotland in very late 2007. These were ministers from so-called Regional Command South who used to meet as a bit of a caucus. I had the then Dutch defence minister ask me to face his cameras, which were parked outside the NATO headquarters, so that I could make an appeal to his parliament to reauthorise Dutch operations in Uruzgan Province, where of course we were a critical partner. I do not think that is a good process. I think we have to have trust and faith in our leadership to make the right decisions. Generally speaking, when the decisions are made correctly, they will typically have the broad support of the parliament, as I know this Prime Minister has with respect to Iraq.

We are not a member of NATO, nor should we be a member of NATO. We are happy to be a NATO partner, as we were in Afghanistan, where the merits present themselves. We need to be always demanding that when we are participating we are part of the strategic planning process, with access to all of the relevant information, but we need to be very cautious about how much we become engaged with NATO and their spheres of responsibility because here, close to home, we need to ensure that we do not take our eye off the very real strategic tensions in our own region.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:02): I rise today to speak on the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq. It is understandable that many Australians are apprehensive about the risk of becoming involved in another lengthy war in the Middle East. Indeed, as a mother of a son in the ADF, I share their concern. In this place we are all aware of the complexity and political danger of the situation in the Middle East. Any decision to become involved carries consequences. However, doing nothing also involves risks and consequences.

What we cannot escape, what we must acknowledge, is that what we are seeing at the hands of the self-styled Islamic State or, as our Prime Minister more accurately says, the death cult, is a level of barbarism and savagery that threatens every standard of decency. What we are seeing abrogates standards that civilised nations have accepted for generations. What makes this even more dangerous and shocking is the ease with which citizens of longstanding democracies built on a tradition of reason and mutual respect have transformed into brutal killers thriving on a blood lust that shocks us all to the core.
These savages proclaim that their wilful and calculated executions are done in the name of their god. Nothing could be further from the truth. But the dangers are real, not just in the Middle East but also here and in other democracies. Failure to confront these deranged people will haunt us into the future, particularly given the resources available to IS. As the Prime Minister said in his statement to parliament, doing nothing means leaving millions of people exposed to death, forced conversion and ethnic cleansing. This year, more than one million Iraqis have been driven from their homes.

We have now all seen, through the internet and on television, the beheadings, the crucifixions and the mass executions. Australia is working with our international partners to keep people safe abroad and at home. An air drop of food, water and hygiene supplies has been mounted in conjunction with American, British and French aircraft. This involvement has been at the request of the Obama administration and with support of the Iraqi government. There has to date been no formal request for combat forces and no decision taken to become further involved in the conflict. There will be no combat troops on the ground. What is happening currently is an intervention with the Iraqi government in support of the Iraqi government.

I am well aware of the dangers of war. I do not believe in simply rushing into battle. Any decision must be carefully and responsibly made. As always, in times of great danger, we turn to our men and women of the Australian Defence Force—brave Australians serving nation, serving us all. That is another reason why our response and that of the civilised world must be determined with care, and that is exactly what the Australian government is doing. The Australian government is not acting in haste. Decisions and their consequences are being carefully considered. Equally, we must consider the results of a failure to take action. The establishment of the so-called caliphate would shape the foundations not just of the Middle East but also of the world itself.

Australians of all faiths are shocked and horrified by the scenes we see from Syria and Iraq. They are witnessing actions that are totally contrary to our remarkable, inclusive multicultural Australia. We have every right to be proud of our nation. As English philosopher Edmund Burke said:

_The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing._

We have a deep and abiding obligation to protect our nation, our citizens and our values from these brutal murderers who would destroy our way of life.

Mr Bandt (Melbourne) (11:07): This is one of the most serious matters that a government, a parliament and a population can be confronted with. Putting our forces in harm's way and getting involved in a war in another country has repercussions for the people who are involved, for the population and for the world more generally. Like, I think, everyone in this place and probably everyone around the country, when you witness the horrific images of beheadings and hear the plight of people trapped in remote locations in need of assistance and, just as we have had in the last little while confirmation that a second journalist has now lost their life in the most barbarous of circumstances, you wonder what to do. People look at this horror and this terror and wonder what should be to. That is precisely why we should be in this place having a full debate about how Australia responds, not as the screen here in the chamber suggested 'Statements by indulgence', as if the only basis that a member of parliament can contribute to this is with some indulgence and leeway but as of right. And we
should be having a discussion that is not a non-binding discussion after the decision has been made, but a serious discussion in this parliament about what Australia's response should be. Having a debate in this parliament invites the Australian people and invites the government to hear the pros and cons and it forces the government, as we are not hearing now, to make its case for military intervention.

The government would have to show that any involvement in war in another country, on the other side of the world, would make things safer for Australia and safer for the rest of the world. That is not something that the government has shown so far. The government would have to demonstrate that getting involved by running guns for one side of the conflict—as this government is doing—and potentially even more, would actually make the region more stable, because when you look at the history of the last 11 years in Iraq you see that the evidence suggests the opposite. The evidence that suggest that military involvement from the likes of Australia has actually helped to destabilise the region. We were told back in 2003 that we were going to bring democracy to that part of the world through military invasion. We are told that military force would prevent these kinds of horrors from occurring. Plainly, that has not been the case. Even more recently, when Western forces assisted some of the groups who were protesting and fighting President Assad in Syria, we now know that some of the assistance that we provided, and the guns that we provided, to those groups are now being used by groups that are fighting alongside ISIL—so many reports claim. So we have to ask: are we about to repeat the mistakes of the past?

In a debate, the government would also have to explain what constitutes a successful mission. I have heard many, many answers to that. At what point will it be said that we have achieved the mission and the reason that we went there? Is it to stay there until these forces are defeated, so, potentially, several years? Is it until the people are safe? Is it simply to drop some guns and then come back? We do not know. That is a concern, because last week we were providing humanitarian assistance; this week we are running guns to one side of the conflict. Who knows what we are going to be doing next week?

The government would also have to come here and explain what the legal basis is for this intervention in another country. We had the astounding spectacle of the Prime Minister making a statement to parliament and then, within a few hours, the Iraqi ambassador coming out and saying, 'Actually, we don't support the Australian government supplying arms direct to the Peshmerga. It should come through the Iraqi government.' He then recanted a short while later. All of those things could be tested here. We could test the very serious issue of blowback, which many commentators have reported on. It is this: if Australia gets involved militarily on one side of a conflict somewhere else, will Australia then be seen as an enemy that is to be threatened in the same way that threats are currently happening? In other words, what would be the consequences for Australia's safety from getting involved? That needs to be brought out and discussed. If there is one lesson we can learn from recent history it is that military intervention is not a cure-all. The Greens supported intervention in East Timor. We supported the Australian involvement then because the case had been made and there was a very clear humanitarian objective an our doorstep. The case had been argued, and we supported it. So it is not a case of saying, 'Never, ever, should one get involved in a conflict.' It is a case of saying, 'When is the right time to do it?' and, 'Do it with your eyes open.'
There is an additional reason that this government should be far more transparent. We know that this government loves to turn human problems into military ones. We have seen that with its treatment of refugees. We know that this government loves to hide behind a uniform. So if the government wants to avoid the charge that some have made, that this is being done for domestic reasons rather than international reasons, then bring a debate to parliament and make the decision in the full glare of the spotlight of public opinion. Otherwise, Prime Minister, if you slip the switch to khaki all of a sudden, people are entitled to question your motivations if you are not being clear with the Australian people about how long we will be there, our purpose and the time we will exit.

It is distressing that, in the blink of an eye, we have gone to being involved in a war in another country. These questions of how to deal with the radicalisation of people, who may be Australian citizens or have a connection with Australia, is a very complicated one that we need to grapple with. We need to ask: does it stem from exclusion that people feel when they are here in this country? Does it stem from attitudes that people in Australia have to Australia's foreign policy—that is, do they see Australia getting involved in conflicts and backing one side over another and does that then force them to have less of an affinity with Australia? Does the move to switch to terror laws, which, in essence, are really about—despite what the Prime Minister says—picking a group of people and using them in public debate as a punching bag to make political points, have an effect?

I note that the leaders in the community in Victoria and in my electorate of Melbourne are grappling with these issues and the best way to deal with that is to have a genuine conversation. I do not have all the answers. I want to hear from people about how we stop this kind of radicalisation, stop people from being attracted to terror and stop people thinking that it is a good idea to go over and join ISIL. But if all we do is chest-beating jingoism we will miss out on the opportunity of having that nuanced and complicated discussion and cutting Australia's link to this kind of abhorrent radicalisation.

I am worried that this government has opened a door and that we are marching down a path to further and further involvement in a war. There is no clear end in sight.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (11:17): I rise today to wholeheartedly support the Prime Minister's statement explaining the assistance Australia is providing to the people of Iraq, who are currently facing very grave danger from the brazen terrorists that call themselves Islamic State.

The Prime Minister was right to say that we should call this extremist group for what they are. They are not a state; they are not merely an alternative movement or a political voice. They are violent ideologues and they are terrorists of the worst order. The shocking images we have all seen over the past few weeks should be a wake-up call for the world. This brand of ideology does not share the common values that we do. Acts of beheading, crucifixion, the marching of unarmed people into mass graves to be executed represent a level of barbarism that is stomach churning.

The ISIL movement does not simply do evil; it boasts of evil and it advertises its evil in a way almost never before seen at any time in the modern world.

I know that, in this age of moral equivalence, some will argue that all war is barbaric. But the way these terrorists operate is far removed from the Geneva convention and its
protocols—the recognised international law that regulates the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to limit its effects. The ideology behind the actions is abhorrent and centred on ethnic cleansing and genocide. The treatment of women, with thousands forced into sexual slavery, is reprehensible.

This is a level of evil that cannot be ignored. It is a conflict that cannot be put down to a regional skirmish or mere sectarian violence, particularly when this evil has recruited so many of its soldiers from around the world including from, sadly, Australia.

We have a moral responsibility to be united in our opposition to such evil. We have a moral responsibility to provide aid to those who are suffering and to assist those who are in the front lines fighting these terrorists. While we have not been asked to provide military or combat assistance at this time, our soldiers who are delivering aid certainly face grave danger. As a nation we all pray for their safety and we thank them for the duty they are carrying out in our name. I agree with the Prime Minister that doing nothing also involves serious risks and consequences.

I have to say I have been disappointed by the response of the Greens and others, who I feel once again let ideology get in the way of good sense and decency. The appalling attempt on Monday in the Senate to overturn convention and try to force a debate on the level of engagement our forces may have in this conflict was a cynical attempt at points scoring. What is more, as the defence minister, Senator Johnston, pointed out, were we to debate what operational activities the Australian Defence Force would undertake it would be completely counterproductive to protecting those lives. This has never been done before in our history. We are a country that has never shirked its responsibility. The Prime Minister has outlined the criteria against which any request for military action will be judged, but of course we all hope that it does not come to that.

I wanted to finish today with the words of Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who said:

Right now, we currently have the chance to rescue people's lives and to hinder further mass murder in Iraq. Right now, we have the chance to hinder [Islamic State terrorists] from creating another safe haven. We must take advantage of this chance.

I support the Prime Minister's decision to act. I believe it is in our own national security interest to do so but, most of all, I think it is our moral duty and obligation as international citizens.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:21): Albert Einstein was once reported as having said, 'So long as there are men, there will be wars.' It is a very sad indictment of mankind that that is the case, and certainly history will show that it has been the case for as long as history records mankind's life on this planet. It seems that the passage of time, the experience of past wars and even the significant advances in civilisation make little difference to the aggression mankind inflicts upon itself. It also seems that the only lessons learned from war are how to do it better the next time around.

Throughout my own life I can barely recall a period when in some part of the world people were not being butch ered, brutalised or persecuted. It is a human trait that I have difficulty understanding. Every day news services report of the people being horrifically killed, wounded, mutilated, raped, tortured, enslaved or abused in some way. For all those people,
even greater numbers live in daily fear that they or their family members may face a similar fate.

These events are occurring away from Australian shores right now, with many Australians relatively oblivious to what is occurring and getting on with a peaceful life here in Australia, completely in contrast to the lives of those people caught up in the midst of conflict. Yet those people are in reality little different to each of us, with similar human emotions, feelings and aspirations to ours. So whilst I have been fortunate to have been raised in Australia, and I have never been personally caught up in a military conflict, it does not take too much imagination to understand how horrific it must be.

Today the conflicts we are seeing are not so much between countries but between warring factions clashing in internal power struggles. Whatever the cause, the loss of lives, the suffering and the misery being inflicted on the innocent lives cannot and should not be ignored by those who know what is happening and have the ability to intervene. The nature of the intervention, of course, needs to be proportionate to what is required. Nor should we blindly take political sides. Rather, we should do what is right.

It seems from reports we receive that the aggressors in Iraq and Syria show no mercy but are driven by blind, violent ideology masquerading as religion. As we debate this statement, there are people in Iraq and Syria pleading for help, as there were in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, when about 100,000 of them were slaughtered whilst the world looked on.

When I attend the Bosnian commemorations of what happened in Srebrenica on 11 July 1995, the universal plea that I hear at each of those services is that such atrocities should never be allowed to be repeated. For Australia—and indeed any country with the ability to intervene—to stand by and watch the slaughter of others and do nothing would show that we place no more value on the lives of those being killed than do the perpetrators. My views are not driven by political ideology, political opportunity, political allegiance or hatred of any group, but by my deep concern for the lives of innocent, fearful and defenceless men, women and children who simply want to get on with their lives as we all do in Australia.

Of course, it will be said that Australia should have similarly intervened in many other similar conflicts. And perhaps Australia should have. I guess that historians will make that judgement, as we all can as well. But right now we are responding to what is happening in Iraq and Syria, as should all other nations that legitimately seek peace. For it will only be through universal condemnation of what is occurring that ISIS or similar organisations will ever be stopped. ISIS is not a democratically-elected body or an internal political force resisting its national government, but an international criminal organisation that is spreading its influence throughout the world.

Of course, the underlying question is, why is this occurring? What is ISIS's purpose and what is its ultimate objective? I do not believe that violence is the way to resolve differences, but there are lessons for all of us in what is happening in Iraq. We cannot ignore events of the past or of the present that have given rise to ISIS and driven their followers into their ideology. For if we do, it will be inevitable that, when this crisis has passed, a new crisis will emerge.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (11:27): To speak in reply to the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq is something that we, as a federal parliament, have to do. It is probably not something
any of us came here thinking that we would have to deal with in the way that this has evolved. It is more than anything I have known in my lifetime to realise that Australia can have its own psychopaths or whatever term you want to give to people that leave our country to join ISIS. I do not think that they are even as good as terrorists. Terrorists are obviously lunatics; people who just want to get their own way. But they actually have an aim. I do not think these people have an aim. I think that people who leave Australia to go and be involved in the sort of bloodbath that ISIS is involved in are people who have no aim. They are simply escaping from life. They have no life. They have no responsibility. They have no cause. This as an excuse to go and kill.

That anyone could take their children with them to a place like this defies imagination. I do not believe that anyone in this place does not realise what an incredibly good country we have. Anyone who has travelled around the world at all is well aware that, when they come home, they are in as good or in the best country of anywhere in the world. The fact that we can have, as has been stated, at least 60 people who have gone to get involved in this murderous rage—and we know that a lot of them, and perhaps the majority of them, were actually born in our country—I find frightening. I find this worrying.

We have a responsibility to deal with this that none of us ever envisaged. Anybody going to where ISIS is and indulging in that kind of frightening lunacy is going there to do something for which they have no responsibility. They are escaping from life and do not have a cause. To think that they are going to get used to doing that sort of thing, the murder, the beheadings and everything they are involved in—we know they are and we know some of them are leaders in it—and then return home and just quietly become ordinary citizens defies common sense. Every one of us in this place has a job to back our leaders and to come up with a solution as to how we deal with it. Maybe that means we have to curtail some of our freedoms to deal specifically with them. We have to deal with this because we cannot have people like that returning to our country. I think all of us have felt a sense of safety, even if we have not thought about it, because of the fact that we are one of the biggest islands or the smallest continents in the world surrounded by water. Now we are certainly very much part of the world that we do not want to be. I have no doubt that everybody in this place will combine to come up with the best way to handle this.

As I said, I do not believe this is terrorism. I think these are a bunch of psychopaths who are escaping reality. To think that somebody who was born in our country could be doing this beggars belief. The fact that they obviously have people behind them, supporting them and sending them over there says it is a bigger issue than just dealing with a few psychopaths going overseas who obviously at some stage, unfortunately, will return, or at least some of them will. I believe that our nation has always faced its responsibilities. This time it is not just the responsibilities we have for the world at large; it is very much a responsibility that we have to ourselves and to our own people.

We have to come up with a way to deal with this. It does not change the fact that we have a responsibility to preserve the dignity and the ability of people to lead ordinary lives in the Middle East, in the Ukraine or elsewhere, but this time it is more than that. It is about looking after our own nation. I found it the most sobering thing I have encountered in public life to realise that people who were born in my country could escape from it to go to less fortunate areas of the world simply to indulge in a murdering frenzy. The thought that they might bring
that back here says that we all have an incredible responsibility to our nation to make sure that they do not get that opportunity. It is not easy as a nation, with the freedoms that we have, the laws that we have and the Constitution that we have, to deal with this, but deal with it we must. I know that all 150 people in this parliament will join together to make it possible to do so, because we must.

Mr HOGAN (Page) (11:33): As we all experienced on Monday, it was a very solemn day in the chamber as we discussed this issue. Just to echo the previous speaker's comments, I think at times like this we all question and, really, we look at the human race. It is my inherent belief that the human race is basically good, that we are good people and that we have loving and good thoughts about other human beings, but obviously there are in this world—and unfortunately there always have been—evil people. As to the genesis, the root, of it, who knows?

But there are evil people, and that is most unfortunate because it has coloured our history through the centuries and has resulted in some horrific wars and other things that we have had to get involved with.

What we are seeing right now in Iraq and obviously in other places around the world is that unfortunately, at the moment, the world does seem to be becoming a little more unstable than it has been in recent years. But, as the Prime Minister said the other day, doing nothing at the moment means leaving millions of people exposed to death, to forced conversion and to basically what is quite obviously ethnic cleansing. So far this year more than a million Iraqis have been driven from their homes, and we have seen that people and their culture—some of these cultures that have existed for millennia—are faced with extermination. The term that has been used quite often in the media and by other people is that a potential genocide is occurring.

We as a country have a choice. As people have said, as Australians we are apprehensive about how we respond to this. We can sit here and do nothing and be very sorry for what is going on over there. Or we can limit it—and at this stage it is limited—to aid. We have obviously done some humanitarian airdrops to people who have been trapped or besieged. This has been done at the request, as we know, of both the Obama administration and the Iraqi government.

It has been stressed also—and I think we really need to do this and we need to keep repeating this—that the target here is terrorism; the target here is not religion. People may do things in the name of religion, but they are certainly not representative of that religion.

A number of speakers have also mentioned the Australian involvement in this, in that we have Australian born citizens involved in this conflict in the sense of going over there and supporting this terrorist group. That obviously is of grave concern to us all and to the government. I would like to commend the Prime Minister and the foreign minister on their actions in not only this conflict but also the conflict that has been happening in the Ukraine: to be a voice of reason and a voice of good. But, with the Australian citizens' involvement in this, we have to look at this very carefully. Unfortunately, in many cases it has been reported in the press that this is often a younger generation whose parents are good people, whose parents are contributing to our community, whose parents are good Australian citizens. In many cases it is their children who have become radicalised and extreme in their behaviour.
So we as a community obviously have to take the measures that the government has taken. We have grown our own counter-terrorism funding and got some Australian authorities to increase their surveillance and their powers in trying to deal with people like that. And we are doing the positive as well. We need to engage every group in Australia and every subgroup. We have lots of subgroups for different members of different clubs and different things. We are going more into those groups and trying to engage those groups so we can work at this at both angles.

It is a very solemn thing to talk about. I commend the Prime Minister and the foreign minister on their actions in this conflict. I think it is the right thing for Australia to do to help people who are basically at the point of a potential genocide and that we be on the side of good in trying to stamp out these extremists and radical people.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:38): It is a fact that since 2003 the people of Iraq have been experiencing horrendous atrocities. As you will recall, in 2003, we—as part of the coalition of the willing—went into Iraq. And it appears that apart from removing Saddam Hussein, who was no doubt a particularly evil person, this engagement has led to the unleashing of various forces between the Sunni and Shiah which are irreconcilable and do not necessarily play just into politics but are now being played out in a very brutal and fanatical way throughout the Middle East. We have more recently seen the rise of ISIS, the Islamic State, which is clearly a fanatical and brutal terrorist organisation, extending beyond Iraq and into Syria, with the aim to effect in the Middle East an Islamic caliphate.

In my electorate, I have regular contact with many of the expatriates from Iraq—the vast majority of them are refugees. I meet regularly with representatives of the Iraqi Australian Christian Association, the Assyrian Universal Alliance, the Mandaean Australian community, the Syrian Australian national federation, the Assyrian Church of the East and representatives from the Chaldean Catholic community. Quite frankly, ever since I entered politics nine years ago, they have kept me up to date as to developments in the Middle East because they always have in their hearts the welfare of their loved ones, their family members left behind, and always express to me the need to provide for their welfare.

Over the last two months, the nature of our discussions have certainly been more stark. We are now seeing the threats played out on our television sets. Whether it concerns the Yazidi Kurds in Sinjar or the Christians in Mosul, we are seeing genocide being played out at an alarming proportion. Right before our eyes, we are seeing ethnic cleansing in Iraq. It is not just applied to the Christian minorities there; it is being applied to any there, including fellow Muslims, who do not share their ideology.

This is an issue where we do have a general responsibility and we do have, in my humble opinion, a moral responsibility. After all, we were part of the coalition of the willing in 2003. It cannot be a situation where we say this is a very, very unfortunate set of developments and simply provide humanitarian relief. It is a situation where we need to be involved and certainly providing humanitarian relief to those who are most in need at the moment, particularly the Yazidis up in Mount Sinjar.

Also, we need to be providing assistance to those who are prepared to stand up against this fanatical, brutal group of terrorists. In that regard, I am talking about the Kurdish Peshmerga military, which occupy the northern end of Iraq. They are doing a fine job in standing up to this advance by Islamic State. I know their losses have been high, but they are a committed
military force and one which I think we need to be supporting. I do support the efforts of the foreign minister and the Prime Minister in indicating we will maintain humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq and additionally that we will provide military support for the Peshmerga in the form of arms and ammunition. That will enable them to fight for the people of Iraq against this blatant and evil enemy of humanity.

These are times when I think no-one in this place wants to be talking in a warmongering way, but they are certainly times when we need to reflect on what our responsibilities are as a country which is quite fortunate that we do not have these incidents being played out in our backyard. I agree with the government that we need to be taking every step possible to ensure that never becomes a reality.

Australia is a country which is very, very multicultural—I have just indicated that I have a significant proportion of expatriate Iraqi refugees living in my electorate. They are concerned not simply to bring more of their relatives to a country such as Australia; they are more concerned that we play an effort to settle down and establish normality in their homeland. I think that we do keep that responsibility and that it is only right that we do. As I indicated, as part of the coalition of the willing, I do not think the job was ever completely finalised—with Australia and the rest of the coalition of the willing withdrawing troops as we did; not that it was a popular war within Iraq. But what we are now seeing is something which is coming in to fill the void, a void which has largely been contributed to by a poor and inadequate government which was not inclusive of all peoples, by any stretch of the imagination. It has created a void for Islamic State to rise and fester. This cannot be, with the view of any degree of balance within the Middle East, allowed to succeed. It would be a calamity not simply for Iraq but for the whole region and, I would dare say, the globe.

For all of those organisations that I have mentioned, we will stay in contact with them. I know they are also talking directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and I do thank her for giving the time to actually sit down and personally meet with them. It is not that we can actually satisfy all of their concerns, but I think it is right that Australia does take these steps to address, as far as possible, the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq and to also provide reasonable assistance in terms of military equipment and ammunition to the Peshmerga and the Kurdish military in their efforts, quite frankly, to stem this attempt to commit the genocide of an innocent people.

I will conclude my remarks now, other than to say that I think everything that I have heard in this debate so far indicates that, regardless of what side of the House we sit on, we are at one on this issue.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (11:48): I rise today in support of the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq and in support of the actions the government has taken in support of the innocents in Iraq. I also wish to acknowledge, as those of us on this side of the House should do, the very responsible position that those opposite have taken with respect to this most crucial national security matter.

The Prime Minister should be congratulated for his statement to the House earlier this week. It was appropriate, prudent and measured, and the members of our nation's national security committee also ought to be commended for the way that they are addressing this most difficult and complex consideration and task.
The threat we face is one neither of religion nor of race; it is a system of perverted beliefs and actions that lead to extremism and terrorism. As the Prime Minister consistently reminds us, these are the actions not of a state but rather of a death cult. We are witnessing a confluence of calamities in the humanitarian situation in the region and Australia's domestic national security interests.

The jihadist terror movement calling itself the Islamic State—which is reflective of neither of those two terms, of course, in any sense—is committing acts of such unrelenting barbarity upon the people of Iraq that Australia, as a responsible international actor, cannot ignore their pleas for assistance. Millions of people are being subjected to ethnic cleansing, forced religious conversion, sexual slavery and the denial of the most fundamental and universal of all human rights. We have seen a litany of atrocities including beheadings, crucifixions, mass murder and the corruption of children into this twisted movement of fear and hate.

Iraq is known as the cradle of civilisation, the source of some of the most celebrated and significant cultural and scientific advancements in human history. Indeed, it was the site of the Garden of Eden and of the Great Flood and was the birthplace of Abraham. Yet what we see today, on an almost daily basis, are the most savage and unrestrained acts of criminal brutality. We must do all we can to assist the victims of this savage and unrelenting campaign. Yes, these people are in a distant land, but our history from our inception has been one of acting globally to protect locally. Sixty Australians or more—it disappoints me to note—are fighting for the jihadists in Iraq and Syria, and they are supported by another estimated 100.

On September 11 2001, just 21 jihadists killed over 3,000 people and changed the course of history forever. We must not allow those who have revealed themselves to be agents of terror, accustomed to killing in the most brutal of ways, to return to our shores, take root in our communities and wreak havoc upon our country. We must take action to support those who, in defending themselves, are helping to defend us.

That is why I support the humanitarian airlift in Iraq and the military resupply effort. We are acting at the request of and in concert with our allies in the region and across the world—including the US, the UK, France, Canada, Italy and of course, and most importantly, the Iraqi government themselves. By undertaking this humanitarian action and by strengthening our national security arrangements at home, we are performing the first duty of government: the defence of the nation. The people fighting for the jihadists have rejected the fundamental beliefs of Australian society and, in my view, forfeited their right to enjoy our freedoms.

Australia is a land of tolerance. It is land of peace. It is a land of prosperity. It is a land of liberty. It is remarkable for its diversity, and it is enriched by the contributions of all those people who live on its soil. We must not allow this extraordinary achievement to be threatened by the evil intent of those who share nothing of our values and who wish to subvert our national way of life. I commend the Prime Minister's statement to the House.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (11:53): I rise to also talk on the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq and Syria. Australians over recent times have watched the nightly news and have picked up the daily newspapers to see what the Prime Minister has called 'acts of pure evil'. We have seen the brutal, abhorrent and disgusting acts of what is, fundamentally, a large-scale, coordinated and organised death cult across northern Iraq and Syria.
While the spread of the influence of ISIS obviously represents a significant threat to security and stability in the Middle East, and particularly in northern Iraq and Syria, it also presents a very strong domestic security risk here in Australia. We know that there are about 100 Australians that are fighting with ISIS in northern Iraq and Syria. They are being radicalised. They are committing these terrible acts. And there is of course the potential for them to bring that mindset, that approach, and all the associated risks that go with that back to our shores and present a significant domestic security risk.

I strongly support the actions of the Australian government in northern Iraq. First and foremost, we are participating in a strong humanitarian program. President Obama said that the religious and ethnic minorities are facing severe persecution at the hands of ISIS, being forced to either convert or, effectively, be beheaded. Those religious and ethnic minorities in northern Iraq, as President Obama said, are facing potential genocide. Australian participation in the humanitarian effort has ensure that those people can survive in the meantime and, hopefully, at one point be freed from the persecution.

In the last few years I have been fortunate enough to spend some time with our men and women who serve out of Al-Minhad air base in the UAE, which is from where we have provided these humanitarian airdrops by two C130 Hercules. I have been on those Hercules with the aircrew. They are incredibly professional and dedicated service men and women, who always have the humanitarian mission at the front of their mind. They always have that compassionate approach at the front of their mind and do not think twice before putting themselves in harm's way. I commend them on the work that they have done on behalf of all Australians. We should all be proud of the effort they have done in delivering that humanitarian program.

I support the Australian government in any further actions that it might be taking to reduce the risk that ISIS poses in the region. We have provided logistical support to drop weapons to Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. I have been fortunate enough to visit Iraq as well. As people on the ground will tell you, the Kurdish fighters are some of the best fighters in the region. They are strongly rejecting the threat from ISIS and have had recent success in Mosul and other parts of northern Iraq in rejecting the threat that ISIS presents. I am proud to say that the Australian government is supporting them through logistical drops of weapons. I think that is an important part. Should our mission expand in concert with our allies with clear objectives and obviously with a clear humanitarian frame of mind and focus, the Australian government should take further steps, because, we as a first-world nation cannot stand on the sidelines and say that it is okay for these acts to happen, that it is okay for these acts to be displayed across our TV screens and newspapers. We have to rise to meet that challenge collectively with our allies. Should the United States as our principal ally, but also other allies in the region, request greater assistance from the Australian government I would strongly support such action.

I also strongly support the Prime Minister and the government in their recent measures to improve domestic security arrangements as a result of this threat. There is over $600 million for greater coordination of our security agencies in Australia. Through Operation Sovereign Borders we have seen what can be achieved when there is greater cooperation between our security forces. There is greater cooperation with United States in sharing information and there are also programs to stop the radicalisation of, particularly, young people in Australia,
which is so important. We do not want this sick death cult and it is abhorrent mindset to set in with any Australians. These are strong measures to fight that clear and ever-present threat.

In conclusion, I am proud of the work of our service men and women in delivering our assistance in northern Iraq. I am proud of the work of the government, which is working with our allies to ensure that we can continue to have not only a safe and secure global community but also a safe and secure domestic environment in Australia. I commend the Prime Minister’s statement to the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (11:59): I also rise to support the Prime Minister’s statement on Iraq and Syria. Let us be clear, what we are seeing is terrorism. Terrorism is a force of asymmetric warfare, which is abhorrent to all Australians. Terrorism, as we are seeing, is defined by violent acts that create fear or terror. That is their intent. It is widely recognised that aspects of asymmetric warfare have existed throughout history, and there are numerous examples. However, this type of warfare induces increasing levels of violence just to wield power over people or regions, and that is exactly what we are seeing. The fact is it has now been brought much closer to the Australian shores, which is demonstrated by the very strong support that Australians are offering in actions overseas.

The Australian people have graphically witnessed some of the atrocities occurring in Iraqi and Syria and the tactics adopted by ISIL. They have been widely reported. There is no doubt that our hearts go out to the families of those involved in the recent beheadings of US citizens and we are seeing further threats to British citizens as well. You can only imagine what their families are going through.

These dreadful acts were outlined by Senator David Johnston in his speech on 1 September. He articulated the actions: the targeted killings, the beheadings, the forced conversions, abductions, trafficking and sexual slavery. These clearly demonstrate the power that terrorists wield over women and children in what they do and how they do it. More disturbingly, they have been using technology to basically promote their activities and for recruiting purposes. In short, they seek to create fear amongst populations and ingrain their extreme acts across the media.

We have taken action. I am very, very supportive of the actions that the Prime Minister and Australia are taking, because they are exactly what people in this country expect us to do. The Royal Australian Air Force delivered humanitarian aid to those trapped on Mount Sinjar as a result of ISIL. The Royal Australian Air Force offers a quick and ready response with a very limited footprint on the countries involved. We will provide weapons and logistical support to Kurdish fighters in their efforts to protect innocent civilians, including men, women and children, and provide much needed basic supplies.

The Prime Minister has made it very clear that Australia will not and will never tolerate this form of terrorism. We are assessing security threats all of the time and monitoring suspected members within Australia and their linkages to overseas partnerships. We have a very clear responsibility to the people of Australia and it is something that we take very seriously. This is exactly what Australians expect us to do in this circumstance. They have an expectation that we will do everything we can to protect them, and that is what this government is doing with the investment of $630 million to counter violent extremism and radicalisation and to boost our associated counter-terrorism agency capabilities. Of course, there is much needed investment in the safety of the Australian community. These agencies...
also need the jurisdiction to act upon information that is collected, and that will allow increased agency interoperability, which is very important in this process.

While we have deployed air assets, Air Force provides more than just transport and the delivery of humanitarian aid. It can offer control of the air and targeted strike capabilities, all done with a limited footprint on the ground. The government have thought very carefully about each of the actions we have decided to take. We are very mindful of any deployment of ADF assets and of course the ADF members who, as we all respect, put their lives on the line every time this parliament and the government make a decision.

Having spent a lot of time—as much time as I could manage—with Defence members in the Defence Force Parliamentary Program, I am always respectful of and have a great level of confidence in the training and the qualities of the people in our Defence Force. I also understand that they have families. I also understand the impact that the decisions we make has on those same families. However, each one of those members of the Defence forces, their families and every Australian expect us to take a firm stand on this and to demonstrate very clearly to those who are involved in this type of terrorist activity that this is not, and never will be, acceptable within Australia or anywhere in the world. We cannot stand by. We cannot stand by. Doing nothing is not an option. Doing nothing is not an option.

We know that Australia boasts a very rich blend of multiculturalism, and it has enhanced our country in so many ways. We live in a country that has not faced the atrocities that we are seeing in the Middle East, and we never want to. We never want to.

Moving on, this government has a direct responsibility to protect Australia, our people and our strategic interests both now and into the future. We want this legacy to continue for our children and their children, and as Australians we have the right—a very hard fought right—to the freedom of religion and speech and the freedom to live our lives as we want, based on respect and within the laws of our country. No-one has the right to threaten this or take it away, least of all those that we see active in Syria and Iraq—particularly those who are taught to kill anyone who does not agree with their beliefs. I support the Prime Minister's description of these as acts of 'pure evil', and I support the response of the Prime Minister and this government.

Mr Taylor (Hume) (12:06): I rise to express my strong support for Australia's role in joining the multinational effort to help Kurdish fighters in Iraq. I have received countless messages and expressions of outrage from my constituents in my electorate of Hume in response to the atrocities in Iraq and, indeed, in Syria. In keeping with the instincts of most Australians, the action that is being taken by the Australian government is sending a strong signal to the Islamic State terrorists that we repudiate their barbaric actions. We repudiate the mass slaughter of innocent people, the enslaving of women and children, the torture of civilians and the unspeakable crimes that risk becoming genocide. That children are exposed to these depraved acts, and sometimes even recruited to participate, is an outrage many of us cannot get our heads around. Those living amongst this horror must be feeling indescribable fear. ISIS have shown again and again, and unequivocally, that they do not respect the sanctity of human life. In this lack of respect, they show that they have not even an ounce of moral compass, and they have no restraint.

While what is happening in Iraq right now is a world away, it is with us every day in images we see on the television and in social media. I think it is right that these scenes, as
disturbing as they are, are published. It is important that we know what these barbarians are capable of. Nowhere has the lack of respect for life been on more repulsive display than in the beheadings of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. All Australians—indeed all right-thinking people the world over—have been sickened and traumatised by these images. The Prime Minister's description of ISIS as a 'death cult' is apt.

There is much praise in the community for the strong stance the Prime Minister and the government have taken. Yet, understandably, there is also concern amongst some Australians about us overcommitting. The government acknowledges the spectrum of views. However, as Gareth Evans pointed out in The Australian on Monday, in the present circumstances the government is acting within clear principles of the international responsibility to protect people at risk of what the United Nations call 'mass atrocity crimes'.

In coming days, Australian aircraft will join an airlift of supplies, including military equipment, to the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. American, British, Canadian and Italian aircraft will also be involved. This involvement comes at the request of the Obama administration and with the support of the Iraqi government.

ISIS is not only a risk to the people living in Iraq and Syria, but to all western civilisations. As Secretary of State, John Kerry, has said of ISIS:

In this battle, there is a role for almost any country.

I am utterly supportive of our involvement; our country must be part of this repudiation.

It is very important to note that the international community's response, of which we are a part, is a response based entirely on humanitarian motives. There is clearly no other motive. Without Australia and other countries stepping in, all those who live in the path of these terrorists will surely die in mass slaughters or in ethnic cleansing or will be required to convert. In those circumstances the multinational response, of which we are a part, is entirely within the boundaries of international humanitarian law. The response is necessary and proportionate. While many are apprehensive about the risk of becoming involved in another conflict in the Middle East, to do nothing is indefensible. This is my strong opinion. To do nothing is indefensible.

I am grateful that it is also the opinion of the opposition. The Labor Party has supported the government and its response in a decent and constructive way. Australia will continue to work closely with its international partners to alleviate the humanitarian challenge in Iraq. There has been no formal request for combat forces and no decision taken to get further involved in the conflict.

The world knows that foreign fighters are now taking leading roles in the fighting in Syria and Iraq. The roles undertaken by extremist Australians are not insignificant. David Irvine, outgoing head of ASIO, has told us it now includes more Australians than any other previous extremist conflict. Some 15 Australians are believed to have died fighting for Islamic extremists during the current conflict in Syria and Iraq. And there are about 60 Australians fighting with the two principal extremist al-Qaeda derivatives: Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra.

ASIO also believes another 100 people in Australia are actively supporting these extremist groups from our shores. This adds a new dimension to our international responsibilities. Whilst these deranged people are a tiny minority, we need to acknowledge this new
development. Australia, like many other countries, is now a recruiting ground for some of these terrorists. I fully support changes to our laws which will permit the government to deal with extremists who return to our shores with a commitment to violence and a hatred of us and our community. While the number of Australians of potential security concern to ASIO and our law enforcement partners has increased, we should not panic. But our specialist authorities need to be equipped with whatever they need to ensure the safety of every Australian.

However, it is incredibly important that we as a community understand that this tiny number of Australian extremists do not represent the many hundreds of thousands of wonderful Muslims living peacefully in and contributing fully to our communities, and who want for our country precisely what all of us want: peace, tolerance and safety. Muslims living in our community are to be protected and, indeed, nourished and supported by the rest of us. As they look on with horror at what is happening in Iraq and Syria, how lucky they must feel to be living in this wonderful country of ours. As a community, we must reach out to them, even enlist their help, in coming to terms with this new scourge in Iraq and Syria. We are all in this together.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (12:14): I rise to support the Prime Minister’s words. We are a country that has been built on a foundation of camaraderie and protecting our democratic rights to live as we please under Australia’s laws. Our society does not condone murder and it does not condone sexual assault or slavery. It does not condone hatred based on race, sex or religion.

No matter what laws a country puts in place, the reality is that there will always be some form of violence and crime. The atrocities we are witnessing in Iraq, however, are beyond reproach. Many in this place, and those outside these walls, would not believe that the acts of genocide seen in Nazi Germany would be allowed to repeat themselves in the 21st century—yet, this is exactly what we are seeing in Iraq and Syria. I say ‘allowed’ because I do not accept that any Australian who believes in our democratic system would oppose assisting innocent civilians who are trying to survive increasing violence from a radical group—a group that I join the Prime Minister in condemning as pure evil.

The world condemned Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement, and today I join with the Prime Minister and our international allies in condemning the barbarism of the Islamic State—a group of extremists who are responsible for multiple massacres, suicide bombings, executions of prisoners, and the taking of innocent women and children from their homes to be used as sexual slaves.

All those in this place have seen the footage of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff being executed in the name of the Islamic State. There is not a strong enough word to describe my disgust for this extreme brutality. What members may not have seen, and if they have not I encourage them to do so, is a speech by an Iraqi Yazidi woman who broke down in the Iraqi parliament recently, calling for humanitarian solidarity and the end to the slaughter of her Yazidi people. She says: ‘Our women are taken as slaves and sold in the slave market. We are being slaughtered. We are being exterminated. I appeal to you in the name of humanity to save us.’ I ask: what kind of people would we be as Australians if we did not answer this call?

Although it may seem like Australia is a long way from these atrocities, I am proud to be part of a government that reflects our country’s laws and morals not just domestically but also
internationally, by assisting the estimated one million Iraqis who have been displaced from
their homes as a result of this conflict.

I welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement that Australian aircraft would participate in
humanitarian airdrops last month and today I welcome this government's further commitment
to join with our international allies in airlifting supplies, including military equipment, to the
Kurdish regional government in Erbil. Humanitarian airdrops were mounted in conjunction
with American, British and French aircraft, and Italy has joined with these allies in airlifting
additional military supplies. In this world there are appeasers and there are leaders. A leader is
someone like our Prime Minister who stands up against barbarism, while those who oppose
this call for justice seek only to poison and undermine the values of our nation.

When the Greens and animal activists witnessed cruelty against animals on their television
screens, my office was bombarded with calls and letters condemning these actions, yet we
stand here today with our screens plastered with images of beheadings, crucifixions and mass
executions and these same people are either silent or, in the case of the Leader of the Greens,
stand in this parliament to oppose Australia's involvement in ending these atrocities. To those
people, I say to turn away from this brutality would be akin to assisting those who commit
these heinous acts. I also question what message this sends to our RSL veterans and those
who have laid their lives on the line for Australian values.

Today, the United States Vice-President, Joe Biden, added his voice to the calls for justice
following the execution of Steven Sotloff and said the United States will pursue these killers
'to the gates of hell', and I hope they do. I not only applaud this sentiment by the Obama
administration; I also join with my colleague the member for Fisher in supporting further
action by the Australian Defence Force, if called on, to eliminate this threat.

I remind the House that the threat of terrorism has no borders and that it has already
reached Australia's shores. At least 60 Australians are fighting with terrorist groups across
Iraq and Syria, and about 100 more Australians are known to be funding or facilitating these
groups. Just as this government has responded to the Obama administration's call for
solidarity in responding to terrorist threats on the ground, we have also taken swift action to
respond to the home-grown terrorism threat that we are faced with. We have committed an
additional $630 million over four years to counter-terrorism measures to strengthen our
borders, bolster our national security laws and increase our emphasis on preventing
Australians from becoming involved with extremist groups through engagement programs.
We are also responding to the threat from those Australians who have taken up arms in Syria
and Iraq and who attempt to return to Australia by cancelling the passports of all those who
are assessed to pose a threat to our national security.

Yesterday the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called for all sides of
Australia's parliament to support the government's efforts to respond to this global terrorist
threat. I recognise and thank the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues who have joined
with the government in condemning these acts and have supported the assistance Australia
has provided to date. I particularly recognise recent comments made by the member for Holt
in this place when speaking on a motion by the member for Cowan in support of increased
national security laws to help combat the threat of terrorism. As the member for Holt stated:
One of the grave concerns I have had as a member of the security committee since 2005 and occupying the national security space since 2005 is that eventually and inevitably in this country an event will occur on this soil of the magnitude of the Bali event—or just a terrorism event.

He went on to say:

...in some occasions, through some sections of the media and some sections of the commentariat, there is a belief that discussions about the liberties of those who might be impacted on by proposed laws in this place and proposed laws to come, but there is not a discussion about the threat that is posed to Australian citizens now and in the future.

A sentiment I fully support. We must always take a considered approach when responding to international conflicts while balancing this with the need to respond swiftly to atrocities. No-one in this place wants to look back in years to come and question whether we could or should have done more to stop these deplorable acts, and no single country or organisation can handle this international terrorism threat alone. I also want to remind the House of the statement by the member for Fisher, when he said:

The Western world stands at a crossroad. Now is the time for us to act decisively, to act with strength, to act with commitment and to act together. That is the way we will protect our values. That is the way we will protect Australia, and nothing less will do.

Another sentiment I support fully from the member for Fisher. I am proud to be part of a government that recognises the need to respond to this threat and will stand in solidarity with our international allies. Australia is a country of privilege, and with privilege comes responsibility. We have a responsibility to protect all Australians from violent extremism. We have a responsibility to reach out and protect or assist all those who are unable to protect themselves, and we have a responsibility to help end this suffering—a responsibility that, I am pleased to say, this government will meet head on.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:22): I rise to support the motion moved by the Prime Minister and express my appreciation that this motion has been supported by the opposition as well. Over the last 24 years, since the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, there has been an almost continuous presence of Australian Defence Force personnel in the Middle East. There have been high profile conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it may not be appreciated by the public that there has been almost a continuous presence of an Australian warship in the Persian Gulf since September 1990. Recently the Royal Australian Navy sent its 54th deployment of a warship. The role has changed over time, from support during the first Gulf War, monitoring sanctions against Iraq, and support later during the Iraq War. Defending the oil platforms has now moved to a maritime security, narcotics, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy role.

I was fortunate enough, with a number of other members of parliament, to visit the Middle East area of operations four months ago. I want to pay tribute to the men and women of Joint Task Force 633 and the work they are doing in maintaining security. One of the common things that I would hear is they would ask the members of parliament: 'Can you remind people that we are still here?' I think people thought after the closure of Tarin Kot in Afghanistan that Australia had really wound down the number of people in the Middle East. But there are still more than 1,000 young Australian men and women who are serving over there. We saw the C130 delivering humanitarian supplies to avert a humanitarian disaster at Mount Sinjar and
Amerli. What we have seen in Iraq since the start of the year, with more than one million Iraqis being displaced, has been a tragedy and a potential genocide.

I support very much the actions of the Australian government in concert with our allies, the United States, and with other NATO countries. At the same time that we are considering this motion it is worth remembering that Australia has been recognised—not being a NATO member state—for partnership of NATO due to our contribution in Afghanistan since 2001 and the close way in which we cooperate with NATO nations.

I fully endorse the criteria that the Prime Minister has enunciated for the test we should apply if there is any request for military action. The request would come from the United States and would have to be supported by Iraq. The four criteria that the Prime Minister has enunciated are:

Is there a clear and achievable overall objective? Is there a clear and proportionate role for Australian forces? Have all the risks been properly assessed? And is there an overall humanitarian objective in accordance with Australia’s national interests?

At the moment, Australian and the Royal Australian Air Force with their C130s and C17s are playing a useful role, firstly, in delivering humanitarian supplies and, secondly, in delivering military support to the Kurdish regional government in Erbil with the support of the national government of Iraq.

Again, I fully endorse the formula that the Prime Minister has used to re-emphasise that the threat is extremism in any form. It is of great concern that we have living amongst us in Australia people who are prepared to go and join the murderous forces of ISIL. I fully endorse the additional measures that have been taken at Australian airports to ensure that this does not occur. We have seen recently just what ISIL is about. The horrific footage of the murders of US journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff remind us that this is not an Islamic state but a death cult. Unfortunately, we in the parliament need to be prepared to face in the future an uncertain world and an uncertain Middle East. I endorse the motion that is before us and pay tribute to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who are putting their lives on the line.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr IRONS (Swan) (12:29): I move:
That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Brain Cancer

Mark Hughes Foundation

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:29): Many people are unaware that brain cancer is one of the most lethal cancers of all. It is the leading killer of people under the age of 39 and children under the age of 10, yet it receives very little research funding. So today I am calling for more money for research into brain cancer and I am also calling on Australians to give generously in putting some money towards research into brain cancer. Brain cancer is
not only the leading cause of cancer death of young people under the age of 39 and children under the age of 10; it carries the highest financial burden of all cancers.

In its malignant form, it is almost 100 per cent fatal. It is one of the most understudied of all cancers. In Australia, around 1,600 people a year will be diagnosed with brain cancer and approximately 12,000 will die. One person is diagnosed with brain cancer every six hours. Every eight hours one person dies.

On Sunday the people of the Hunter will have a unique opportunity to support the Mark Hughes Foundation, when the mighty Knights take on the Dragons. In this home game the Knights 'old boys' will be supporting the Mark Hughes Foundation.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 12:31 to 12:45

Ms HALL: Before the division, I was talking about the Knights Old Boys' game on Sunday at the Newcastle football stadium.

Two-time premier winning former Knights utility back, Mark Hughes, was one of the regular Old Boys. Mark was diagnosed with brain cancer 12 months ago. Since being diagnosed with brain cancer, Mark has established the Mark Hughes Foundation. In conjunction with the Hunter Medical Research Institute and the Sydney Neuro-Oncology Group they are raising funds to fight this insidious disease. The Old Boys' charity partners will host the Dragons—the mighty Knights will be taking on the Dragons in their home game on Sunday—and at this game people will have the opportunity to donate to the Mark Hughes foundation.

The Knights have been fantastic supporters of the Mark Hughes Foundation ever since it started. It is very exciting and this year this is a very special event. Just give you an idea of the impost that it has on Mark Hughes's life: he very well at the moment but he undergoes scans every three months to keep on top of his condition. The most recent of those was last week and it showed that he is in good health. He is getting out there and he has turned what was a catastrophe in his life to an opportunity to help other people.

The Mark Hughes Foundation is affiliated with the Hunter Medical Research Institute—a very strong research institute, one of the best in Australia. In conjunction with the Foundation they have created a strong emphasis on brain cancer research in the Hunter region. This will only benefit people within the Hunter, but that research into brain cancer must not be localised just to the Hunter.

At this particular time I would like to congratulate the Hunter Medical Research Institute for agreeing to partner with the Mark Hughes Foundation. This partnership will translate into research and, hopefully, it will initiate pioneering clinical and biomedical research that leads towards the prevention of brain cancer, a cure and earlier diagnosis so that those people who are diagnosed with brain cancer will have the opportunity to undertake treatment before it is too late. Quite often it is one of those cancers that sneak up on people and when it is finally diagnosed quite often it is too late to provide a lasting cure.

The foundation also partners with SNOG, which is Sydney Neuro-Oncology Group, and they are looking at brain cancer research and support. It is a charitable organisation that aims to improve the management of brain tumours through targeted research, education and ongoing support for people living with brain cancer, and also for their families.
Another organisation that has been at the cutting edge of research into brain tumours is Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, which is Charlie Teo's research group. He is always out there arguing for more money, for more investment, for greater knowledge and better education around the issue of brain cancer. I am sure there would not be a member of this House who has not been associated with somebody who has had to fight the battle with brain cancer that is ongoing in Australia all the time. I talked about the statistics a little earlier and they are quite frightening.

As well as Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, there is also Shine a Life, Chris O'Brien's foundation. His fight with brain cancer has been well documented, both in this House and in other places. Now what I would like to do is call on everyone in the Hunter to get behind the Mark Hughes Foundation, go along to the Knights game—they will have a good day—and donate to his foundation.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (12:50): On indulgence, I would like to associate myself with the fine remarks of the member for Shortland and wish everyone associated with the Mark Hughes Foundation good luck at the game.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (12:50): I too would like to associate myself with the remarks made by the member for Shortland and support the Mark Hughes Foundation, as I come from a family where we lost a family member to brain cancer. I support all recognition and support for the Mark Hughes Foundation.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Mr IRONS (Swan) (12:50): Members in this place would have heard me speak before about my work with the forgotten Australians and the need for all victims of child sexual abuse to have their voices heard. On 12 November 2012, I welcomed an announcement by the former Prime Minister Julia Gillard that a royal commission inquiry would be held into institutional responses to child sex abuse. Although I welcomed this announcement, I, the victims of abuse, and the organisations who support them have been concerned that the 12-month time frame provided in the terms of reference for the inquiry would not be sufficient to ensure the commission is able to meet its objectives. For the past couple of months, sufferers who are yet to tell their stories have been left in limbo as a result of this restricted time frame.

I recently wrote to the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General to express my support for the call by the commission's chair, the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, for an inquiry extension. In this letter I stated that I am aware that the Prime Minister was very supportive of the establishment of a royal commission inquiry, which has provided a mechanism for those who did not have a voice to not only share their stories but regain some semblance of control over the abuse that they suffered. I went on to state that an extension to the royal commission's inquiry, and the implementation of an independent national redress scheme, are key steps that this government should take to give sufferers of abuse and neglect the closure they need and to send a message to perpetrators, both past and present, that society and government will not tolerate a repeat of this sorry period.

I am very pleased that the Prime Minister has answered this call for an extension and has committed up to an additional $125 million to fund the work of the commission for a further two years. This extension will allay the fears of those who have not yet had the opportunity to tell their stories to the commission and will ensure that their voices are heard. The extension
will give the commission the capacity to hear more stories from victims, to conduct additional public hearings, and to issue additional interim reports—with the final report and its recommendations to be delivered to the government by 15 December 2017.

According to the royal commission's interim report, which was released on 30 June, many people have already shared their experience of abuse by attending a private session or providing a written account to the commission. I encourage all those who have suffered abuse to join with these people and engage with the commission.

I recently had the pleasure of officially opening knowmore legal service's Perth office, who provide free legal advice and information for any member of the public who is considering telling their story or providing information to the royal commission. This not-for-profit organisation is funded by a grant from the federal government, represented by the Attorney-General's Department. Speaking with knowmore's executive officer, Jenny Hardy, at the launch highlighted the need for this extension, with this one support service alone providing more than 4,000 advices and having conducted more than 300 outreach community engagement events across the country since they opened their Sydney office in July last year. To date, 11 per cent of their services have also been provided to clients in my home state of Western Australia, and this was before their permanent office had even been established. It is organisations such as this that we need to ensure a royal commission of this magnitude is met with sensitivity and has appropriate support networks available for those who need them. Implementing a royal commission inquiry into what has historically been a 'too hard' and ignored subject is an achievement in itself, but to gain a further extension is a credit to the current government, all those who have had the courage to tell their stories and the many organisations across Australia who have supported the inquiry on behalf of those who, until now, have had no justice, no protection and no voice.

Many people do not understand the journey of those who have suffered emotional, physical and sexual abuse or the trauma they relive when telling their stories. I am pleased to be part of a government that understands the need for victims to have a voice, when for too long they have suffered in silence, and will provide additional funding to ensure the commission can complete its work. I say to all those people who rallied for the extension: well done. Your voice was heard in Canberra and the Prime Minister and this government have extended the royal commission as you requested. You should pat yourselves on the back for the efforts you made to get that extension.

Climate Change

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (12:55): 'The first duty of a government is to protect its people,' the Prime Minister is fond of telling us. But unfortunately our Prime Minister has been abjectly failing in this duty when it comes to protecting us from the effects of global warming. He scrapped the post of science minister and the Climate Commission as well. He has sought to kill the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the Climate Change Authority and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency as well—so far unsuccessfully. But he has abolished the price on pollution and he is hell-bent on destroying the renewable energy target.

Everyone knows that we have a science-denying climate change appeaser and a Luddite for a Prime Minister, but what many Australians may not know is that we have someone similar running Victoria. Premier Napthine has attacked clean energy program after clean energy program. We are now less than 100 days from an election in Victoria and the chickens are
coming home to roost, because the Victorian government can no longer claim that Canberra is doing the heavy lifting on climate change, so Victoria can no longer get away with dragging the chain. They will be judged on what they have done and what they have failed to do.

This week, thanks to a report released by Environment Victoria, we have clear evidence of the state government’s climate crimes. The report *Sun blocks and wind breaks* outlines 25 attacks on clean, renewable and efficient energy and I want to outline to the House each of those 25 attacks. No. 1: in August 2011 the coalition government implemented extremely restrictive planning regulations for wind turbines, making it almost impossible to get approval for a new wind farm. Attack No. 2: in May 2011 the coalition abandoned talks on the phase-out of one of the world’s dirtiest power stations, Hazelwood, and as a result it continues to emit around 30 per cent of Victoria’s climate pollution.

No. 3: in June 2011, breaking election commitments, the coalition government abandoned Victoria’s white paper and all the commitments within it. No. 4: in March 2012 the Victorian government abandoned Victoria’s 20 per cent pollution reduction target and removed it from the Climate Change Act. No. 5: in September 2011 they slashed the premium solar feed-in tariff from 60c to 25c. No. 6: one month later they restricted access to the standard solar feed-in tariff. No. 7: one year later they slashed the solar feed-in tariff further from 25c to just 8c.

No. 8: from the start the Victorian government joined Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s crusade against the price on pollution. No. 9: in 2011 the Victorian government renewed Alcoa’s coalmining lease at Anglesea for 50 years, with no measures to reduce its pollution. No. 10: the government has removed climate change and renewable energy from the remit of Sustainability Victoria and scrapped some of its successful programs. No. 11: the coalition has continued Labor’s push to create a brown coal export industry in Victoria. No. 12: it spent $120,000 of taxpayers’ money to improve the image of coalmining in Victoria. No. 13: it dropped the promise, after making election commitments, to implement pollution standards or new coal fired power stations.

No. 14, it failed to deliver any progress towards the election commitment to improve residential energy efficiency. No. 15: a $20 million pledge to replace energy-guzzling streetlights with more efficient lighting was ditched in the 2012 state budget. No. 16: despite an election commitment, no review of fossil fuel subsidies has taken place. No. 17: in March last year the government scrapped the solar hot water rebate. No. 18: the government also repealed a cost-effective program that was helping business to reduce energy consumption. No. 19: earlier this year the government drastically scaled back loans to government departments to improve their energy efficiency. No. 20: despite the closure of Alcoa, the government has extended the operating licence of the Anglesea power station, which helped to power the smelter.

No. 21: $75 million has been provided to three proposed coal projects in the Latrobe Valley. No. 22: the government is phasing out the low-cost and job-creating energy efficiency scheme. No. 23: the government has joined the Prime Minister in his push to destroy the RET and even argued for gas to be included as renewable. No. 24: it has also backed the retailer Simply Energy’s decision to charge customers an extra $51 a year for having solar panels. No. 25: it has cancelled the requirement for government agencies to purchase green power.

As this appallingly shows, the Napthine government cannot be trusted to act on climate change. In fact, backed by Labor they are seeking to expand the coal industry in Victoria and...
have set out to destroy action on clean energy. Only the Greens can be trusted to fight for clean energy.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 13:01