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SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH 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 MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,
Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP, Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry, Ms Clare Ellen O’Neil, MP,
Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Brett David Whiteley MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks 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—Mr Scott Buchholz MP
Government Whips—Mr Andrew Alexander Nikolic, AM, CSC and
Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

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<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katter's 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
Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Heriot
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Charles Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joshua Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
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<tr>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgment of country and read prayers.

PETITIONS

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:01): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Onshore Abattoirs

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of citizens of Australia opposing live export Draws to the attention of the House:
Onshore abattoirs will create multiple winners. The rhetoric that either animals or farmers must be sacrificed is redundant. We owe it to our country communities to create thousands of value-adding local jobs.
Almost all world markets appreciate chilled, reliably tested meat. Australia's economy will benefit.
It is a moral violation to subject creatures, for which we have a duty of care, to distress, terror and pain. Australians are outraged. Our national reputation is compromised.
Repeated, horrific breaches of 'welfare' standards are not limited to a few rogue countries. ESCAS itself is fundamentally and irrevocably flawed. Common 'best practice' involves throat-cutting while animals are fully conscious. 'Legal' privations and assaults during transport would have perpetrators imprisoned if the animal were domestic or native.
Time is critical for those being loaded now. Further investigations, and notions such as CCTV also squander resources.
We therefore ask the House to
Immediately cease live export
Work with the Australian Government to develop and deliver policies and programs supporting localised, sustainable, humane animal processing
Deliver an international message that Australia's exports shall now prioritise quality over quantity
from 557 citizens

Australian Constitution Section 116

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens of Australia, draws the attention of the house that the Australian Constitution Section 116 does not protect its citizens from, cults, sects or wrong influences by non-application of qualification, on observance, or control toward religions.
We therefore ask the House to Amend Section 116 of the Australian Constitution to read-The Commonwealth will establish qualification of a religion, if necessary be observant, will disband or reject any group under the pretence of a religion, under the Australian Constitution.
from 1 citizen

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:01): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

CHAMBER
Asylum Seekers

Dear Dr Jensen

Pursuant to Standing Order 209(b), relating to referring a petition to a Minister for response, please find response to Petition Number 965/1436.

This petition of members of the Bathurst Catholic Diocese was submitted by the Standing Committee on Petitions for a response from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, in writing, on 20 October 2014:

The petition raises concerns about Australia’s asylum seeker policy.

Under the previous government’s policies the number of illegal maritime arrivals to Australia significantly increased. This increase has undermined the integrity of Australia’s migration and humanitarian programmes and threatens Australia’s territorial sovereignty.

Offshore processing and settlement deters people from risking their lives in the hands of people smugglers in an attempt to enter Australia without a visa. The denial of permanent settlement in Australia eliminates a product for people smugglers to sell. The government’s offshore processing policy gives asylum seekers the opportunity to have their protection claims assessed in accordance with the Refugees Convention. If found to be a refugee, they will be settled in a third country and provided with support to establish a new life.

Current government policy is yielding positive results, with one arrival in 2014 and none to date in 2015. To date, 4400 extra places have been allocated to Iraq and Syria this programme year and an additional 4500 will be allocated in the next 3 years in the Humanitarian Programme to be managed and provided in an orderly process to those who apply through the proper channels.

Yours sincerely

From the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Mr Dutton

Broadband, Queensland Seafood Industry

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 17 March 2015, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning the quality of available telecommunications infrastructure in Burnett Heads, Queensland.

I understand the concerns the landowners and residents of Burnett Heads outlined in the petition.

Telstra have confirmed the last upgrade to the Burnett Heads exchange was in June 2014. Any future planned upgrades will be published at www.telstrawholesale.com.au/products/broadband/adsl/upgrade-plans/index.htm.

As retail service providers are private companies, operational decisions such as infrastructure upgrades are commercial matters for each company to consider, subject to the regulatory framework within which they operate.

The Australian Government has committed to completing the construction of the National Broadband Network (nbn) ensuring that all Australians have access to fast affordable broadband as soon as possible.

To deliver fast broadband sooner, at less cost to taxpayers and more affordably for consumers, the nbn should be completed using a multi-technology mix. This will match the right technology to the right location and make use of existing infrastructure where possible.

The multi technology mix approach is predicted to cost $32 billion less to implement, get the nbn finished by 2020 and enable nine out of ten Australians in the fixed line footprint to get access to download speeds of 50 megabits per second or more.
An important element of the government's policy is that areas like Burnett Heads which are currently under served will be prioritised in the nbn rollout.

The definition of underserved is based on the analysis done for the Broadband Availability and Quality Project. It takes into account the availability (access) and quality (speed) of broadband. The analysis found over 1.6 million premises around Australia have poor access or no access to broadband.

The analysis was provided to nbn to consider these areas when prioritising the rollout. However nbn also needs to consider the cost and logistics of prioritising deployment to particular areas. The Broadband Availability and Quality Report is available at www.mybroadband.communications.gov.au/uploaddocuments/Finalreport.pdf.

Quarterly updates of planned nbn activity, technology improvements or variations in the rollout are available, you can visit www.nbnco.com.au for more information on the implementation of the network.

On 1 December 2014, nbn released its new national rollout plan which provides details on the nbn underway to deliver fast broadband by June 2016. While Burnett Heads is not included in the new schedule, ultimately no-one misses out as the network will be made available nationally by 2020.

As with any project of this magnitude, nbn expects changes to this forecast. Accordingly, nbn is committed to providing quarterly updates of planned activity to capture any changes to the schedule identified through process and technology improvements or variations in the rollout. The nbn website www.nbnco.com.au provides regular updates on the network rollout schedule.

Thank you for your representation as Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull

410 Visa Holders

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 25 February 2015 to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Peter Dutton MP, concerning the submission of a Retirement (subclass 410) visa holder petition. As the Minister responsible for the matters you have raised, I will respond on behalf of the Portfolio.

The Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (the Citizenship Act) sets out the requirements for Australian citizenship. All applicants for Australian citizenship by conferral must satisfy a number of eligibility criteria, including the requirement to be a permanent resident. There is no discretion provided by the Citizenship Act for the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection or the Department to waive the legislative requirements for Australian citizenship.

Retirement visa holders are not precluded from applying for a permanent visa if there is one for which they believe they may be eligible. Australia offers a number of visa categories under which people can apply to live permanently or temporarily in Australia. Each visa category has a different set of legal requirements which reflect the different purposes of the visas. Information on the full range of visa categories can be obtained from the Department's website at: www.immi.gov.au.

While there is a diverse range of permanent visas available, the Australian Government does acknowledge that there will be some temporary visa holders who will not be able to meet the requirements for a permanent visa, despite having lived in Australia for many years.

The Retirement visa does, however, provide for people who wish to reside in Australia but may not be able to meet the requirements for a permanent visa. The validity period of this visa was increased to 10 years on 1 July 2009. While this does not provide a pathway to permanent residence, it is hoped that having such a long visa validity period provides some certainty to retirees about the duration of their stay in Australia.
The department monitors and reviews visa and citizenship arrangements and your comments have been noted for this purpose. As any proposal to change visa and citizenship arrangements may have implications for other portfolios, any changes would need to be considered by the government as a whole.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash

Halal Certification

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2015 to the Treasurer, the Hon Joe Hockey MP, concerning a petition regarding halal certification and calling for amendments to the Competition and Consumer Art 2010 (CCA). The matter has been referred to me as I have policy responsibility for the CCA. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you.

I am aware that a number of Australians are concerned with the practice of halal certification in Australia and the Australian Government supports consumers having access to information about the food they purchase.

Industry-based food certification initiatives, such as halal certification, are aimed at highlighting the special features of a product and are not uncommon in the highly competitive Australian food industry as companies compete in markets here and overseas. The practice is voluntarily entered into by individual businesses and while a fee is provided to the halal certifier, the income produced by an Australian business from selling halal-certified products belongs to that business. Australian businesses can also export halal-certified products to international markets and thereby contribute to the Australian economy.

While it may not always be evident if a product has been prepared according to halal practices, generally there are strong incentives for businesses paying for halal certification to clearly label their products. The Australian Consumer Law, contained in Schedule 2 of the CCA, prohibits misleading or deceptive conduct and the making of false or misleading representations, including claims that food products meet certain consumer values such as ‘halal’. If members of the public have concerns that specific products have been mislabelled with regard to halal certification, they can contact their state or territory fair trading agency or the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission at: 1300 302 502 or via its website at: www.accc.gov.au/contact-us/.

Australian governments have previously considered the practice of food labelling to promoting the special features of a product. In 2011, Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for food regulation considered the issue in their response to the report of the independent review of food labelling law and policy, Labelling Logic.

Ministers determined that a market-driven, self-regulatory approach to consumer value concerns, such as halal, is likely to be more responsive to consumer needs than a regulatory approach. Further information on the food ministers’ response to the review is available at: www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au.

I note the petition calls for a number of changes to the CCA. Halal certification is a complex issue that relates to a number of portfolios and the changes sought are of a nature that could not be addressed through amendments to the CCA. For example, the states and territories are responsible for the regulation of food production and processes, food labelling requirements are set by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code administered by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand and the treatment of costs associated with food production are a matter for that particular business.

It should be noted that there are many products sold in Australia that are not halal certified. If someone is not supportive of halal-certified products for whatever reason, they may seek information
directly from food companies to identify products that have been produced appropriately for their needs. That said, the Government is aware there is considerable misinformation circulating about halal certification and is concerned about its potential negative impact on Australian businesses, including that it can unfairly affect their reputation when they are legitimately marketing their products in a certain way.

As you are most likely aware, on 13 May 2015 the Senate referred an inquiry into third party certification of food to the Senate Economics References Committee, to report by 30 November 2015. Given the scope of the terms of reference, I would expect that a number of issues raised in the petition will be considered by the inquiry.

I note that when the Committee has considered this response it will be presented in the House and be posted on the Committee's website.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Small Business, Mr Billson

Mohamad Ali Taheri

Dear DrJensen

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2015 drawing my attention to a petition regarding the imprisonment of Mohammad Ali Taheri in Iran.

The Australian Government remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Iran, including in relation to Iran's use of intimidation and arbitrary arrest, and the ongoing use of capital punishment.

Australia consistently raises concerns about Iran's human rights situation with Iranian authorities in Canberra and in Iran, and before the United Nations, including the UN General Assembly Third Committee and the Human Rights Council. I raised human rights issues with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr Mohammad Zarif, during my visit to Iran on 18-19 April.

During Iran's second Universal Periodic Review of its human rights situation in October 2014, and before the Human Rights Council in March 2015, Australia called on Iran to release all prisoners of conscience, and urged Iran to respect detainees' human rights, ensure that national laws support the independence of lawyers, and ensure all trials are conducted fairly.

The Government will continue to pay close attention to the human rights situation in Iran and express our concerns as appropriate.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Bishop

PETITIONS

Statements

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:02): In June 2014 I made a statement as Chair of the Petitions Committee updating the House on the petitions received in the 44th Parliament up to that point. Today I will provide the House with another update on the activities of the Petitions Committee so far this in this parliament.

Australians remain very active petitioners. So far in the 44th Parliament, the committee has considered more than 192 petitions. Of these, 173 were found to meet the requirements and
were presented to the House. In my capacity as chair of the Petitions Committee, I presented 109 of these petitions, while the remaining 64 were presented by members on behalf of their constituents. In total, these petitions contain more than 1.5 million signatures.

Regrettably, since September 2013, 15 petitions have been found not to meet the requirements and were thus unable to be presented in the House as petitions. It is always concerning when a petition is deemed noncompliant with the standing order requirements. The committee continues to work to help prospective petitioners by engaging in a program of public outreach—to help make as many Australians as possible aware of their right to petition the House and how to conduct such a petition.

This parliament, the committee has been active on social media through the House's Facebook and Twitter pages, with regular posts highlighting the rules for petitions and the role of the committee. A part of this role is providing assistance to potential petitioners before they commence gathering signatures. By publicising this role, it is hoped that more potential petitioners will avail themselves of the assistance available, thus increasing their chances of meeting the requirements and gaining access to the benefits that petitioning the House can bring.

Another part of the public outreach by the committee is holding public hearings with petitioners to receive feedback on their experiences of petitioning the House. In conjunction with these hearings, the committee sometimes visits schools to discuss the petitions process with students and teachers. In two of my recent statements to the House, I discussed both a school visit and a public hearing, and the value of these activities.

I would like to conclude my statement today by focusing on the rate of ministerial responses. As I have said recently, one of the real strengths of the current approach to petitions is the proportion of petitions which receive ministerial responses. Before the changes implemented in 2008, very few petitions received responses. Since these changes, nearly every petition receives a response.

This trend has continued in the 44th Parliament, with approximately 90 per cent of petitions having received a response. As I have mentioned previously, the committee has recently undertaken an audit of petitions with outstanding responses and has written to ministers who have so far been unable to provide responses to petitions referred to them. In this way, the committee hopes that every petition presented in the House will receive a response.

COMMITTEES
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
Report

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (10:06): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, I present the committee's report, entitled Reviewing Troubled waters: consideration of the government response to the 2012 inquiry into arrangements surrounding crimes at sea, together with the minutes and proceedings. International cruises are an increasingly popular holiday choice for Australians of all ages. In most cases, a cruise holiday will be a welcome escape from the pressures of everyday life. However, when accidents or crimes occur on board a cruise vessel, they can be very difficult for victims and law enforcement agencies to cope with.
This is not the first time the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee has reported on crimes at sea. In June 2013 the committee tabled a report, entitled *Troubled waters*, which investigated the arrangements surrounding crimes committed at sea. The report arose from a coronial inquest into the death of Ms Diana Brimble on board a P&O cruise ship in 2002. The *Troubled waters* report found that cruise safety had improved a great deal in the years since Ms Brimble's tragic death, but it also identified a number of areas in which safety practices could be improved. The report made 11 recommendations directed at preventing crimes at sea, caring for victims and making it easier for law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes at sea involving Australian citizens.

In November 2014, the committee received the Australian government's response to the *Troubled waters* report. The government had agreed to only two of the committee's 11 recommendations. Three were not agreed to, a further two were noted and four were agreed to in principle. The key recommendations that the government did not agree to were recommendation 1, which was on the collection and publication of independent statistics on crimes at sea, and recommendations 7,8 and 9, which would have made it a condition of entry to Australian ports that cruise operators meet minimum standards in responding to alleged crimes at sea, in crime scene management and in their reporting of alleged crimes at sea.

The committee reviewed the government response and subsequently held a private hearing so that the government could provide more information on that response. The hearing was also attended by representatives of the cruise ship industry and by Mr Mark Brimble on behalf of the International Cruise Victims Association. After careful consideration, the committee continues to hold concerns about the adequacy of the government response to its recommendations. We maintain that the collection and publication of statistical information on crimes at sea is a necessity. The cruise industry argued that cruise ships are comparatively safe, but there should be a way to verify those claims independently. Reliable and independent information is critical to the formulation of good policy and Australians should have access to accurate, independent information on the risks of travel.

With that in mind, the committee has recommended, once again, that the government take all necessary steps to ensure that information on crimes at sea is properly reported so that accurate statistics can be maintained and published. It is also critical that cruise lines operating in Australia extend appropriate care to victims of crime and that they maintain proper crime scene management and reporting practices. This will ensure that victims do not suffer more than they should and that crimes at sea can be prosecuted where possible.

At present, there is nothing to compel cruise lines to enact these measures other, I suppose, than fear of a social media backlash. But Twitter is not a form of accountability. There should be legal standards in relation to these matters and cruise lines should be denied access to our ports if they consistently put Australians at risk by failing to meet those standards.

This committee has been urging the industry to improve its safety practices for a number of years. We do note that industry practice has improved. But there continue to be reports about incidents which are made worse because safety technologies, such as man overboard systems, are not in place. So more does need to be done and we ask the government to act to ensure that Australians have the information they need to make informed choices about cruise safety and to ensure that cruise lines meet responsible safety and reporting standards.
We do not want to demonise the cruise ship industry. We do recognise the substantial contribution it makes to the tourism dollar. But we do say that more needs to be done to regulate the industry to make it safer for everyone and to give that greater standard of accountability that the cruise ship industry can then tout as well.

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

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (10:11): As deputy chair of the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee, I wish to commend the chair and committee members for their work throughout this inquiry into crimes at sea. I especially want to acknowledge the secretariat's support. I also wish to acknowledge the work of the members of the committee in the previous parliament who held the initial inquiry into crimes at sea.

As noted by the chair, international cruises are an increasingly popular holiday choice for Australians, so popular in fact that, according to the Cruise Lines International Association, more than one million Australians took a cruise holiday in 2014—a surge of 20 per cent from 2013. This confirms Australia's position as the world's fastest growing source of cruise passengers and the fourth largest total market in the world.

As has been identified by this report and the earlier Troubled waters report, current safety and reporting regulations for this large and rapidly growing industry are clearly inadequate. Indeed this has been again been highlighted in recent weeks in the coronial inquest into the tragic deaths of Kristen Schroder and Paul Rossington, who lost their lives after going overboard from the Carnival Spirit in May 2013. It was revealed at the inquest that the pair were not reported missing until some 16 hours after they went overboard—and CCTV footage was not being monitored.

The Troubled waters report, tabled in 2013, found that while cruise safety has improved a great deal there are a number of areas in which safety practices should be improved. The report made 11 recommendations directed at preventing crimes at sea, caring for victims and making it easier for law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes at sea involving Australian citizens. The committee remains concerned that the government took so long to consider the initial report and that it did not adequately address the recommendations made. For an industry that is growing at as rapid a pace as the cruise industry is, to neglect the work and recommendations of Troubled waters for some 18 months is unacceptable.

As noted by the chair, the government agreed to only two of the committee's 11 recommendations. Three were not agreed to, a further two were noted and four were agreed to in principle. The committee reviewed the government's inadequate response and subsequently held a private hearing to put a series of questions to the government regarding recommendations not taken up. The hearing was also attended by representatives of the cruise industry and the International Cruise Victims Association. The committee continues to hold concerns about the adequacy of the government's response to its recommendations.

The committee maintains that the collection and publication of statistical information on crimes at sea is essential. Evidence must back up the industry's claims that cruise ships are comparatively safe, and Australians should have access to accurate, independent information on the risks of travel. It is also critical that cruise lines operating in Australia extend appropriate care to victims of crime and that they maintain proper crime scene management and reporting practices. There should be legal standards in relation to these matters and cruise
lines should be denied access to our ports if they consistently put Australians at risk by failing to meet them.

Across two parliaments now, this committee has been urging industry to improve its safety practices. As the chair noted, while there have been signs of improvement I would suggest that, as is graphically demonstrated by the current coronial inquest into the two deaths at sea that I mentioned earlier in this report, it is very clear that much more needs to be done. The government should act to ensure that Australians have the information they need to make informed decisions about cruise safety and to ensure that cruise lines meet reasonable safety and reporting standards. I strongly urge the government to reconsider their response and objections to the recommendations made by this committee.

The SPEAKER: Does the member for Dawson wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (10:16): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The 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

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (10:16): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Intelligence and Security Committee

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (10:17): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present the committee's report entitled Review of the relisting of Hezbollah's external security organisation.

I am pleased to present the committee's report on its review of the relisting of Hezbollah's External Security Organisation as a terrorist organisation under 102.1 of the Criminal Code. It is important to note at the outset that this listing prescribes Hezbollah's External Security Organisation, or ESO, and not Hezbollah in its entirety.

Hezbollah is a multifaceted organisation that includes political, social and military components. Hezbollah maintains a social welfare network, including education and health services as well as what is described as a highly-capable and well-resourced militia. Hezbollah entered the Lebanese parliament in 1992 and the government in 1995.

The ESO is described as a discrete branch of Hezbollah, responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of terrorist attacks against Hezbollah's enemies outside Lebanon. In evidence, the committee was informed that Hezbollah's structure can be identified to a level of detail that enables that very distinct part of the organisation that is purely responsible for its terror its activities to be identified.

Although ASIO has concluded that the ESO has been involved in at least three significant attacks against Israeli and Jewish interests outside Lebanon, the ESO has not publicly admitted responsibility for any terrorist attack. The statement of reasons notes the difficulty in
gathering information about the group's role and activities due to its secretive nature, but concludes:

… there is no indication that the ESO's role has changed in recent times, …

The committee notes that since the last relisting, several alleged or probable ESO operatives have been arrested around the world.

The committee examined the basis for the listing of only the ESO and was assured that for this and for all previous listings the government had carefully considered the extent of the organisation that should be proscribed. This included the question of whether proscribing the ESO would achieve the government's intent. The committee acknowledges the evidence it received to substantiate the approach that has been taken. The committee accepts that the government's current approach to proscription provides flexibility by allowing competing interests to be considered and unintended consequences that may hinder counterterrorism efforts to be avoided. It should also be noted that any activity that is relevant to security may be subject to investigation by ASIO regardless of whether an entity is proscribed or not.

On the basis of the evidence presented to it, the committee accepts that Hezbollah's ESO continues to engage in terrorist acts. The committee therefore supports ongoing proscription of the ESO as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code and recommends that the regulation not be disallowed. I commend the report to the House.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Taxation

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (10:21): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that 1 July 2015 marks the 28th anniversary of the introduction of dividend imputation in Australia;
(2) recognises that:
   (a) the system of dividend imputation introduced by the Labor Government in the 34th Parliament has been maintained and supported by every Government since;
   (b) the system of refunding excess imputation credits for the benefit of low income earners and charities, which was introduced by the Coalition Government in the 39th Parliament, has been maintained and supported by every Government since;
   (c) dividend imputation has delivered improved operation of Australia's capital markets and corporate landscape;
   (d) the end of double taxation of profits has delivered increased prosperity to everyday Australians who own shares either directly, or through indirect means such as superannuation; and
   (e) dividend imputation has encouraged increased share ownership levels throughout the Australian community;
(3) endorses and lends ongoing support to dividend imputation; and
(4) rejects calls to tamper with or discard dividend imputation and reintroduce any double taxation of dividends.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Laundy: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Mr TONY SMITH: Twenty-eight years ago, share ownership was not the domain of the broad population because the tax system conspired against it with punitive double taxation of company profits and personal income. Back then, a dividend paid to a shareholder on the top marginal tax rate was effectively taxed at nearly 80c in the dollar. Not only did these tax settings discourage share ownership for everyday mums and dads, they encouraged all the wrong things in the corporate world. Debt-fuelled inflation of share prices was rewarded over productive investment and the generation and distribution of profits to shareholders. For shareholders, the only viable way to realise profit was through selling the shares after growth in the stock price—rather than receiving a share of the earnings through a dividend.

Twenty-eight years on, things could not be more different. The reason for that is that 28 years ago this parliament passed critical and revolutionary tax reform legislation. Then Treasurer Paul Keating introduced legislation to end the double taxation of dividend income. It began operation on 1 July 1987 and when it did it fundamentally altered the incentives for shareholders and for company boards and management. Australia led the world. The overriding disincentive to pay dividends was turned on its head with shareholders no longer burdened by double taxation. A shareholder with a marginal tax rate above the company tax rate now only paid the difference rather than the aggregate. That system has been maintained by every government since. Indeed in the year 2000 it was extended by then Treasurer Peter Costello to refund excess imputation credits for the benefit of low-income earners and charities. It has been a reform that has, together with the privatisation of government assets, boosted direct share ownership in this country. Critically, it has also altered the corporate landscape and, in our view, underpinned the strength of the Australian economy, anchoring it in so many ways.

There have been some calls to tamper with dividend imputation—indeed some calls to abolish it altogether. Those calls have argued that the dividend imputation system is not attractive to foreign shareholders. In other words, the argument is that we should do away with dividend imputation or tamper with it in order to get a lower company tax rate. The truth is that there would be no prospect of lowering corporate and income tax rates enough to leave Australian shareholders in anything other than a higher tax position.

This motion lends support to the current system and rejects out of hand any of the calls to tamper with it or indeed to do away with it. We are having a debate in this country about tax and that is a good thing. But the purpose is to put a magnifying glass on the failures within the system, not the standout successes. The purpose is to deliver lower, simpler, fairer taxes—not to reintroduce double taxation of dividends. If that were to be done, someone on the top tax rate today would, instead of paying the difference between it and the company tax rate, be paying an effective tax rate of nearly 63c in the dollar. For those people who advocate change, their future is in fact the failed past of 28 years ago.

Along with my colleague, I put forward this motion to send the message that that is not where we want to go. If we were to go back to that place, we would be recreating a failed system. We would be putting all the incentives in the wrong places. It would be the financial equivalent of being ignorant enough and arrogant enough to think we could destroy one of the Seven Wonders of the World and create something better. I commend this motion to the House. I know it has strong support amongst members on both sides.
Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (10:26): I support this motion and congratulate the member for Casey for having put it forward. The member for Casey has raised some excellent points and has gone back through the history of dividend imputation. This was a Keating-Hawke reform and it was visionary. What is often missed about this reform is that it worked hand in hand with the launch of superannuation. Superannuation, which is today sitting at $1.9 trillion, enabled a huge number of people to own shares for the first time. The Australian Foundation Investment Company, in its submission to the tax white paper process currently underway, shows that as of 2012 22 per cent of households with incomes below $50,000 owned shares.

I have two frustrations with most of the discussions about taxation that take place in this chamber. The first is that they take place in a silo, not looking at the flow-on effects and the impact on the economy. The second is that they focus on lines in the budget, on the cost to the budget, without looking at any benefits that may result. The member for Casey pointed out very well the double taxation impact—79c in the dollar versus 30c. There is no rort here, as has mischievously been reported. A company makes a profit, pays its 30 per cent tax, and then any shareholders to whom that profit is distributed pay top-up tax. The effective rate of that top-up tax, for someone on the marginal rate of 49c in the dollar, is 27 per cent. It is simply single taxation that fits in with the marginal tax rate.

Following on from what the member for Casey said, I want to discuss the impact that tampering with imputation would have on small and family businesses. We look at those line items in the budget and we look at the potential imposts, but we never consider what alternative behaviour may result. That is where the conversations on tax in this place always fall over. What would happen? As the member for Casey so well pointed out, dividend imputation enables small- and family-sized business to reinvest in their own business through retained earnings—rather than taking on bank debt—knowing full well that, when they do issue dividends in the future, should they so desire, they will effectively be paying the one top marginal tax rate.

But what do they do with those retained earnings when they invest back in the business? They do two things. They drive further and increased profitability in that business, which is a win for the taxpayer through increased company and top-up tax in the future. More importantly, they employ more people—which is a win for the local economy as well as a win through that future employee's PAYE tax revenue. So dividend imputation is win-win-win—all the way through.

What would happen if dividend imputation were not there? Businesses would restructure themselves. You would move from having a private company to having a sole trader or a partnership. Growth would be inhibited—businesses would have to take on bank debt to grow further—and there would be single taxation at whatever marginal tax rate applied. Alternatively, if you did stay in the company format, you would, instead of paying tax at 79c in the dollar, just increase your wage, decreasing your business profitability and the tax applied to it. In a perfect world, you would probably make your business profitability zero so that you paid no company tax. You would just pay your marginal tax rate of 49c in the dollar on your wage earnings. This is where analysis of tax in this place so often falls over. It just considers lines in a budget paper. It never looks at how businesses will behave as a result of the environment we set as regulators and what the flow-on impacts will be through increased profitability for, and increased tax receipts from, the taxpayer and through increased
employment in the local economy. As a federal member, I can tell you how important that is. Further, when we set the regime, we need to recognise that certainty is the key to sustainability.

The member for Casey is on the money with this motion. I know that I have come at it from a different angle than he did, but I think it is just so important that both sides get behind dividend imputation and keep it in place. It was a Hawke-Keating reform and it was a great reform.

Debate adjourned.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (10:31): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the 40th anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 which was passed in implementation of our international obligations under the International Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination; and

(2) recognises the:

(a) important role the Act plays in Australia's Human Rights Framework;

(b) importance of Section 18C of the Act in protecting Australians from racist hate speech; and

(c) important role the Human Rights Commission plays in administering the Act.

The SPEAKER: Is there a seconder for the motion?

Ms Brodtmann: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr WATTS: The year 2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act and, in the midst of a national debate about the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship, it is a timely anniversary to reflect upon. Australian citizenship is the core of one of Australia's greatest policy success stories: the Australian model of multiculturalism, a model that, in general, respects and protects the rights of Australians to celebrate their ethnic heritage while at the same time emphasising that this liberty is coupled with the unifying and overarching obligations that we all have as citizens of a liberal democracy. As a result, we are a stronger and more prosperous nation because of our social diversity and we are a safer and more secure society because of our national unity.

We have come a long way on the issue of race in this country. As I speak in this chamber, a boy from Beaudesert in Queensland and the son of a Filipino migrant to this country, Jason Day, is battling against the best golf players of the world in the final round of the US Open. When my ancestor was a member of the Queensland parliament in the 1860s, that chamber passed a series of racist laws designed to discriminate against Asian residents of that state. One of the first orders of business of this parliament after Federation was to formalise these discriminatory laws at the federal level through what was to become known as the White Australia policy. For much of our history, our nation did not want people like Jason Day to be a part of it—yet today much of the nation will be sneaking into work late after having stayed home to cheer him on as the pride of this country.

So what has changed in this time? We have. We have made Australian multiculturalism work by working at it. We asked migrants to our country to buy into the Australian bargain. We respect cultural diversity where it is not inconsistent with the fundamental values of
liberal democracy and in turn we expect that all Australians work to become invested in our nation's democratic, economic and social life.

Protection from racial discrimination, as enshrined in the Racial Discrimination Act, is a part of this bargain. When passed in 1975, the Racial Discrimination Act made it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of their race in a whole range of areas, including employment, housing and the provision of goods and services. In effect, it made it unlawful to deny the full benefits of Australian citizenship and the benefits of equal treatment on the basis of race. This is a principle that, if anything, has become even more important in the increasingly diverse nation that we live in today. It is particularly important to ensuring the social cohesion that is so necessary for our response to the growing threat of violent extremism in our community. This change was not simply about protecting minorities from overt discrimination, but more broadly at dismantling the institutional racism that pervaded Australian society during the White Australia policy and ensuring that it could never return.

Despite this, after decades of the act being an essential part the legal framework safeguarding our flourishing multicultural and tolerant society, the act still continues under attack from sections in the conservative side of politics. The member for Dawson, a strident critic of the racial hate provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act, recently made an extraordinary attack on Australian multiculturalism in this chamber claiming that:

Today's multiculturalism means that the world view and the beliefs that spawn practices like honour killings, child brides or sharia law must be accepted, because they are seen as legitimate values within a particular culture.

With respect, if the member for Dawson believes this, he simply has not been paying attention. The very success of Australian multiculturalism is founded on a rejection of this kind of relativism. These practices that are talked about by the member for Dawson are not accepted in Australia. That is why, in the vanishingly small number of cases where they occur, our legal system does and should respond firmly. It is disingenuous in the extreme to imply that extreme and unlawful practices of this kind are representative of the broader experience of Australian multiculturalism. While I congratulate the member for Herbert for calling out his colleague for the comments at the time, the silence from other members has been deafening. Australian multiculturalism works because we work at it. This is an ongoing obligation on all members of this House.

These politically motivated attacks on this act, and the Human Rights Commission that oversees it, are concerted efforts from sections of the conservative side of politics to undermine legislation that protects minorities and our social cohesion—the very model of Australian multiculturalism. Even today, sections of the Liberal Party are seeking to repeal parts of the act. On 25 March 2014, the Abbott government announced it planned to water down the act by removing the section 18C hate speech provisions from the legislation, opening the door to racial vilification in Australia.

This section of the act was introduced during the Keating government in response to an increase in reports of racially motivated verbal and physical attacks against Asian-Australians in the 1990s—Australians like Jason Day's family and like my own family. It was then, and remains today, a crucial part of the Australian model of multiculturalism. We should remember what makes it work and we should continue to work at it in this chamber.
Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (10:37): I rise today to support this motion. I definitely, like the member opposite, support Jason Day, who is battling not only a brutal course and worthy opponents but also a severe case of vertigo whilst carrying the hopes of a country on his shoulders. I look forward to watching what unfolds over the next couple of hours, like my friend the member opposite. I believe my views on this matter are now well known, but I welcome the opportunity this motion presents to have my views recorded in this place. Australia is and always will be a country built on the back of migration. It is important that our nation celebrates this. It is also important that we support a legislative system that reflects the diverse and multicultural country that modern Australia has become.

Whilst this is a reflection of my vision for this country, it is only one of the reasons that I spoke out against proposed changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act last year. I began my journey into politics for one underlying reason: to make this country a better place for my kids and my grandkids. I believe that all Australians, regardless of ethnicity or religious backgrounds, should be able to live in a free society; but I also believe that those who are marginalised or vulnerable in our society should have a legal system that protects them from discrimination. That is a value I hope is reflected in the country that we leave to future generations and to all Australians.

From the outpouring of support for my stance against the proposed changes last year, I was reassured to know that the vast majority of people agree that modern Australians have a right to be protected from racial vilification. I was, of course, delighted when the Prime Minister subsequently removed the discussion from the table. The arguments to change the act stem from a belief that free speech should hold a central place in an open, liberal and democratic society. I agree that freedom of speech is a cornerstone of our society and that it has a fundamental role to play in modern Australia. However, I also hold the view that the current act does not restrict that freedom in any impactful way.

There are numerous examples where restrictions on freedom of speech are already existing and accepted by most Australians. Even in this House, a beacon of free speech, we may from time to time be ruled ‘out of order’ for phrasing an argument in a particular way.

I believe that protecting minority groups from racial vilification is one such restriction that is acceptable and appropriate, especially as individuals in these minority groups are often going through a difficult process of assimilation in their new home country and may not be in a position to ably protect themselves from such abuse. We need a safety net to provide these protections, and we should always look to avoid weakening laws that provide safeguards to the most vulnerable in our community.

Of course, legislation should be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is continuing to achieve the intended outcomes. However, last year I did not believe that a strong case had been made that major changes to the current legislation were required, and I maintain that view today. The number of complaints made under the act is small, and the number of those complaints that proceed to litigation is even smaller—in fact, minute. Moreover, the immensely valuable and educational conciliation process that is facilitated by the act is also often overlooked.

One of the benefits of being a backbench member of parliament is that the core task of my position is to represent the people of Reid, and to take their concerns to parliament. Within my electorate, this means I have the honour of representing one of the most multicultural seats
in Australia. In the period last year when the Attorney-General put this draft legislation out for consultation and forecast some potential changes, I had countless representations in forums, social media, direct contacts and in the street in speaking with the people of Reid. The majority of those people were my constituents. They were worried about these changes, and told me in no uncertain terms. The vast majority of those representations supported the act and I am sure they join with me today in acknowledging the 40th anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act and in pledging to continue to work to ensure that Australia remains an inclusive and tolerant society.

In the time I have left I would also like to place on record my support for the role the Human Rights Commission has played over the last 40 years in the administration of the act. I recently joined the Hon. Fred Chaney and shadow Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus and others at an event in Sydney to mark the 40th anniversary of the act and to launch a book by the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Soutphommasane, titled, *I'm not Racist But* ...

The event was a good opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a nation, but also a reminder that it is incumbent on all of us to continue to stand up to prejudice in all forms. I am sure that all members in this place would agree.

**Ms ROWLAND** (Greenway) (10:42): I am delighted to speak in support of the member for Gellibrand's motion.

From the start, I think people might be wondering, 'Why is this significant? Why is this parliament noting the 40th anniversary of a piece of legislation?' I think that part of the answer to that comes from the event that was held, mentioned by the member for Reid, on 11 June in Sydney, where we gathered together for the launch of Tim Soutphommasane's book, *I'm not Racist But* ... and also to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the act. In attendance were the Race Discrimination Commissioner, the shadow Attorney-General, Senator Penny Wong, the member for Reid, a number of other distinguished guests and me. Each speaker gave a most insightful perspective on why this act is so important.

One area that I think is not recognised as much as it should be is that if it were not for the Racial Discrimination Act we would not have had native title. There would be no Mabo without the Racial Discrimination Act. It was also great to see Gillian Triggs, the President of the Human Rights Commission there and Tim Wilson, the Human Rights Commissioner. All members reflected in very unique ways on the importance of this legislation.

Of course, the act does have a long 40-year history. It was passed in the final months of the Whitlam government in 1975 and really drew upon the pioneering work of attorneys-general, Lionel Murphy and Kep Enderby. For the first time in Australian history this legislation made it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on their race in a whole range of areas, including employment, housing and the provision of goods and services.

This act established the principle that is fundamental in our law to modern Australia, enforcing a powerful message about the kind of Australia we want—a thriving, accepting and respectful multicultural society, one that is inclusive irrespective of where you were born or where your parents may have been born. But I think it is also worth reflecting on the fact that these principles had to be fought for to be enshrined in legislation, and even after the passage of the act it was contested. In 1982 the Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland challenged
its validity in the High Court in the Koowarta case. And, as I said, it set the stage for the subsequent Mabo decision and native title. It also led the way for other, broader human rights work. Over the next couple of decades the Sex Discrimination Act, the Disability Act and the Age Discrimination Act followed.

So, be in no doubt about the significance of this act and why it is so important to acknowledge it and to fight for it into the future. Forty years since the Whitlam government proudly proclaimed that the Racial Discrimination Act would 'show a clean face to the world in terms of racial matters,' I believe that few pieces of legislation have encapsulated our modern Australian identity as distinctly or profoundly. Going to the words of Attorney-General Kep Enderby at the time, in 1975, he said that this bill:

… will make people more aware of the evils, the hurtful consequences of discrimination and make them more obvious and conspicuous. In this regard the Bill will perform an important educative role.

We know even today how much racial vilification damages the notion of society. It not only goes towards being against those fundamental tenets that I discussed; it also prohibits people from participating in our economy as much as they could.

You only have to look at the public outcry over this government's proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act, specifically in respect of 18C and the prohibitions against racist hate speech, to see how much the public recognises and respects these provisions. I acknowledge the words of the member for Gellibrand on this point, and I will add to them. I am yet to hear from the proponents of repealing these protections against racist hate speech. I am yet to have them articulate precisely what it is that they want to say that they cannot say now. I think it would be extremely telling if they could articulate exactly what that is. I was not surprised that a wide variety of groups came together to oppose these changes, including those on the government's own side.

As we rightly come together as a parliament to celebrate this legislation, we need to remember that its progress was hard fought, and we need to ensure that all our equal opportunity laws and institutions are not merely symbols to acknowledge from afar or to tick off from a list. I will end by saying that I remain tremendously optimistic for our society every time I see my three-year-old with her friends. Children do not see race. I look forward to a day when in our society, in this parliament and in our broader community we do not see it either.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (10:47): I would like to thank the member for Gellibrand for raising this important motion that acknowledges the 40th anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. I would also like to acknowledge my coalition colleagues the members for Hughes, Reid and Hasluck, who will also be speaking on this motion, together with the members for Greenway, Melbourne Ports and Fowler. All of them are regular contributors to any conversation or debate in this place that deals with the elimination of discrimination, the promotion of multiculturalism and the protection of human rights.

The Racial Discrimination Act was enacted in response to the Liberal-Nationals government's signing of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1966. The convention formalised our nation's position to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. This legislation was followed by laws to protect against sexual discrimination, age discrimination and disability.
discrimination with the Human Rights Commission, formed as a statutory authority to oversee and investigate complaints made under these laws. Last year the Abbott government commenced a community consultation process to look at clause 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act to ensure that it was fulfilling its core objectives while also achieving a fine balance with protection for an individual's freedom of speech.

As a result of this process I reached out to the many groups that make up my multicultural electorate and facilitated dozens of conversations on this issue. From community leaders to independent media to school groups, we debated and discussed the importance of protecting both these areas: the grey area that sometimes occupied the space and the challenge to lawmakers to fulfil our democratic responsibility to represent the views of the majority whilst protecting the needs of the minority.

Bennelong is truly a microcosm of multicultural Australia. Our region is blessed with vibrant Chinese and Korean communities occupying each side of the railway tracks in Eastwood. To walk down Rowe Street is akin to being transported to Shanghai or Seoul—without the high rises! As a result of these discussions, I formed the strong view that, when this grey area is encountered, it is our responsibility as lawmakers to stand firmly side by side with our minority groups to ensure that their rights—that everyone's rights—are protected and that no-one should be subject to any form of discrimination because of their race, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

Our nation, like so many, does not have a proud colonial history when it comes to the treatment of minority groups, whether it be embracing our Indigenous heritage or working together with Chinese migrants in the goldfields. My first motion in this place celebrated the impact of Chinese migration on Australian society over the past 200 years. Whilst we should never forget tragic incidents like the Lambing Flat riots just over 150 years ago, it is just as important that we celebrate the society we have formed today and the great levels of cross-cultural respect that are on display every day in my Bennelong electorate.

The legislation that we celebrate today has helped to create the modern day dynamic where we celebrate and extoll the virtues of cultural diversity. But these laws have also happened as a result of cultural change. In my previous career I witnessed this change and evolution firsthand. Althea Gibson was the first Black American to win Wimbledon. She was able to have success in Australia and Britain long before she could in the US. She said of playing in Sydney that it was the first time she was able to have a milkshake and a hamburger and know what it was like to feel white. Years later Arthur Ashe, who also won Wimbledon and was a great black American player, was the first allowed to play in South Africa. He did so on the agreement that the crowds had to be integrated. This was one of the first proactive steps of using sport to force this integration. Not long after, when we were playing in Richmond, he was allowed to practise at the Richmond Country Club, where his father had once been a janitor and where black people were not allowed to be members.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:52): I thank my colleague the member for Gellibrand for bringing this motion forward to acknowledge the 40th anniversary of Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Four decades have now passed and, if we look at Australia's history book, this is a great innovation, one far removed from the former White Australia policy and one that quite frankly now encompasses a very positive attitude to having a broader, more harmonious community settled in this country.
The Racial Discrimination Act—as a matter of fact, in the same year it was brought in—coincided with the Fall of Saigon. We received our first wave of refugees from Vietnam. This wave led to the initial migration of 50,000 people coming here and making Australia home, and quite frankly it was the first major endorsement of recognised settlement of a large body of people in this country. However, historically there have been major gaps in our legal system when it comes to discrimination, particularly in respect of our racial discrimination laws. This led to the introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act, which was the very first antidiscrimination and human rights legislation passed by the Commonwealth parliament. Not only does its existence embody Australia's commitment as a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which itself was ratified in September 1975, but the act was groundbreaking in respect of the way it went about fostering social cohesion within the broader Australian community. It represents Australia's new commitment to being a multicultural nation and securing for all Australians, regardless of their background, equality before the law.

In my community, which boasts over 150 nationalities, I regularly get to see cultures on display. I see and visit various temples, mosques, churches and other religious institutions. But moreover, I get to see people who have come and adopted Australia as their home and see their commitment to making this a very positive development here in Australia and one which certainly plays out very much through their children.

Today I am hosting students from the Thomas Hassall Anglican College in my electorate. One of the things they have been studying is the issue of discrimination. I welcome students from the school and I am glad that this debate took place while they are here.

In my electorate, over 30 per cent of people in my electorate come from an Asian background. I also have a very large population in my electorate from the Middle East. The vast majority of people who have come to my electorate are refugees. I spoke about the first migrants from Vietnam. At the moment, migrants who are coming here are fleeing the war in Syria, the conflicts in Iraqi and elsewhere. They come here to settle. They bring their hopes and their dreams to give their families a better way of life.

One of the things I think is very important in their settlement is that they can do so in the full knowledge that they will not be discriminated against in this country. That is why we were very concerned with the attempts last year of trying to prune back the Racial Discrimination Act, particularly in respect to section 18C, which would have made it unlawful for people to act out racial hate speech, which would have a deleterious impact on the harmonious society encouraged in this country.

I commend the efforts of the Australian Human Rights Commission and in particular, the Racial Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Soutphommasane—I should know his name better than that because Tim is actually of a Laotian background—(Time expired).

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:58): I rise to speak on this motion moved by the member for Gellibrand. Firstly, I would like to make it crystal clear that I am sure everyone in this House agrees that both racism and any form of religious intolerance is absolutely abhorrent. It is a gravely divisive social force. We in this parliament here and at all levels of government need to do everything we can to eliminate all forms of racism and religious intolerance in this country.
I am sure I concur with all the points raised by all the members speaking so far. But there are a few points I do disagree with other members on this side of the chamber. Certainly we have, I believe, one of the most wonderfully racially tolerant nations in the world. For those who have had the opportunity to travel around the world, certainly we have problems here in Australia. But when I compare the racial harmony that we have in our country to many parts of the rest of the world, we are second to none. We have a proud democratic nation with freedoms where people from all countries of the world have come to our society. They have been able to assimilate, to fit in and also retain parts of their culture and their heritage to make our nation a wonderful place.

We do still have problems with racial intolerance in this country, and we saw in the newspapers this morning an appalling act of violence and racial extremism against a gentleman in Melbourne. Acknowledging we still have problems, the question should be: what is the best antidote going forward? Should we continue with attempts at government regulation and censorship like section 18C or should we actually encourage free and open speech and open debate? The current section 18C provides, it is unlawful that:
(a) the act is reasonably likely, in all circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person …

In my opinion, the words 'offend' and 'insult' go too far. Rather than government censorship and sweeping racism and religious intolerance under the carpet, and allowing it to fester, I believe that the best way to defeat it is to bring it out in the open. Let us defeat it with free speech. Let us to defeat it with open debate. I believe that is what would be far better for our country.

When we talk about section 18C, it is disappointing to hear all sides of the debate trying to work out what is the best way to defeat racism, but to hear those in favour of 18C maintaining the current levels of censorship and allowing racial intolerance to be swept under the carpet actually attack those in favour of repeal and somehow allowing racist speech is very, very disappointing.

The other part of this motion refers to the Human Rights Commission. It is correct that the Human Rights Commission plays an important part in administering the act. Therefore, it is important that the general public has confidence, trust and faith in the commissioners on the Human Rights Commission. It is regrettable that the public has lost some of that faith, I think, due to two aspects.

Firstly, there was the Human Rights Commission recommendation to give $350,000 so-called compensation to a gentleman who actually bashed his pregnant wife to death with a child's bicycle. This gentleman had a long history of numerous assaults, property damage, wilful damage, obstructing police and drug possession. A psychologist said that this gentleman had a persistent pattern of abnormal emotions and behaviour, and was at high risk of reoffending, and that he continues to use threats to get what he wants. This is a person that the Human Rights Commission recommended be given $350,000 worth of taxpayers' money. Decisions like that undermine the Human Rights Commission.

The other area where the Human Rights Commission have lost some of the public's faith is to do with the timing of their inquiry into children in detention. No government wants to see children in detention. But the fact that that inquiry was originally scheduled under the
previous Labor government and was postponed, delayed or held back and done during this
government's time actually harmed the reputation of the Human Rights Commission.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (11:03): I want to thank the member for Gellibrand for bringing
this motion forward. When we consider the history of Australia, particularly the white
Australia policy, which Harold Holt abolished, we find that we set in place a mindset around
the differences between the cultural groups that reside in this country. The Racial
Discrimination Act was an endeavour to set that aside. It is a pity we do not think about
people in their capacity as an individual, and the qualities and the richness they have within
themselves, and the way in which their ethnicity has shaped the essence of who they are. If
we set aside the fact of colour, race or whatever that creates biases then we would not need a
racial discrimination act.

I went back to the Attorney-General at the time, Mr Enderby, and read extracts of his
second reading. He said, 'The purpose of this bill is to make racial discrimination unlawful in
Australia and to provide an effective means of combating racial prejudice in our country.' So
he acknowledged it existed. He went on: 'The bill introduces into Australian law for the first
time the obligations contained in the International Convention on the Elimination of All
Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is asserted in this convention that all human beings are
born free and equal in dignity and the rights that any doctrine of superiority based on racial
differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous.
Without any justification, I hardly need to say that I am sure that all members would agree
with this.'

He then went on to say: These will make people more aware of the evils, the undesirable
and unsociable consequences of discrimination, the hurtful consequences of discrimination
and make them more obvious and conspicuous. In this regard, the bill will perform an
important educative role. In addition, the introduction of legislation will furnish legal
background on which to rest charges, reflecting basic community attitudes. The fact that
racial discrimination is unlawful will make it easier for people to resist social pressures that
result in discrimination.'

I now refer to the Human Rights Commission report Racist violence: report of the national
inquiry into racist violence in Australia, initiated by HREOC in 1988 following
representations to it about an apparent increase in the incidence of racially motivated violence
in Australia. The findings of the national inquiry included:

Racist violence is an endemic problem for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all Australian
States and Territories.

Racist attitudes and practices (conscious and unconscious) pervade our institutions, both public and
private.

On the whole, public authorities do not respond effectively to reports of racist violence.
If we consider those in the context of a contemporary Australian society then the impact of
the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 has brought us a long way forward from where we were.
When we consider the impact of the white Australia policy on our northern neighbours and
the removal of that by Harold Holt, it changed the make-up of the fabric of a community in
which we now readily accept diversity and the qualities that each of those diverse groups
bring in the way of food, culture, dance and those things that they deem important.
What is more interesting in the make-up of our society now is the way in which the inclusive nature is much more prevalent than it was when I was a child and the way in which the freedoms that we have are celebrated. The distinctiveness of groups is celebrated annually in many of the events that I attend within my electorate, as of those of many of my colleagues in this chamber. The debates around the importance of section 18C will continue for some time until we as a parliament mature in the way in which we see freedom of speech in respect to the respecting the dignity and the rights of others who are very different to each and every one of us.

In its 40 years, the Racial Discrimination Act has taken us from a point where we did not support the individualism of a particular ethnic group to where we now accept a society that is truly multicultural, that is accepting of diversity and in which we now celebrate our differences in a way that we never used to. I commend this motion to the chamber and I thank the member for Gellibrand.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (11:08): It is an honour to speak after the member for Hasluck, who I regard as a friend and who is an example of the very things that he was talking about.

Racism begins with mindless hatred based on difference. No law can stop this irrational emotion, but we can stop people from harming each other because of it. Whether that harm is in the form of discriminating against others in employment and access to services or in undermining their sense of safety and belonging through racial vilification, the Racial Discrimination Act has provided those on the receiving end of racism with the means to fight back in a peaceful, legal and dignified Australian way.

The act was yet another example the lasting social reform enacted by the Whitlam government. It was Australia's first federal human rights legislation and secured equality before the law for all Australians. It was also a fine example of a national government taking the lead to set an example for all Australians. Since that time, all Australian states and territories have enacted similar legislation. Unfortunately, detractors of this act have frequently misunderstood it. As Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Soutphommasane, said recently, The Racial Discrimination Act … is not about punishing racism. Rather, the Act is about protecting people against prejudice.

Contrary to some public commentary, the legislation does not mean that people can be prosecuted and convicted under the law. Nor does it enable media outlets to be 'shut down' if they publish or broadcast racially offensive material. The legislation is more modest than this. It works not through coercion but through conciliation.

Over the almost forty years the Racial Discrimination Act has been in operation, more than 6 000 complaints have been resolved. Only a small number of complaints under the Act reach the courts: last year, it was only 3 per cent of complaints finalised by the Commission.

And the law is not only just about remedies. Its impact has been systemic.

Among the more vilified and misunderstood parts of the act is section 18C. Sections 18C and 18D of the Racial Discrimination Act were introduced in response to recommendations of major inquiries, including the National Inquiry into Racist Violence and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. These inquiries found that racial hatred and vilification caused psychological harm to their targets and reinforced other forms of
discrimination and exclusion. They found that low-level behaviour like this softens the environment for more severe acts of harassment, intimidation and even violence by impliedly condoning such acts.

18C’s purpose is to promote tolerance by bringing parties together to discuss and mediate the subject of their complaint and arrive at a conciliated and agreed outcome. Conciliation meetings that are resolved may require the following outcomes: an apology; an agreement to remove offensive material; systemic outcomes, such as changes to policies, procedures and training of staff or individuals; or sometimes even the payment of compensation. I was relieved when the current government dropped its plans to abolish 18C. A campaign led by Andrew Bolt, the Institute of Public Affairs and its prodigy Tim Wilson was dropped in the favour of the wall-to-wall community outrage. As the great philosopher of the 21st century, Isaiah Berlin, said:

… total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs.

Section 18C reinforces pluralist Australia and complaints are resolved by a process of reconciliation. It worked very well under the well-known socialist former Prime Minister John Howard. It is worth quoting from last year's submission by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to the Abbott government's exposure draft, when the government attempted to change 18C:

In 2003, the Commonwealth - which was then under a Coalition government headed by Prime Minister John Howard – intervened in Toben v Jones to defend the validity of Part IIA of the RDA and specifically the use of the words "offend, insult, humiliate and intimidate" in section 18C. The Commonwealth argued "that acts done in public which are objectively likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate and which are done because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin are likely to incite other persons to racial hatred or discrimination or to constitute acts of racial hatred or discrimination", and the court accepted that submission.

In the few seconds that I have got left to speak, I will say that it is very odd that in a situation where you are criticised for denying other people's liberties, as we were by the Herald Sun columnist Andrew Bolt, that as a result of my criticisms of Andrew Bolt that were published in the Guardian—explaining that the act is about conciliating racial hatred and not persecuting Andrew Bolt; I was in fact criticising Justice Bromberg, who in my view unfairly and in overboard way found against Mr Bolt—I have been banned from the Andrew Bolt program. The great speaker for civil liberties and the man who insisted that this was all about persecuting free speech has banned me from that program! (Time expired)

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (11:13): by leave—I thank the member for Gellibrand for moving this motion on the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. There can be areas of disagreement, but the fundamentals are sound. In the way in which he expressed himself as he moved the motion, I was pleased that he differentiated himself from some debates held at other times that have not acknowledged the core values that hold us together. It is a compact in which we acknowledge our diversity—that is, we are people of different races, different cultures, different faiths—but also that we have certain overriding principles which bind us together as a nation. These principles were well set out in a document called the National agenda for multicultural Australia. It was produced at the time of the Hawke government. Its principal author, I think, was a very prominent Victorian, Sir James Gobbo. He articulated the way in which I see modern Australia—very diverse in terms of its roots but an example to the
rest of the world about how you can come together. It is never perfect—nothing is perfect—but, when you look at a country that has 25 per cent of its population or thereabouts overseas born, we ought to be, if race is a problem, more challenged than anybody else, and we are not.

Our core values reflect gender equity, for instance. They reflect respect for parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and English as the national language. It is important, as we have this debate about what Australian citizenship means, that we understand the nature of our diversity. I do not think of these matters only in terms of people of particular races. I am focused on my own grandchildren. I have grandchildren who can say they are Norman, Irish, Scottish, German Jewish, Tongan, Chinese and Samoan. You may wonder how they get that mix. It is very colourful. They are extraordinarily talented. They are young but will be, I am in no doubt, great Australians. It reflects something of what we are. I think we need to be very proud of that. We need to defend it and defend it vigorously.

I would defend it by advocacy rather than by trying to prosecute people for alleged breaches. In relation to human rights issues, I am occasionally troubled about what I see as jurisprudence that develops over time which sometimes takes us further than we might otherwise want to be. Some of my colleagues have raised the issue of 18C. I would not have been arguing for its repeal given that there was one case in which it was suggested that perhaps it went a bit far. I think it could be addressed in another way, and I would like to just put on record the suggestion I would make. If these matters are going to be pursued by prosecution, or through the courts, you might properly require the Attorney-General's fiat to be able to initiate the litigation. That is a process that is adopted in other parts of our law to ensure that, if matters are going to proceed, they proceed in the public interest. I offer that as a constructive suggestion if it is thought that we ought to look at these issues again.

But let me once again affirm very strongly my view. I think there is no place for racial discrimination; there is no place for discrimination against people because of their faith; there is no place for discrimination against people on the basis of their culture. As I have said before, we remain an example to the rest of the world about how you can live together successfully. I commend those who have participated in this debate.

Debate interrupted.

**Small Business**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (11:19): I move:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Coalition Government has:

(i) started to arrest the decline in the small business environment overseen by the previous Labor Government; and

(ii) developed and started to deliver as part of the budget, the largest small business package in the nation's history—the Jobs and Small Business Package—worth $5.5 billion; and

(b) as part of the Jobs and Small Business Package, small businesses will be eligible for a 1.5 per cent company tax cut or a 5 per cent tax discount for small unincorporated businesses; and

(2) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for making unfunded announcements to small businesses in his Budget Reply Speech which ignore the two-thirds of small businesses which are not structured as companies; and

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**CHAMBER**
(3) commends the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business on their effective management of the small business economy.

I have great pleasure in moving this motion on small business, for the House to record its support for how the coalition's Growing Jobs and Small Business package has started to arrest the decline in the small business environment overseen by the previous Labor government. The coalition has developed and started to deliver, as part of the budget, the largest small business package in the nation's history, the Jobs and Small Business package, worth some $5.5 billion. It is a legacy that our government can be proud of. From all corners of the country, our members and senators have reflected on how this package has been embraced by the small business community. It was interesting to note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in his budget-in-reply speech on small business. We can see what a token attempt it was—supporting only one-third of the small business sector and ignoring a full two-thirds of small businesses, those which are not structured as companies.

In this motion I also move that the House commend the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business on their efficient management and support of the small business sector in our economy, reflecting its value to the country. At the heart of the government's 2015 budget was the Growing Jobs and Small Business Package. These measures are providing $3.25 billion in tax cuts for small business and $1.75 billion in accelerated depreciation measures.

The coalition government has started to deliver the nation's largest small business package, to ensure that we continue to support and grow our small business sector. As a consequence, last week was a great week for small business in Australia. We saw the Senate pass these two very important budget measures to assist small business to help this economy grow, develop and prosper. The Senate passed measures to give businesses an immediate tax deduction for each asset they purchase—subsequent to budget night—of less than $20,000. They will have the ability to immediately write those off. The measures also include a 1.5 per cent tax cut to incorporated small business.

Small business was, prior to this government coming in, declining in number of jobs and importance to our economy. Under this government, that is starting to turn around. This government has arrested the decline in small business. We are now developing and supporting those who wish to put their lives on the line every day to grow small businesses and employ Australian people. We are creating a more competitive system that supports small business and does not hinder it. Already we are seeing the positive effects that consumer and business confidence is having across the country, particularly in my electorate of Forde. In August, a northern Gold Coast business expo is being hosted at Upper Coomera. All exhibitor spaces are already full. As Forde's small business community grows in confidence and excitement, it is prepared to take full advantage of these new budget measures, The enthusiasm for this upcoming expo is an indicator of the great things to come.

Small businesses in Forde range from business services to construction to social services to manufacturing. I look forward, as businesses begin to take advantage of these budget measures, to reporting back to parliament the many success stories we are sure to hear from our diverse small business community. I am proud that our government has placed such an outstanding focus on Australia's small businesses. Small business owners are people who create services, create jobs and contribute to the economic growth of their local communities.
and to the country. Providing the ability for small businesses to reinvest leads to new and improved ways of doing business and overall improvement of our nation's productivity. Small businesses are at the forefront of Australia's jobs and growth, and the coalition is delivering for small business now and into the future. Only through creating a strong economy does our nation flourish. Small business does and will continue to play an integral role in the success of Australia's economy.

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

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:24):** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (11:24):** What a load of rubbish we have just heard. This motion on small business is nothing more than absolute rubbish just designed to heap praise on ministers and the Prime Minister: 'Let's all bow down to their greatness and what they have done.' When you actually have a look at it, it is not even close to what the member spoke about—the so-called greatest ever package for small business in Australian history, $5 billion. Let me tell you what it was under Labor before the Liberals took it away: it was $7 billion, and ours was for four years, not two years. So, just come back with the facts. Your package is there for two years and ours was for four years. Yours is a reinstallation of the stuff you cut off small business in the first place, but you have only given it back to them to the tune of $5 billion, when our package was $7 billion. The audacity of these guys: to come in here and talk about the greatest package in Australian history. Let me tell you a little something about politics: you always know somebody is fiddling the books when they say it is the greatest package ever, because it is not even close to that.

Let's have a look at what they have actually done since they got to government. They came into government with this debt and deficit hoo-ha—you know, that there was a crisis and emergency happening. But what have they done with the debt and the deficit since they came to government? They have doubled the deficit. The deficit went from $17.1 billion to now more than $35 billion. How is that a good outcome for the economy or for Australia's small business people who expected a little bit more? They said they would put downward pressure on rates—on everything. Everything was going to go down; it has not done that. In fact, what did they do with debt? They have added—that is right: added—an extra, net add, $35 billion to debt. Of course they do not want to talk about that. You will not hear them coming into this place talking about debt, deficit, emergencies and fire trucks pulling up and putting out some sort of emergency fire. The fire is twice as large now. They keep throwing fuel onto the fire and they are patting themselves on the back. This what I just do not understand. Talk about leading with a glass jaw. They come into this place with these trumped-up motions that are nothing more than self-aggrandisement. Who takes them seriously? That has got to be the reality.

What has happened in the latest Labor survey figures? When we were in government, unemployment was too high but it had the number five in front of it. Now that this mob, the Liberals, are in, unemployment is still too high, except it has a six in front of it. It went from having a five in front of it when we were in government to having, now that this mob has come in, a six in front of it. And they pat themselves on the back: 'job well done; good on you Liberal government, Liberal Party.' They come in here and they double the deficit; they add more debt and unemployment goes up. Do you know what the long-term unemployment rate is? It is staggering. Long-term unemployment is now a staggering 24.2 per cent. It is
unacceptable by anyone's standards, but you will not hear them putting motions on the table and coming here and talking about it or—something even better—doing something about it. It is all just trumped-up motions about patting Prime Ministers and ministers on the back: they are the greatest history; it is the greatest package ever; he is the greatest Prime Minister ever; they are the greatest ministers ever. Fine! Pat yourselves on the back and do whatever you want. Get your backbenchers to come in here and just create stories.

One thing they did get right in this budget—just one little thing; they have not got much right in this budget or the previous one—was that they reinstituted Labor's small business package of assistance. Sure, it is not as large; sure, it is not as timely; and, sure, it is over less time. But it is welcome. That is why it has passed the Senate. Labor thought that at least they have reintroduced our really good measures for small business. Small business, having had it in the first place, then had it taken away by the Liberal government. The hand reached well and deep into small business pockets. To make it even worse, they added the regulatory burden while they did this. They actually made it retrospective, which meant that a lot of small businesses that had already made claims not only had to rectify it retrospectively but also had to give the money back to the government and cause themselves a whole heap of red tape and a whole heap of problems.

So, this motion does pass strange. What did they do, though? This is a key thing. When the Liberal Party were in opposition they talked the economy down. I thought they did a pretty good job, because the economy went with their talk. But when you get to government you are supposed to talk the economy up. When they got to government they forgot they were supposed to lead the country. They are still talking down the economy. They are still hurting small businesses.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:29): It is wonderful to have an opportunity to speak again in this place about the government's $5.5 billion dollar Jobs and Small Business package, and I commend the member for Forde on his motion.

This package is unequivocally a good outcome for the 13,000 small businesses registered in my electorate of Ryan, and the more than two million small businesses across Australia. Small businesses with turnover of less than $2 million dollars per annum will benefit from a 1.5 per cent corporate tax cut and unincorporated small businesses will benefit from a five per cent tax discount.

We know that the Labor Party do not want to talk about this package. We know this because no less than the Leader of the Opposition himself stood up in this place on 3 June and moved to shut down debate on the enabling bills immediately following my speech on the bills.

Mr Perrett: So we could vote on it! You then cut it off the next day!

Mrs PRENTICE: When he did so he accused me of playing cheap politics on this issue. He then proceeded to give a master class in cheap politics himself by trying to shut down debate on the flimsy pretext of urgency, knowing full well, member for Moreton, that the Senate was not sitting at the time and that guillotining debate in the House would make zero difference to the timely passage of the bills.

Cheap politics is something we have come to expect from the Leader of the Opposition. It is all those opposite are left with, given that their so-called 'Year of Ideas' has so far yielded
so little. But not content with merely having no ideas of their own, Labor wants to shut down debate on the coalition's good ideas that will assist small business. Labor simply do not want the millions of small business owners across Australia to hear the good news about how the coalition government is making it easier for their businesses to grow, employ and prosper.

Labor do not want Australians to hear about it, because it shows them up for their years of treating small business policy as a second-order issue. Labor merely paid lip service to the small business sector. They treated the small business portfolio like an unwanted raffle prize, passing it to up to five ministers in the space of 15 months in the final chaotic years of their government. Is it any wonder then that little was done to improve the lot of small business owners in Australia? Contrast this with the actions of the coalition government. Not only do we have a Minister for Small Business who is well established in the role and has a genuine enthusiasm, but he is a minister who has a seat at the cabinet table. For the first time in many years, small businesses have a minister with the willingness and the authority to look out for the interests of the small business sector.

And when it comes to the interests of small business, as a general rule small business owners do not expect handouts from government. Ask most small business owners and they would tell you that they want less government intervention in their business, not more. The coalition government understands this intrinsically. We want to release small businesses from the burdens of excessive taxation and excessive red tape. And we want the tax system to work for small businesses, not against them.

Small business owners across Australia know that we have delivered on all fronts. The coalition government has cut corporate taxes on incorporated small businesses and reduced the taxation burden on unincorporated small businesses. The coalition government has announced reforms to save more than $2.45 billion dollars annually through reduced compliance costs. And the coalition government has allowed small businesses to deduct immediately 100 per cent of the cost of each and every piece of capital equipment with a value of up to $20,000.

This Jobs and Small Business Package is a winner. It has been enthusiastically received by every small business owner I have spoken to in my electorate. Industry groups and peak bodies have been singing its praises. In fact, the only group that has not been enthusiastic about it is the group of members opposite from the Labor Party. They say they support this package. Well if they do, I urge them to get on board, to go back to small businesses in their electorates and to spread the word about the benefits of the coalition's package for small business. After all, if they do not have any ideas of their own they may as well talk about ours.

The Labor Party gave us smoke and mirrors; they did not give us any rubber on the road. They did not deliver for small business. The coalition has funded this package and is delivering for small business. I commend the minister for the Jobs and Small Business package and in doing so I commend the member for Forde's motion to the House.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (11:34): I really want to express my gratitude to the member for Forde for giving me the opportunity to talk about Labor's really strong commitment to small business and the runs on the board that we have in trying to support small businesses to do what they do best.
I have 5,000 innovative and entrepreneurial small businesses operating in my electorate of Hotham, and I hope they agree that I have been a very forceful defender of their interests in my time in this House. I have a bit of a business background myself so I do have a little knowledge of some of the issues they face, in particular in their dealings with government. But I am particularly interested in what it is that this House can do to let small business do what they do best. I know how central small businesses are going to be to Australia's economic future.

Entrepreneurship and innovation have always mattered to us in Australia, but when we look at where our economy is heading we can see its growing importance in each year. We know that our economic future is going to be very much dependent on how we can transition into a knowledge-based economy in Australia. We know that as the global economy becomes more and more competitive we are going to need to show the world that Australians can do things that no-one else in the world can do, to increase our prosperity. And we know that the small businesses in this country and the men and women who lead them will help our economy capture some of the incredible opportunities that lie ahead in the Asian century and the digital century, that are part of Australia's future.

We are all singing from the same song book here. Labor has known about this for a long time and, of course, when in government we put in place some really important measures that were very popular in the small business community to help small businesses go about their business. In fact, the achievements which this government crows about so endlessly are actually in large part a kind of reheated, second helping of some of the important initiatives that Labor has put in place and which have been resurrected, dare I say it, with much self-congratulation on the other side of the House.

Central to all of this policy discussion is the instant asset tax write-off. What a good idea, in a time where small businesses need a bit of a lift, to allow them to write off some of their assets. It was a great idea when we implemented it in government, but then those on the other side of the House abolished it when they came to power. I really want that on the record: the instant asset tax write-off existed, and they abolished it. When in government, Labor proposed a tax cut for small business, but those on the other side of the House opposed it. You can understand a little bit of frustration from those of us on this side of the House, because we see a bit of grubby politics coming into an area where there is no need for any partisanship. We are all in furious agreement: small businesses are incredibly important, they are an important driver of growth now and they will matter more in the future, and we should be doing what we can to support them. It is in that good faith principle that Labor has tried to create policy and done so, I think, very successfully.

Those on the other side have been trying desperately, in whatever way they can, to imply that there is some reticence on this side of the House to get these reforms into law so that small businesses can start to benefit from them. This culminated in the somewhat interesting display of the government voting down its own legislation. I have to say it is just an expression of how enthusiastic Labor is about some of these initiatives that we wanted to get this into the Senate as quickly as we can so that we can help small business men and women to benefit from these policies.

The truth is that, when we look at the policy positions of both parties, we see a couple of good ideas that Labor came up with in government that have been adopted by those on the
other side of the House, but that is not where it ends. What we saw in the budget reply speech by the Leader of the Opposition a couple of months ago was a great new threshold of policy for small business. What Labor is starting to talk about now is a five per cent tax cut for small businesses. The Prime Minister dismissed the idea out of hand immediately, but based on past form I have little doubt that he and the very effervescent Minister for Small Business will be coming back and putting that forward as their own idea in due course.

I close by saying that it is well and good to talk about specific policies relating to small business, but what small businesses need most is a thriving Australian economy full of confident consumers. I would say to the government that, in their two years or so in office, they have done just about everything that they can to knock the confidence of the economy, and the confidence of consumers in this country, on the head. I would ask them to turn their attentions to this important question that is really on the minds of small business in my community of Hotham.

Debate interrupted.

United Nations Charter: 70th Anniversary

Dr STONE (Murray) (11:40): I move:

That this House:

(l) recognises 26 June 2015 as the 70th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter (Charter) at San Francisco;

(2) notes that:

(a) Australia was one of the 50 nations which signed the Charter that established the United Nations organisation;

(b) the United Nations came into being on 24 October 1945, a date that recognises each year as United Nations Day; and

(c) the signatories to the Charter agreed to:

(i) save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind;

(ii) reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;

(iii) establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and

(iv) promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom; and

(v) achieve these ends, to:

- practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours;

- unite our strength to maintain international peace and security;

- ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest; and

- employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples; and

(3) calls on all Members and Senators in the Australian Parliament to celebrate the achievements of the United Nations over the last 70 years.
This motion recognises that, on 26 June 1945, Australia was one of the 50 nations which signed the charter which established the United Nations organisation. With the end of the Second World War, there was a sense of urgency across all nations that there needed to be a better way of resolving conflict, which, during the war, had destroyed the lives of millions of people across a number of continents. So we acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Every day the United Nations makes a positive difference for millions of people by vaccinating children, distributing food aid, sheltering refugees, deploying peacekeepers, protecting the environment, seeking a peaceful resolution of disputes, supporting democratic elections, gender equality, human rights and the rule of law.

The theme of this anniversary year is 'Strong UN. Better World'. I had the privilege, for about three months at the end of last year, to work directly with the Australian mission to the UN in New York working with the United Nations General Assembly and its various committees. That gave me a very keen appreciation of the fact that, while there is a lot to do to make sure that the UN is as efficient and effective as it can be, it is the best that we have globally and it would be unlikely to be cobbled together any time in the foreseeable future, if there were, for some miraculous reason, the dissolution or disappearance of the United Nations.

In particular, I want to commend the adoption of the resolution by the United Nations creating the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, which occurred just a few days ago, on 19 June 2015. On 19 June, we recognised the effort to boost the global fight against the horrors faced by women and girls in zones of conflict worldwide. The United Nations General Assembly has approved by consensus a new resolution to commemorate every 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This is a mark of the concern that the United Nations membership has for the evolution of warfare, where the most horrific crimes against women and girls are now more likely. In a statement made at the time, the President of the General Assembly, Sam Kutesa, who directed this resolution, said:

Together, we must prioritize prevention and response efforts, empower victims, provide comprehensive assistance and shift the stigma of shame from the victims of these crimes to those who commit them and condone them.

He also said:

Rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict constitute grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law …

Unfortunately, it is a growing way in which terrorists and failed states try to intimidate and bring about their own rule of law.

Young people in particular are suffering terrible atrocities. We cannot forget the kidnapped girls in Chibok, Nigeria, or the students killed in Kenya and Pakistan by extremists. Unfortunately, violent extremism is a growing and global threat. The Middle East is becoming more unstable. The prospects of a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine are tragically becoming more distant. We are in the fifth year of a devastating crisis in Syria, with more than 220,000 people having been killed. In Yemen, more than 18 million people are caught up in a terrible conflict, with some 12 million people without food and shelter. There is terrible suffering of civilians, particularly women and girls.
In relation to the resolution to create annual recognition of the plight of women and girls in conflict, let me remind you that a particularly horrific situation exists in the Middle East conflicts, where, for example, ISIL is allegedly issuing a regulation setting out the prices to be paid for Yazidi and Christian girls. The amounts vary according to the age of the woman or girl. The promise of sexual access to women and girls has been used in ISIL propaganda materials as part of their recruitment strategy. An estimated 1,500 civilians may have been forced into sexual slavery. This is a most horrific circumstance, and the UN is going to be making sure its eradication is at the forefront of providing a better life for all. I commend this motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): Is the motion seconded?

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (11:45): Yes. I thank the member for Murray for having moved this important motion. As a former UN staff member and the co-founder of the UN parliamentary group, of which I am now a deputy chair—and Dr Stone is the chair—I am very happy to second the motion.

The parliament will mark the 70th anniversary of the signing of the UN charter with a special ceremony on Thursday. Australia of course played a key role in the founding of the UN. Prime Minister John Curtin, one of my predecessors in the federal seat of Fremantle, before his untimely death in July 1945, championed the new international peacemaking organisation which would become the United Nations. In his last major parliamentary speech, on 28 February 1945, Curtin said:

If we are to concert with other peoples of good will in order to have a better world, there must be some pooling of sovereignty, some association of this country with other countries, and some agreement, which, when made, should be kept … There is a price that the world must pay for peace; there is a price that it must pay for collective security. I shall not attempt to specify the price, but it does mean less nationalism, less selfishness, less race ambition. Does it not mean also some consideration for others and a willingness to share with them a world which is, after all, good enough to give each of us a place in it, if only all of us will observe reason and goodwill towards one another?

Australia was fortunate that the Minister for External Affairs responsible for inaugurating national foreign policy was, according to Gareth Evans, 'Australia's first genuine internationalist'. Dr HV Evatt—'Doc' Evatt—played a crucial role in the negotiation of the UN Charter. He argued that the prime purpose of the UN should be to provide collective security for all nations by setting in place procedures to achieve speedy, peaceful conflict resolution and to promote economic and social justice. He advocated unstintingly the rights and opportunities of smaller countries through his work to raise the status of the UN General Assembly; to restrict the dominance of the permanent five members of the Security Council; and to expand the goals of the UN Economic and Social Council.

Evatt's support for decolonisation led to the incorporation of a trusteeship clause in the UN Charter. He succeeded in strengthening the functions of the assembly by securing agreement that its powers include all matters within the scope of the charter unless they are already on the council's agenda, and by widening the UN's economic and social goals to include promoting higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress as well as universal respect for human rights. In recognition of the significance of Evatt's contribution Australia was elected as one of the first non-permanent members of the Security
Council. Evatt was also elected as the third chair of the UN General Assembly, a position he was occupying at the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another formidable Australian force in establishing the UN and the visibility of women in the international arena was Jessie Street. She was the sole woman on the Australian delegation to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945. With other women, she was instrumental in having a permanent Commission on the Status of Women established within the United Nations, separate from the Human Rights Commission. Jessie was its first vice president. As such she was closely involved with the drafting of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. She and her CSW colleagues were successful in changing the first draft of the declaration, which had opened with the statement, 'All men are brothers', and referred to the rights of 'man'. Jessie always said, 'if you don't refer expressly to women, they will be excluded from rights'. Hence, the 'brotherhood' opening was dropped. In its place, Article 1 begins: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.'

Jessie Street strongly believed in the UN as an instrument of peace but she was also keenly aware that the UN is only as good as the states, the governments which are its members, allow it to be. The tragic failings sometimes attributed to the UN, such as Srebrenica and Rwanda, can usually be traced back to intransigence, action or inaction on the part of one or more powerful member states.

Standing up to powerful member states may well have cost the second Secretary-General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjold, his life. Hammarskjold was mysteriously killed in a plane crash in the Congo in September 1961. New evidence presented in a book by Susan Williams titled *Who Killed Hammarskjold: The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa*, has led to the establishment by the UN of an independent panel of experts to investigate Hammarskjold's death. I hope it will lead to some belated justice for this brilliant and courageous man.

In the meantime, on this special 70th anniversary of the UN Charter, I would like to quote the inspirational words Dag Hammarskjold said to UN staff just nine days before he was killed:

> It is false pride to register and to boast to the world about the importance of one's work, but it is false humility, and finally just as destructive, not to recognise and recognise with gratitude that one's work has a sense. Let us avoid the second fallacy as carefully as the first, and let us work in the conviction that our work has a meaning beyond the narrow individual and has meant something for humankind.

Debate interrupted.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS**

*Mr DREYFUS* (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (11:50): I wish to make a personal explanation.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall):** Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

*Mr DREYFUS:* Yes.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Please proceed.

*Mr DREYFUS:* On Thursday 18 June, the Prime Minister claimed that I wanted to 'welcome back' terrorists to Australia. On 21 June, the Prime Minister also claimed that I said

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Dr STONE: On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I have pleasure in presenting the committee's second report for the 44th Parliament, entitled: Partnering for the greater good.

The inquiry into the role of the private sector in promoting growth and reducing poverty in the Indo-Pacific region coincided with the launch of Australia's new aid development policy paradigm. This provided an opportunity for the committee to consider how to best implement the new aid paradigm: to increase engagement with the private sector, promote gender equity, and refocus on our aid efforts in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Committee greatly appreciated the comprehensive and constructive nature of the evidence provided. We received over 150 submissions, and heard from 84 diverse organisations and individuals at public hearings. And we were very pleased numbers of these people who had made submissions resubmitted information on request or added additional information and we heard from them all over Australia.

The 37 recommendations and supporting commentary in this report will facilitate putting development policy into practice. The report provides an overview of the global aid landscape, and examines best practice stakeholder engagement. It highlights the work being done by the private sector, the emergence of social responsibility and cross collaboration in accelerating the pace of economic growth and reducing poverty, as well as the risks and benefits to the enterprises and the nations concerned. The report also explores the options for financing development to get the best return on investment for Australians and developing countries within our region.

The private sector is moving ahead, often in partnerships with development agents, to address financing needs. There is growing interest in the social impact investing sector, and while many countries are establishing development finance institutions, the Australian government has shown what can be done by partnering with Australia's world-class financial institutions. The Australian government should look for ways to continue to support these effort rather than trying to compete in the already heavily occupied development bank space at this time.

Australia's business and governance expertise is very well understood, well regarded and in demand in our region. This is an area where we can make a real contribution to promoting...
economic growth and private sector development across the region. The Australian government's capacity building and twinning programs have supported developing country partners to establish effective public services and improve governance to minimise corruption. Australia's volunteer programs have also made a valuable contribution. However, we think it is time to reflect on these programs to ensure they are supporting businesses to grow. It is the local private sectors that will lift low-income communities, and the men and women within them, out of poverty and provide economic independence.

Supporting the private sector also means addressing infrastructure and social services. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, public private partnerships, and product development partnerships are demonstrating the benefits of coordinating and consolidating resources to achieve greater good.

But to build successful partnerships takes mutual understanding and respect. There is still some work to be done in this area. We strongly encourage the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to take immediate steps to build its own capacity to engage with the private sector in a more meaningful way, both here in Australia and through its overseas representatives. On this basis, the committee has recommended that the department foster expertise in building partnerships, work to shift its culture toward a more positive approach to the private sector, and find ways to increase the number of staff with experience working within the private sector.

Complementing this, DFAT needs to invest in an improved communications strategy, including web-based communication platforms that describe all of the programs and projects in play, as well as upcoming opportunities for collaboration and partnering. Potential partners should be able to find a pathway with ease. Likewise the public is entitled to know—where and how Australia's aid funding is being spent. There are so many good stories that can be told. Not only must our taxpayer funded aid be more transparent, it should be highly visible.

Much more also needs to be done by DFAT to tell the story about the Australian government's aid activities. Australia's aid program needs to be more recognisable and our distinctive Australian identity should be evident across everything we do. It is about badging.

The new aid paradigm represents an exciting and important new era of development support in our region. Australia stands on the threshold of new partnerships with our regional neighbours, some of whom have the greatest need globally to address gender inequality and poverty. Through innovation and partnerships utilising Australian expertise in the public sector, the private sector and civil society, together we can build a better region. We trust that our report is a great support in this effort.

I commend the report to the House.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Dr STONE: I move:
That the House take note of the report.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Dr STONE (Murray) (11:57): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

BILLS

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Fair and Sustainable Pensions) Bill 2015
Consideration in Detail

Debate resumed on the motion:
That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Government amendments being moved together and the remaining stages being passed without delay.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (11:58): I ask leave of the House that that motion be withdrawn.
Leave granted.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (11:58): I ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) to (6) as circulated together.
Leave granted.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (11:59): Today, members opposite—all of them, Liberal members, National Party members—are once again going to vote for a cut to the pension. They have already done it once. Everybody around Australia remembers the first time when members of the Liberal and National parties voted to cut the indexation of the pension, and today they are going to do it again.

Three hundred thousand pensioners around Australia are about to have their pension cut because of this Liberal and National Party government—300,000 pensioners who were told before the last election by Mr Abbott that there would be no changes to pensions. How many times did he say it? Over and over again, Mr Abbott told pensioners that there would be no changes. He lied to them once in last year's budget and then tried, day after day after day over the last year, to defend this cut to indexation. Now, in this year's budget, he is lying to them again—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): The member for Jagajaga must be careful in using that term in this chamber.

Ms MACKLIN: by introducing another cut to the pension, this time by changing the way the assets test works.

Each and every pensioner in Australia—and there are 3½ million pensioners—is going to remember, particularly as they go to the election, that this Prime Minister did not tell the truth. They will never forget it, and I can assure and each and every member opposite that we will make sure of it. What pensioners will be saying to themselves and to their neighbours is: 'What will they do to us next? What will these Liberal and National Party members do to us next?' How could they possibly trust a Prime Minister who told them before the last election that there would be no changes to the pension—and yet here we are debating yet another change to the pension?

We know that the Prime Minister would really like to cut pension indexation, a cut that would have seen 3½ million pensioners lose $80 a week within a decade. That is really what the Prime Minister wanted to do. We know that, because he stood here at the dispatch box day...
after day after day defending it, trying to tell pensioners that it was fair to cut the pension by $80 a week. There is no doubt whatsoever that that is what this Prime Minister wants to do.

We also have no doubt that he clearly wants to try another approach now. This legislation, which all these Liberal and National Party members are going to vote for, will see 300,000 pensioners face a cut. Of course, it is not going to stop there. It is not only these 300,000 pensioners, who are currently retired. We also need to think about what the impact of this change will be on those planning their retirement. People in the age range of 50 to 65 right now, of course, understand that this change that this Liberal-National Party government is pushing through this parliament today will mean that around half of all new retirees will be affected. Half of them will have a lower pension then they would have otherwise anticipated. These are people who are currently on below-average incomes. All these people in the 50-to-60 age range who are currently on below-average incomes now know that, because of this change that this government is pushing through the parliament, they will have a more difficult retirement because of this government.

Also, we should not ever forget the grubby deal that the Greens did, and we will not be letting them forget it either. The Greens too are lining up with the Liberal and National parties.

What I want to say to pensioners today is that the Labor Party will stand with you. We will make sure that your retirement incomes are protected. We do not think that it is right for a government to say one thing to pensioners before an election and then do the exact opposite. This government has moved to cut the incomes of 3½ million pensioners. It thinks it is going to get off scot free. Well, it will not. The Labor Party will do everything to defend the pension.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (12:04): Before I move these amendments, I simply give an explanation for the amendments that are before the House. They take account of a number of matters that occurred in the other place earlier today. The abolition of the seniors supplement and the retention of the energy supplement for those on the Commonwealth seniors health card has passed the Senate, which will deliver further savings to the budget of over a billion dollars. As has been reported, as a result of the arrangement that is agreed between the Australian Greens and the government, which I table for the benefit of the House, matters regarding the assets test rebalancing, which is part of this bill, will be supported by the Australian Greens in the Senate.

As a result, we are moving that schedules 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 be removed from this bill. Those schedules, which have not yet been considered—and, as a result of these amendments, will not be considered—by the Senate, will be reintroduced as other bills before the House; in particular, the defined benefits income streams, which the opposition have indicated they will be supporting as well. That will provide further opportunity for some $450 million in savings to be put forward and to be able to assist with the budget task, which is considerable.

I also note that the amended bill that will go forward from this place with the support of the House puts forward an increase of $30 a fortnight for pensioners on the lowest level of assets. Those opposite are going to vote against a pension increase of $30 a fortnight for those on the lowest and most modest level of assets. That is what those opposite are doing. Over 170,000 pensioners will get a pension increase as a result of this bill. That is why these measures have been supported by ACOSS, UnitingCare and the Council of the Ageing in particular—and
also the Australian Greens, I note. It is because it is good policy. Those opposite have left a vacuum in terms of their position when it comes to good policy, and it says something when the Australian Greens occupy the vacuum left by the Labor Party on policy. That says a lot about what is happening on that side of politics. It is all about politics; it is not about policy.

The government listened carefully to the response to the measures that were introduced in the 2014-15 budget, and we have reframed a new measure in consultation with stakeholders and in consultation with other members of parliament, in this place and the other place, to come up with this very sensible measure. It is a sensible measure which delivers savings to the budget but also delivers a fairer and more sustainable pension for those who most need it.

It is quite interesting that those opposite will vote against a pension increase for a couple with assets of up to around $451,000—a pension increase. If you have assets of up to $451,000 or thereabouts and your own family home, you would be getting an increase in the pension. Secondly, if you are a single homeowner with assets of up to about $289,000, you would get an increase because of the expansion of the assets free area. More than 90 per cent of pensioners either are not affected by this change or get an increase in their pension.

But if those opposite are really serious about the hyperventilation we see them carrying on with in this place and that we saw last week, if they are really serious that they believe that this is such an unfair change, then what they should do in this debate, in this place or at another opportunity on this day, is say that they will reverse these changes at the next election, because these measures do not take effect until January 2017. If they really believe it, then they should commit to reversing the measures. If they do not, what we know is this is just another hollow commitment from a very hollow opposition leader who is hollowing out the Labor Party, day by day by day.

We have seen the division among those opposite on this measure. They are torn asunder as the Leader of the Opposition falls further and further to the left and further to the politics rather than the policy. He is a man who is pulling himself down, because he has opted for politics over policy. He has opted for the politics of division on his own side of the House rather than recognising good policy when he sees it. It is up to the opposition to show how genuine they are as they come to the dispatch box and deplore these measures. If they are serious about it, they will reverse it. The cost is over $4 billion.

I move:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table items 2, 3, 7 and 8), omit the table items.
(2) Schedule 1, page 3 (line 1) to page 5 (line 19), omit the Schedule.
(3) Schedule 2, page 6 (lines 1 to 16), omit the Schedule.
(4) Schedule 4, page 24 (line 1) to page 35 (line 7), omit the Schedule.
(5) Schedule 5, page 36 (line 1) to page 42 (line 22), omit the Schedule.
(6) Schedule 6, page 43 (line 1) to page 49 (line 9), omit the Schedule.

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (12:09): I would just like to say I take the minister up on his challenge. If I am elected to the next parliament, I will be voting to reverse these measures because I think they are totally unfair and unreasonable. Really, government should be about priorities for people and we have seen the government’s priority has been very narrow. First they wanted to introduce a co-payment which would have attacked the elderly and then they wanted to increase the pension age to 70 years, but they were unable to do that. They have
come back today and decided that they are going to take from the pensioners of Australia parts of their pension to make their lives not better but harder and more difficult. They do this in a situation where Australia has adequate financial capacity to look after those less fortunate than ourselves and we have debt levels among the lowest of the OECD countries.

Interestingly enough, in Australia we spend about eight per cent of our GDP on the elderly and in Europe they spend about 20 per cent of their GDP on the elderly and disadvantaged. That gives you an indication of the priority this government puts on the elderly and disadvantaged people. Are Australians any less worthy than those that live in Europe? Do they have any less need? Are they better looked after? You would have to say no when you look at the amount of money being spent on the health system as a proportion of GDP compared with what is spent in Europe, the United States or other developed economies.

Again the government seems to be attacking those that can least afford it. A person who has $25,000 in earnings and superannuation will lose over $8,000 of their pension. It hardly acts as an encouragement for people to put money away for super to provide for the future. They are going to see half of it go. Also, they will lose their eligibility for part of the pension. That is a negative incentive. We really need to provide an incentive the other way. We need to boost demand in this country to ensure that the money supply is sufficient to create growth so the government will have the revenue to provide for those that need support.

I do not think I have ever seen in my life a person who is receiving the pension enjoying a high standard of living, wasting money, or going out and doing things that other Australians are entitled to do. Life should not end when you reach pension age. We should not disregard Australian people who have served this country well over many years and who fought in the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam and other conflicts for the nation, only to find in the twilight years of their life they have been disregarded, that they have been given very low priority on the government's agenda.

Surely the government should be a government for all Australians, one that has a responsibility to look after their standard of living, their future and what they can aspire to be. We do not just love our mothers and our children. We love our grandparents as well, and our love should not be diminished by the way we treat them in society. What sort of example does that set for future generations coming forward? It is not just about the present; it should be about the past and recognising that senior citizens of Australia are people we should respect, that wisdom resides in a lot of our elder citizens, that they still have a lot to contribute to Australia. How can they have the respect of the community if they are constantly being attacked, if their income and their lives are being slowly diminished by a government that continues to cut away at the small entitlements that they have at the moment?

This comes at a time when we have a government that has less debt than the Menzies government had. The Menzies government had a debt of about 40 per cent of GDP. Today it is around about 14 per cent of GDP. Where has that other 30 per cent gone? Why doesn't the Liberal Party become the party of Bob Menzies, which looked after all Australians? It was a broad church. It provided a rising standard of living. It had expectations that whoever you were, wherever you came from, regardless of how much money you had, you could have a fair go in this country and be looked after. Why do we have to have a persecution philosophy, where we aim at those people who are unable to support themselves or defend themselves when under attack? Why do we constantly attack them? Why don't we create the sorts of
incentives that are needed in this country to provide a rising standard of living for our people? Bob Menzies would be rolling in his grave if he saw the sorts of measures that are coming forward in this parliament to attack those who cannot look after themselves, to attack the pensioners of Australia.

The pension, for many people, has been sacrosanct—most important in their sustainment and their lifestyle. I think we have to vote against these measures. We have to support our elderly. We have to support those on a pension and a fixed income. We realise that the figures that the minister quoted today are not extraordinarily high when compared with those of other competing nations that have similar standards of living to our own in Europe and the United States. I will be voting against the measure.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:14): I welcome the opportunity to speak at this stage of the debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Fair and Sustainable Pensions) Bill 2015. I was on my feet last week about to speak at the second reading stage of this bill when the debate was guillotined so I and a number of people did not get the opportunity to say how this bill and these measures will affect our communities. So I now welcome this opportunity to put on the record how people in regional Australia, particularly in my electorate, will be affected by these changes.

Let there be no mistake: this bill will cut the part pension for some 330,000 part pensioners, including many in my own electorate. We are talking about the people I spoke to last week and this week. These people are not millionaires, despite how the government likes to portray them. They are retired schoolteachers, nurses, social workers and farmers. These people have worked really hard their whole lives and have now had the goalposts shifted by this government, which seeks to cut their part pension.

I will give you an example. A Woodend widower worked as a schoolteacher in her local community. After her husband died she spoke to her financial planner and sold the family home. It was heartbreaking at the time. She downsized and put the money raised from that into the bank. She has some super savings. She currently gets a part pension of about $330 a fortnight. That will now be under attack if these changes go through. She said to me straight out: ‘I just don’t know how I am going to put petrol in the car. I don’t know how I am going to survive.’ These people are not millionaires. They are pulling together a modest retirement income, and that has now been attacked by this government.

I have another example. A dairy farmer sold their dairy farm in Echuca. These people have done it tough through years of drought and flood. They have sold their farm and moved into Bendigo to be closer to the health facilities. After they had paid out their debts they had some capital left, and that is in the bank. They are trying really hard to invest that wisely and get decent returns, but it is nowhere near the government's deeming rates that are currently in place for investments. They also said that these changes will affect their retirement income. They are already struggling to live on that income and keep up with the cost of living.

An ambo did the right thing when he was working and salary sacrificed. He put money into his super so that he had enough in his retirement to survive. As he rightly pointed out, super did not come in straightaway when he first started working; it came in only later in life. That is the same for so many people who have retired or are looking to retire shortly—compulsory super did not come in when they first started working. So in our country we are transitioning to an economy and community where more people have adequate superannuation to live on in
their retirement. This ambo said that he now feels like he is being punished because he salary sacrificed and put money into super. There is not enough to mean that he can survive on his own superannuation savings but there is enough with the part pension to live modestly. He believes he is being targeted by this government because he tried to do the right thing and save as much as he could.

The reality of this bill is that not only does it attack the 330,000 people who have retired but it is going to attack people who are looking to retire over the next decade. That is roughly another 700,000 workers—people working as nurses and teachers and people working in manufacturing. They are not millionaires. They are people who through their hard work have pulled together some modest assets—not the millions of dollars that this government is referring to—and are looking to retire on either the part pension or the pension. This government is trying to force those people into poverty. Quite frankly, that is not fair.

For the Greens to say that we were opposed to it when Howard introduced it so we continue to be opposed to it today is quite an immature argument because since Howard first introduced these changes the cost of living has skyrocketed. So to say that ignores the reality of so many part pensioners and the circumstances under which they live today. This is bad policy; this is not good policy. It is going to push a lot of part pensioners on very modest incomes into poverty.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (12:19): As a general rule, I support means testing and the idea that people who have more money should pay their fair share, so on the face of it you would think I would vote with the coalition government and the Greens on this Social Services Legislation Amendment (Fair and Sustainable Pensions) Bill 2015, but I cannot bring myself to do that. In this case I will support the Labor opposition. I will do that for a range of reasons. For a start I cannot bring myself to support a broken promise. The Liberal and National parties before the 2013 federal election made it very clear that there would be no change to pensions—and this is clearly a change to pensions. That is wrong, and I will not support a broken promise.

I also find that I cannot support something that does not have appropriate grandfather provisions. At the end of the day pensioners have made a lot of decisions over many years to get themselves in the situation they are in. It is not fair out of the blue to strip income away from them, and that is what some of them are now going to face. We already heard the example of some pensioners losing $8,000 a year. When you are on a modest income a small amount of money can make a disproportionate difference. That extra bit of money might be your only discretionary income. In fact, that extra bit of money might already be built into the costs structures you have in your life these days. The government cannot simply come along and with no warning take it away from them.

I would have a much different response to this bill if there were appropriate grandfather provisions so that every current pensioner has their current arrangements maintained. The grandfather provisions would ensure that people who are soon to retire are also able to retire with the old arrangements. Make these sorts of changes something for the future so that people who are still maybe 10 years away from retirement can factor them into their calculations and plans.

I also am concerned that these changes are badly designed. It does not make any sense that, say, a couple with $600,000 in assets would effectively have a bigger income than someone
with $800,000 in assets. For a start, that is unfair, but it is also a disincentive to people to save and to be putting as much money as they humanly can into superannuation. And what of the people who have been struggling to save outside the superannuation system—say, to leave some extra for their kids? What about those people? It is not acceptable simply to say that people can draw down their super more quickly, because the reality is that this asset threshold includes all of their assets, including non-super assets. For some people, it will include substantial sums of money that they have saved to leave an inheritance for their children—people who have, say, gone without things their whole life to leave that little nest egg for their kids. So the government cannot just defend its bill by saying people can draw down their super more quickly, because it just does not work that way. In fact, for a single person, by the time they have their car, their goods and chattels, a bit of super and a bit of cash aside from super, there is not actually a lot of super there, and they will draw it down much too quickly and in fact, before they know it, be on the full age pension, and they will have lost their nest egg that perhaps they were keeping for any unforeseen medical bills and so on.

I will just close by making the point—I have made it many times in this place—that we are a rich country. We can afford to look after the young, students, the unemployed, the sick, the disabled and older Australians. With an annual federal budget of close to $400 billion a year, with the right priorities, we can look after the people that need to be looked after. We can certainly afford to pay more to people on the full age pension. The issue here is not that it is one or the other. We have enough money to keep the existing pension arrangements and to find a bit of extra money for people who are on the full age pension at that end of the spectrum. That is what we should be turning our minds to: working out how we can help people on lower incomes better while keeping in place the arrangement for people who are a little bit better off.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (12:24): I rise today because it is a great shame that we are even having this debate in the chamber here today. If the Prime Minister were a man of his word, we would not be here today debating this bill. Before the election, the Prime Minister said there would be no changes to pensions. There was no ambiguity in that statement—no ifs or ors. The PM made very clear to the Australian people, who remember well that promise: if elected, there would be no changes to the pension, full stop. Yet here we are today debating exactly that: changes to pensions. It is very clear from the title of the bill—Social Services Legislation Amendment (Fair and Sustainable Pensions) Bill 2015—that this is indeed an amendment to pensions.

Labor will hold this government to its promises. We will be opposing this bill, we will again stand with the Australian pensioners, and we will take this up to the next election, because breaking your promises to the Australian people should count. You cannot take money from pensioners while protecting wealthy Australians. It is wrong, and Australians know it is wrong.

In the analysis of the bill, Industry Super Australia have said that the changes proposed will not in any way be delivering fair or sustainable pensions, as claimed by this government. They said:

Current retirement incomes policy settings are falling short of their goal of providing all Australians with a comfortable living standard in retirement. The net impact of the changes contemplated by the
Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will make things worse. In particular, the legislation will adversely affect women and those on low to middle incomes over time.

Their analysis has directly suggested:

- For all Australians retiring from now through 2055, about half will not achieve a comfortable retirement, taking into account Age Pension, superannuation income and income from wealth outside of superannuation.

- The retirement system is especially failing single women.

That is a point that I think this parliament needs to be very conscious of.

Over two thirds of single women aged 55-69 will retire on incomes below a comfortable standard. Even younger women face a difficult future. More than half of women currently aged 25-29 will retire on incomes below a comfortable standard.

NATSEM's analysis agrees that measures in this bill will unfairly impact Australians on lower incomes. Their modelling suggests that nearly 80 per cent of these cuts to pensions will be borne by Australians in the lowest income quintile.

Make no mistake: as I said, it is Australian women in particular—our widows and those living alone—who will bear the brunt of these cruel measure. I would like to draw the House's attention—and that of the minister while he is in the chamber—to a constituent of mine from the electorate of Newcastle. Patricia is a single woman, separated from her husband some years ago now. She wrote to me and said:

I'm about to retire after working until 68 (as suggested by the current government) and have discovered that, with the new proposed budget, I will end up about $4,000 per year worse off because I have, apparently, tried to hard to top up my super, silly me, I should known they'd change the rules!

Hope you'll help stop these new assets test rules which will really affect many middle income people like me.

Well, we can assure people like Patricia that Labor will be opposing these proposed measures. Patricia is one of thousands of women who will be in the same boat. Contrary to government opinion, these are not women who are 'liquid asset billionaires'. These are women who have struggled. We already know it is difficult for women to achieve equity in pay and then, further, ensuring that their superannuation is equal to that of their male counterparts. But women—single, divorced, widowed or otherwise—who are looking to retire are grossly impacted by these measures put before the House today.

My question to the minister is: where is the fairness in these proposed attacks on part pensioners and their retirement incomes? Has the government done any modelling? Has the government instructed the Office for Women, or any department for that matter, to perform modelling on the impact of these cuts to Australian women? When modelling shows that 80 per cent of single women retiring in 2055 will be disadvantaged, further entrenching social inequality in Australia, how can this minister, his government and the Australian Greens justify their— *(Time expired)*

**Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (12:29):** I have two comments I would like to make in relation to this Social Services Legislation Amendment (Fair and Sustainable Pensions) Bill 2015. The first is a call from my constituency for the government to please be consistent and to stop changing the goalposts. The people who come into my office say it is really hard to manage their affairs in the long term if the government keeps changing the rules and shifting the
goalposts. Minister, there are a number of ministerials coming in your direction in the near future putting that into writing. This is a heartfelt call, as people try to get their affairs in order for the long term, for some bipartisanship and consistency. That is the first of my requests today.

The second is I would like to comment on the process from last week. Minister, it is really important for me to consult with my constituents on how I vote. When changes are made without any reference to the crossbench or any discussion with us about changes to legislation, as happened last week, it causes enormous confusion in my community. I beg, plead and ask you, as far as possible, to give notice to the crossbenchers when changes are made, and give us a chance to go back to our communities and consult with them, particularly on important legislation like those before the House today. Thank you.

Question agreed to.

Honourable members interjecting—

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No members were robbed of any time. We started the new call after the bells rang. The question now is that this bill, as amended, be agreed to.

The House divided. [12:36]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Broadbent)

Ayes .................... 82
Noes .................... 54
Majority ............... 28

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Briggs, JE
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
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 (teller)
Pitt, KJ

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
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
Porter, CC
Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (12:43): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015
Consideration in Detail

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent) (12:46): The question is that amendments (9) to (21) and (23), moved by the member for Ballarat, be agreed to.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (12:46): I reject these opposition amendments. I want to talk about how proud I am that this government is committed to ensuring that our nation remains at the very cutting edge of initiatives in medical research. We have done and will continue to do this through ensuring that our medical researchers are on the forefront of developing technologies, treatments and research. In last year's budget, we as a government committed to the creation of a $20 billion Medical Research Future Fund. This is, by far, the biggest endowment fund of its kind in the world and will be an asset to our nation, delivering benefits for all Australians now and well into the future. When I reflect on the initial purpose of the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015 and what it proposes, I think of the enormous benefits that can be delivered. This bill will fund vital research, which will enable more researchers and more scientists to discover and innovate new technologies and new medicines.

I know that the Hunter Medical Research Institute, the HMRI, encourages innovation at all levels of health and medical research and that the institute will directly benefit from the establishment of this Medical Research Future Fund, which will provide a secure and reliable revenue stream for further medical research. The fund will enable our nation to support a sustainable health system into the future. The cure to breast cancer, the cure to brain cancer, might only be a number of years in the making. A financial injection such as this, into vital research, may project to such landmark findings that will shape the future and, importantly, save lives. They may only be a few years away.

The Hunter Medical Research Institute recently began a project on virtual biopsies for prostate cancer that could bring new-found accuracy in the diagnosis and monitoring of the disease. This was done through the HMRI opening a magnetic resonance imaging centre, with the most advanced scanning technology in the Southern Hemisphere. This technology is also used for further research into early detection of breast cancer. In August 2014 it expanded into detecting prostate cancer using spectroscopy, a 'virtual biopsy'. This is at the very forefront of prostate cancer research being undertaken on such an advanced MRI scanner. This research is undertaken at the Hunter Medical Research Institute, in the Hunter Valley, and this new technology has been dubbed 'the Ferrari of medicine'.

The Director of HMRI, Professor Michael Nilsson, has also recently teamed up with researchers in Sweden to develop new methods to combat sleep apnoea and help sufferers of severe snoring. I am proud to hear of these outcomes in my patch, my home, the Hunter. The HMRI are also on the forefront with the development of a new generation of targeted melanoma drugs, with HMRI researchers' findings in this sphere likely to lead to future collaborations with the world's top cancer researchers. This news is particularly welcome and

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significant for the Hunter region, which has above average rates of melanoma. Cancer Institute New South Wales figures show that the Hunter ranks fourth in a list of five red-zone regions, behind northern New South Wales and the Central Coast, for instance. The HMRI cancer program has had research results recently published in the US Journal of Cancer Research for the latest innovations—just an example of how valuable this investment is for our nation and for our communities.

I am proud of what the government is achieving in relation to advancing the scope and potential in both the research and medical fields through the Medical Research Future Fund Bill. To close, I would like to note that this bill is an investment in Australia, an investment into medical research, an investment into quality of life and, more importantly, an investment into generating a better understanding of illnesses and diseases, delivering real outcomes for saving our lives. But the work is not done for Hunter Medical Research. Institute. An investment of $93 million established the first real and meaningful building for the research. Now planning is underway to build a second tower, which will house clinical trials of some of the research, will provide greater opportunities for commercialisation of some of the research outcomes that they have delivered. Importantly, remember, this is a tripartite establishment. Our community holds the chair. It is working with the University of Newcastle and Hunter New England Health to deliver real and meaningful health outcomes for all of our nation, and indeed the world, through the work that is done there.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (12:51): I rise to speak on the amendments (9) to (21) and (23) to the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015. Unfortunately, I did not get to speak during the debate as I was cut off, as I have been on numerous debates recently, by a government that is supposedly intent on letting us speak and be heard in this place about such important things as the Medical Research Future Fund.

I reject this notion that the amendments are spurious, because what we have before us is a deeply concerning piece of legislation. On the whole, Labor is happy to support the notion of a Medical Research Future Fund. Indeed, I and the member for Scullin have spent the last 12 months speaking to everybody in the medical research field. We have spoken to them one on one, because we discovered that the government had announced this wonderful medical fund accounting trick—as many people have referred to it, particularly Ross Gittins in The Age. They mentioned the accounting trick in the budget but had not consulted with anybody. The member for Scullin and I have been out, at the request of the shadow minister for health and the member for Ballarat, Katherine King, to actually talk to people in the field. I have talked to everybody in Victoria, where there are a huge array of medical institutions and hospitals, particularly in my electorate, where there are the Monash Medical Centre and Monash University. My own electorate is home to a vast array of NHMRC funding and terrific work is done there. But we discovered a range of concerns and areas of issues that were not addressed in this bill.

But what is more concerning is that we have had 12 months, from the last budget to now, for the government to get out there and talk about it and set up a fund that will work. What we found is that, no, they actually have not established a fund. They have just picked up what was in the Future Fund and called it medical research—badged it. That might work for other things, but this is an area where peer review is paramount and where we need standards set and we need governance. There is no governance in this legislation, so, again, it is very
concerning. Without a means for oversight, for an independent advisory panel with a peer review process, and without consulting the NHMRC or even distributing funding at arm's length through the NHMRC, the government, for all intents and purposes, can direct funds from the MRFF to any of its pet projects. It might not even need to be within the medical research area.

So, yes, we are setting up a fund that is meant to go into medical research, but how are those funds being channelled? The bill is fairly silent on that. The community is concerned because, again, the government has not consulted them. If we go back to when the fund was put out in the budget, the media reports said that one of the real surprises of the budget from last year—not this year—was the creation of the Medical Research Future Fund, which was to be partly funded by the introduction of the $7 GP co-payment. Theoretically, that co-payment has gone, but this injected money provides an opportunity to think strategically about the role and direction of Australia's medical research effort. That effort is a really good thing to think about, and where the money is going and where it should be used—that is, in translational medicine, in health services or in mid-career research. There are a raft of areas where the medical research community is crying out for support, assistance and guidance. But, again, this bill does not give any of that guidance, support or information. Health services research was a central part of the 2013 strategic review of health and medical research, the McKeon review, commissioned under the previous Labor government, and has been called for in the 2012-13 Productivity Commission annual audit, which argues:

Policy-making based on good evidence is central to improving community living standards.

It was also mentioned in the recent National Commission of Audit Report, which said that Australia needs to 'embed health and medical research in the health system' in order to 'improve patient outcomes and deliver efficiencies'.

So, again, there is a great need for this, but there needs to be a strategy about how we are embedding this research into the current medical facilities so that we are not just doing more of the same. But the legislation does not tell us if we are doing more of the same or if we are not. A great concern in this space was well said by Sir Gustav Nossal, a man I do not think we can argue with:

I think this $20bn fund is very exciting but … why cut CSIRO? Why cut the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation? Above all, why cut the Australian Research Council? This is going to make an us-and-them situation: the medical researchers will be laughing and the enabling scientists in maths, chemistry, physics and so forth will be suffering. This is not good.

He said that saving the fund would give the government the chance to support the recommendations of the last McKeon committee Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research. And so it would. There is a blueprint under that medical research paper done by Simon McKeon that provides a way forward, having spoken to everybody in this space and had it supported by them, that the outlines of the McKeon review should be supported, invested in and moved upon. But this legislation does not do that. It creates a fund and then says, 'Trust us; we will deliver that fund to the people who need it.' You cannot do that in such a critical area as medical research where you need good-quality peer review.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (12:57): The government does not support the amendments moved by the opposition, because they would not achieve the objective of the bill, which is to establish a fund which will provide complementary
funding within the medical research sector to meet priority national needs and to address existing strategic gaps in medical research approaches. The opposition model would continue the old model of primarily funding investigator instigated work through the NHMRC. When Labor was in government they commissioned the McKeon review, which found that Australia needs a more strategic model to get the best health results. The opposition's proposed changes to the bill would firstly place constraints on funding for medical research infrastructure and the commercialisation of medical research innovations. Secondly, the opposition's amendments would remove the ability for the government to enter into agreements with the states and territories, with corporate Commonwealth entities or with corporations. That would be a major constraint on our ability to forge the strongest possible partnerships wherever necessary to get the best health outcomes. Thirdly, the opposition's amendments would burden the CEO of the NHMRC with significant additional administrative responsibilities that are not practical or appropriate in the hands of that office holder. Providing the CEO of the NHMRC with such extensive powers would be inconsistent with the intent of building proper checks and balances into the legislation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:03]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Broadbent)

Ayes ......................52
Noes ......................84
Majority .................32

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Grif tin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC
Swan, WM
Vamvakou, M
Wilkie, AD

Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Feeney, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
Leigh, AK
MacTernan, AJGC
Mitchell, RG
O'Conor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Snowdon, WE
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A
Question negatived.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (13:10): by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (8) and (22):

(1) Clause 4, page 3 (lines 18 to 22), omit "Initially, the Fund's investments are a portion of the investments of the Health and Hospitals Fund which was established under the Nation-building Funds Act 2008. Additional amounts may also be credited to the Medical Research Future Fund Special
Account.

(2) Clause 5, page 5 (lines 22 to 24), omit the definition of Health and Hospitals Fund.

(3) Clause 5, page 5 (lines 25 to 28), omit the definition of Health and Hospitals Fund Special Account.

(4) Clause 10, page 12 (lines 6 to 10), omit "Initially, its investments are a portion of the investments of the Health and Hospitals Fund which was established under the Nation-building Funds Act 2008. Additional amounts may also be credited to the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.", substitute "Amounts are credited to the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account in accordance with determinations by the responsible Ministers.".

(5) Clauses 12 and 13, page 13 (line 9) to page 14 (line 9), omit the clauses.

(6) Clause 15, page 15 (line 23), omit "amounts referred to in paragraph 34(4)(a) are", substitute "amount referred to in paragraph 34(4)(a) is".

(7) Clause 19, page 19 (line 6), omit "Agency; or", substitute "Agency."

(8) Clause 19, page 19 (lines 7 to 9), omit subparagraph (iii).

(22) Clause 34, page 27 (lines 15 to 20), omit paragraph (4)(a), substitute:

These are important amendments in the context of massive cuts to the Health portfolio under this government—cuts of more than $60 billion to hospitals that over time will have a devastating impact, an inevitable impact on emergency department waiting times and elective surgery waiting times. Labor's opposition to the abolition of the Health and Hospitals Fund and the transfer of the remaining $1 billion is consistent with our longstanding position that we will support health and medical research, but not if it happens and is funded in a way that hurts the patients of today.

The Health and Hospitals Fund has delivered significant benefit across Australia based on the clearest possible advice of experts. Unlike the way in which this government has drafted this bill, Labor established the Health and Hospitals Fund with proper governance and proper oversight. When Labor introduced the Nation-Building Funds Act in 2008—the act that established the Health and Hospitals Fund, among others—we also established an advisory board with oversight of the Health and Hospitals Fund. The Nation-Building Funds Act explicitly stated:

The function of the Health and Hospitals Fund Advisory Board is to advise the Health Minister about the making of payments in relation to the creation or development of health infrastructure.

I particularly want to make some mention of some of the projects that have been delivered under this fund and the positive impact that the fund has had on the health and wellbeing of Australians. I want to acknowledge the 24 regional cancer centres delivered across three rounds of the fund, including in areas where, up to the time of their opening, patients had to travel many hundreds and sometimes thousands of kilometres to receive the best quality treatment for cancer. I refer in this regard to the services constructed in Townsville, Traralgon, Ballarat, Bunbury, and Whyalla in my state of South Australia, among others.

The Health and Hospitals Fund also contributed to countless other projects of significant value to communities across the country, including the Garvan St Vincent's Campus Cancer Centre in Sydney, the Nepean Clinical School, the Melbourne Neuroscience Project, the new rehabilitation unit at Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth, the Midland Health Campus in Perth, the Acute Medical and Surgical Services Unit in Launceston, and the research and training
facility at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin, among many others. It is obvious that the Health and Hospitals Fund has had a significant benefit. This is something that should not be lost as a result of this government's broken promises and through its ongoing cuts to health funding.

The Prime Minister did of course promise before the last election that there would be no cuts to health. In opposing the abolition of the Health and Hospitals Fund, Labor is at least holding the government to account on the program in this area.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (13:14): The government do not support the amendments moved by the opposition—we definitely do not. The removal of provisions to transfer $1 billion from the Health and Hospitals Fund to the Medical Research Future Fund would have an adverse effect on the earnings of the fund. I am bewildered; I am surprised—I do not understand. I am getting a message all through the debate on this legislation that, for some reason, Labor are not broadly in support of medical research, because if they were they would not be moving amendments like this.

The Health and Hospitals Fund is largely uncommitted. It is not currently being used for a health purpose. The Health and Hospitals Fund was always intended to be a time limited fund which would eventually be exhausted; unlike the MRFF, which will exist in perpetuity. The MRFF allows the balance of these funds to be used for health purposes. It is not taking away the characterisation of these funds as being for health; it is far wider and more strategic than what the HHF allowed for.

It is interesting to hear from the member for Port Adelaide. I know he is representing the shadow minister and I appreciate that he is delivering the shadow minister's message, but let's not forget the origin of the Health and Hospitals Fund. This is not money that Labor had at its disposal, or that it created out of the goodness of its heart. This money derived from Peter Costello's Future Fund. It was an investment in perpetuity for the future. Labor took the earnings from the Future Fund and created a new fund called the Health and Hospitals Fund at a time when previous Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was trying a dramatic take-over of the hospital system.

There is no doubt that good projects have been funded, no doubt at all; and we do not back away from that. But the question for governments and the question for this parliament is: what is the most effective use of this money going into the future? The value that we place on medical research is not the value that Labor places on medical research. Remember they tried to take out $400 million from the budget for medical research in 2011, and then they were embarrassed into a backflip. There was a sneaky accounting trick—I think, in the last of their budgets—around another $110 million, proving categorically that they are no friend of medical research and that their measures in opposing our sensible legislation are not appreciated and not supported.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

Question put.

The House divided. [13:21]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Broadbent)

Ayes ....................52
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AYES: 85
NOES: 52
Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (13:28): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to this bill and to the Medical Research Future Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2015, which is next on the order of business.

I seek leave to move government amendments as circulated on sheet HK145 together. They amend the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015.

Leave granted.

Ms LEY: I move government amendments (1) to (22), as circulated on sheet HK145, together:

(1) Clause 4, page 4 (after line 8), after: (c) making grants of financial assistance directly to corporate Commonwealth entities.

insert: The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board is established to determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities. The Health Minister takes the Priorities into account in making decisions about the financial assistance that is provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

(2) Clause 5, page 4 (after line 18), after the definition of acquire, insert:

Advisory Board means the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board established by section 32B.

(3) Clause 5, page 4 (after line 22), after the definition of asset, insert:

Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities means the priorities determined under section 32E.

Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy means the strategy determined under section 32D.
(4) Clause 10, page 12 (after line 20), after:

(c) making grants of financial assistance directly to corporate Commonwealth entities.

insert:
Debits are made from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account by the Finance Minister after being required to do so by the Health Minister. The Health Minister takes the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (which are determined by the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board under Part 2A) into account in making decisions about the financial assistance that is provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

(5) Heading to Subdivision A, page 16 (lines 3 and 4), omit the heading, substitute:

Subdivision A—Rules relating to debits from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account

15A Health Minister may require the Finance Minister to debit amounts

(1) The Health Minister may, in writing, require the Finance Minister to debit a specified amount from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account under Subdivision C, D or E.

Note 1: The Health Minister must report on the financial assistance provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account (see section 57A).

Note 2: The Health Minister may delegate this power under section 61A.

(2) The Health Minister must take into account the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities that are in force in determining whether to require the Finance Minister to debit an amount.

(3) A requirement under subsection (1) is not a legislative instrument.

(6) Clause 20, page 19 (lines 16 and 17), omit "The Finance Minister may, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, a", substitute "If, under section 15A, the Health Minister requires the Finance Minister to debit a specified amount from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account under this Subdivision, the Finance Minister must, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, the".

(7) Clause 20, page 19 (line 18), omit "Medical Research Future Fund".

(8) Clause 24, page 21 (line 2), omit "(1) The purpose of the MRFF Health Special Account is (subject to subsection (2))", substitute "The purpose of the MRFF Health Special Account is".

(9) Clause 24, page 21 (lines 12 and 13), omit subclause (2).

(10) Clause 25, page 21 (lines 15 and 16), omit "The Finance Minister may, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, a", substitute "If, under section 15A, the Health Minister requires the Finance Minister to debit a specified amount from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account under this Subdivision, the Finance Minister must, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, the".

(11) Clause 25, page 21 (line 17), omit "Medical Research Future Fund".

(12) Clause 25, page 21 (lines 20 to 23), omit subclause (2).

(13) Clause 26, page 22 (lines 1 to 13), omit the clause, substitute:

26 Debits from the MRFF Health Special Account

(1) As soon as practicable after an amount has been credited to the MRFF Health Special Account under paragraph 25(1)(b), the Health Minister must ensure that the MRFF Health Special Account is debited for the purposes of making one or more grants to bodies of a kind referred to in section 24.

Note 1: The Health Minister must publish on the internet information about the grant to which the debit relates—see section 58.

Note 2: The Health Minister may delegate the power under this section to the CEO, an SES employee or acting SES employee of the NHMRC (see section 61A).
(2) However, if one or more of the grants cannot be made, an amount equal to the credited amounts of those grants is to be:

(a) debited from the MRFF Health Special Account; and
(b) credited to the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

(14) Clause 27, page 22 (line 16), omit "subsection 25(2)", substitute "subsection 26(1)".

(15) Clause 27, page 22 (after line 21), at the end of subclause (3), add:

Note: The Health Minister may delegate the power under this section to the CEO, an SES employee or acting SES employee of the NHMRC (see section 61A).

(16) Clause 28, page 22 (line 22) to page 23 (line 11), omit the clause.

(17) Clause 29, page 23 (lines 15 and 16), omit "The Finance Minister may, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, a", substitute "If, under section 15A, the Health Minister requires the Finance Minister to debit a specified amount from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account under this Subdivision, the Finance Minister must, by writing, direct that, on a specified day, the".

(18) Clause 29, page 23 (lines 16 and 17), omit "Medical Research Future Fund".

(19) Page 25 (after line 13), after Part 2, insert:

Part 2A—Australian Medical Research Advisory Board
Division 1—Simplified outline of this Part
32A Simplified outline of this Part

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board is established to determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities. The Health Minister takes the Priorities into account in making decisions in relation to the financial assistance provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

The Strategy is determined every 5 years and the Priorities are determined every 2 years.

The Advisory Board consists of the CEO of the NHMRC and other persons appointed by the Health Minister with suitable experience and knowledge.

Division 2—Establishment of Australian Medical Research Advisory Board and functions
32B Australian Medical Research Advisory Board
(1) The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board is established.

(2) The Health Minister may give the Advisory Board written directions as to:

(a) the way in which the Advisory Board is to carry out its functions; and

(b) procedures to be followed in relation to meetings.

(3) A direction under subsection (2) is not a legislative instrument.

32C Functions of the Advisory Board

The functions of the Advisory Board are:

(a) to determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities in accordance with Division 3; and

(b) to advise the Health Minister about other matters that the Health Minister refers to the Advisory Board.

Division 3—The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities
32D The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy
(1) The Advisory Board must determine a strategy for ensuring that a coherent and consistent approach is adopted in providing financial assistance under this Act for medical research and medical innovation.

(2) The first Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy must be determined as soon as practicable after this section commences. A subsequent Strategy must be determined and in force as soon as the current Strategy ceases to be in force.

(3) In determining the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy, the Advisory Board must take into account:
   (a) the national strategy for medical research and public health research prepared for the purposes of paragraph 16(2)(c) of the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992; and
   (b) any other relevant matter.

(4) An Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy is in force for 5 years.

(5) An Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy must not require financial assistance to be provided to a particular person, or for a particular project.

(6) An Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy is a legislative instrument, but section 42 (disallowance) of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 does not apply to the Strategy.

(7) In addition to the requirement under the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 for an Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy to be registered, the Advisory Board must ensure that the Strategy that is in force is published on the internet.

(8) Subsection 33(3) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 does not apply in relation to the power under this section to determine an Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy.

32E The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities

(1) The Advisory Board must determine the priorities for providing financial assistance under this Act for medical research and medical innovation.

(2) The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities must be consistent with the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy that is in force.

(3) In determining the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities, the Advisory Board must take into account the following:
   (a) the burden of disease on the Australian community;
   (b) how to deliver practical benefits from medical research and medical innovation to as many Australians as possible;
   (c) how to ensure that financial assistance provided under this Act provides the greatest value for all Australians;
   (d) how to ensure that financial assistance provided under this Act complements and enhances other financial assistance provided for medical research and medical innovation;
   (e) any other relevant matter.

(4) Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities must be determined as soon as practicable after the first Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy is registered under the Legislative Instruments Act 2003. Subsequent Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities must be determined and in force as soon as the current Priorities cease to be in force.

(5) Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities are in force for 2 years.

(6) Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities are a legislative instrument, but section 42 (disallowance) of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 does not apply to the priorities.
(7) In addition to the requirement under the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 for Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities to be registered, the Advisory Board must ensure that the Priorities that are in force are published on the internet.

(8) Subsection 33(3) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 does not apply in relation to the power under this section to determine Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities.

Division 4—Advisory Board members

32F Membership of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board consists of:

(a) the CEO (within the meaning of section 4 of the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992) of the NHMRC; and

(b) up to 7 other members.

32G Appointment of members

(1) Advisory Board members referred to in paragraph 32F(b) are to be appointed, on a part-time basis, by the Health Minister by written instrument.

(2) A person is not eligible for appointment to the Advisory Board under paragraph 32F(b) unless the Health Minister is satisfied that, if the person were appointed, the Board would collectively possess an appropriate balance of experience or knowledge in the following fields:

(a) medical research;

(b) policy relating to health systems;

(c) management of health services;

(d) medical innovation;

(e) financing and investment;

(f) commercialisation.

(3) The Minister must appoint one of the members of the Advisory Board appointed under subsection (1) to be the Chair.

(4) A member of the Advisory Board appointed under subsection (1) holds office for the period specified in the instrument of appointment. The period must not exceed 5 years.

Note: A member of the Advisory Board may be reappointed—see section 33AA of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901.

32H Remuneration and allowances

(1) A member of the Advisory Board is to be paid the remuneration that is determined by the Remuneration Tribunal. If no determination of that remuneration by the Tribunal is in operation, the member is to be paid the remuneration that is determined by the Health Minister.

(2) A member of the Advisory Board is to be paid the allowances that are prescribed under subsection (4).

(3) This section has effect subject to the Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973.

(4) The Health Minister may, by legislative instrument, prescribe:

(a) remuneration for the purposes of subsection (1); and

(b) allowances for the purposes of subsection (2).

32J Leave of absence

The Health Minister may grant leave of absence to a member of the Advisory Board on the terms and conditions that the Health Minister determines.
32K Disclosure of interests
(1) This section applies to a member of the Advisory Board who has a material personal interest in a matter being considered, or about to be considered, by the Advisory Board.
(2) The member must, as soon as possible after the relevant facts have come to the member’s knowledge:
   (a) disclose the nature of the interest at a meeting of the Advisory Board; and
   (b) disclose the nature of the interest to the Health Minister.
(3) A disclosure under paragraph (2)(a) must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
(4) The Health Minister must terminate the appointment of a member of the Advisory Board appointed under subsection 32G(1) if the member fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with subsection (2) of this section.
(5) Subsection (4) does not limit section 32N.

32L Other terms and conditions
A member of the Advisory Board holds office on the terms and conditions (if any) in relation to matters not covered by this Act that are determined, in writing, by the Health Minister.

32M Resignation
(1) A member of the Advisory Board appointed under subsection 32G(1) may resign his or her appointment by giving the Health Minister a written resignation.
(2) The resignation takes effect on the day it is received by the Health Minister or, if a later day is specified in the resignation, on that later day.

32N Termination
The Health Minister may at any time terminate the appointment of person under subsection 32G(1) to the Advisory Board.

(20) Clause 54, page 40 (after line 9), at the end of the clause, add:
Every 2 years, the Health Minister must provide a report to the Parliament on the financial assistance provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

(21) Page 41 (after line 14), after clause 57, insert:
57A Health Minister to report to Parliament on financial assistance
(1) The Health Minister must, as soon as practicable after the most recent Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities cease to be in force, prepare a report on the financial assistance provided for medical research and medical innovation from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account during the period the Priorities were in force.
(2) The report must include:
   (a) a description of how the financial assistance provided was consistent with the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities; and
   (b) information about any other financial assistance provided by the Commonwealth for medical research and medical innovation.
(3) The Health Minister must cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is prepared.

(22) Page 43 (after line 6), after clause 61, insert:
61A Delegation by the Health Minister
(1) The Health Minister may, by writing, delegate any or all of his or her powers under section 15A, 26 or 27 to:
(a) the Secretary of the Health Department; or

(b) an SES employee, or acting SES employee, of the Health Department; or

(c) the CEO (within the meaning of section 4 of the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992) of the NHMRC; or

(d) an SES employee, or acting SES employee, of the NHMRC.

Note 1: The expressions SES employee and acting SES employee are defined in section 2B of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901.

Note 2: A power delegated under paragraph (1)(c) is a function conferred on the CEO of the NHMRC under paragraph 7(1)(e) of the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992.

Note 3: This section allows the Health Minister to delegate powers to the CEO, or an SES employee or acting SES employee, of the NHMRC. This allows the Minister to benefit from the NHMRC's expertise in funding medical research and allows the NHMRC to manage distributions from the MRFF Health Special Account (for example, for payments in relation to competitive grants or other programs administered by the NHMRC).

(2) In exercising powers under a delegation under subsection (1), the delegate must comply with any directions of the Health Minister.

These amendments clarify and enhance the decision-making and accountability mechanisms to be used in the disbursement of funds from the MRFF. I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The minister will obviously have leave to continue her remarks when the debate is resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Australian Vietnamese Community

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (13:30): I recognise Isobella Castella and the students from Padstow Heights Public School who are in the gallery today.

Tonight in Parliament House there will be a special event to celebrate 40 years of Vietnamese settlement in Australia. The story of the Australian Vietnamese community is incredible and inspirational. It is a story of danger and desperation, of pirates, hunger, camps and death. It is also a story of hope, a story of a new home and a new struggle, of family, of hard work and of success.

I know this story well. I heard it from my grandfather who fought in Vietnam. I heard it from the children in my classroom when I was at school in Cabramatta. And I have heard it from my mother- and father-in-law. They are two of thousands of Vietnamese refugees who fled Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and settled in Australia.

The Vietnamese community has given back so much to Australia in return. The little boys and girls I went to school with, who told me about pirates and boats, are now doctors and nurses, police officers, pharmacists and engineers. This incredible success has happened because of three things: a strong community, led by the VCA; a strong faith, found in our churches and temples; and strong families. It is a privilege to represent so many Vietnamese Australians in this parliament. The Australian Vietnamese community has made Australia a better place to live, and tonight we gather to celebrate this remarkable story.
Ridge, Mr Drew

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:31): I rise to inform the House of the achievements of Drew Ridge, a Formula race car driver from Matcham, within the electorate of Dobell. Drew has recently taken the first major step towards becoming a professional race car driver after winning the Asia Cup Super 6 title at the Sepang International Circuit, in Malaysia. What makes this achievement all the more impressive is that Drew is only 16 years old. Drew started competing on the Malaysian circuit in December and says that his recent win was a big boost for his career.

Last year, I was able to support Drew through the government's Local Sporting Champions grants program. The grant enabled Drew to compete in the 2014 Race of Stars, which saw Australia's top karters and some of the world's best compete at the major title. Only the top 25 junior Australian drivers are invited to compete, along with international champions.

Drew can continue in the Asia Cup series, which starts in August, or potentially compete in the new Formula 4 series in Australia or Europe. Drew is a great example of the sporting talent we have on the Central Coast. I would like to wish Drew all the very best for his future and commend his achievement to the House. I would also like to commend the achievements of many of the other sporting champions that we have on the Central Coast. I encourage many of our young students and local champions to apply for the grants that we have from the federal government, the Local Sporting Champions grants program. I commend Drew's achievements to the House.

Defence Procurement

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:33): Last week the Abbott government's hand-picked audit commissioner, Tony Shepherd, argued that the replacement submarines should be built in Australia. Australian shipbuilder Andrew Bellamy, now based in the US and building naval warships for the US Navy, reportedly also believes that Australians have the capability to build their own naval vessels and backed Australia's efficiency and expertise.

In a clear sign of frustration with the Abbott government, global defence company BAE Systems last week pulled out of bidding for the Pacific patrol boats. The Abbott government has destroyed Australia's car industry and is doing the same with the naval shipbuilding sector with its confused messages and continued uncertainty.

Australian based defence companies and ship workers know they are capable of building the naval vessels that Australia needs. Hundreds of Australian businesses would directly contribute if the vessels were built in Australia, and those businesses want to get involved. With the Australian dollar now trading at around US77c, any offshore purchase has become far more costly than it was a year ago. More than ever before, the excuse that it is more expensive to build in Australia does not stand up to scrutiny.

In his budget address, Treasurer Hockey encouraged Australians to have a go. So why won't the Prime Minister support Australian businesses, support Australian workers and let them have a go?

Flynn Electorate: Purcell's Engineering

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:34): I would like to praise a small business in my electorate that has taken the initiative to use the Industry Skills Fund growth stream set up by the
Assistant Minister for Education and Training, Simon Birmingham. Purcell's Engineering were successful in their application to have their training program jointly funded. Our government has granted the business nearly $24,000, or 50 per cent, of the cost they need for their training projects to operate. The business will be able to use this funding to provide improved skills to their employees, which will enable them to continue producing quality work.

The Industry Skills Fund was set up to help businesses like Purcell's invest in training and support services and to develop innovative training solutions. I met with the business owner, Terry Purcell. He has praised the program and thinks it is very worthwhile continuing such a program. The program has given Purcell's a more skilled and efficient workplace.

I am promoting the initiative of Purcell's Engineering because they have taken a proactive attitude and are finding the program very beneficial. I am hopeful that other businesses in my electorate will follow the example of Purcell's Engineering and use this fund to help upskill their employees, which will upskill the business and return good economies to the city of Gladstone.

Renewable Energy

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:36): There are nearly 250,000 wind turbines throughout the world and 25 reviews conducted by leading health and research organisations have found no direct link between wind farms and health effects. The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council's recently updated statement on the evidence on wind farms and human health says:

There is no direct evidence that exposure to wind farm noise affects physical or mental health.

In Australia, however, we have a Prime Minister and a government who claim to know better than scientists and health experts. Indeed, not only are wind farms 'a blight on our landscape'; they are noisy and potentially dangerous!

Last week the Prime Minister said:

When I've been up close to these wind farms, there's no doubt, not only are they visually awful, they make a lot of noise.

This noise, alongside the noise of certain Senate crossbenchers, has led to the government proposing to appoint a new national wind farm commissioner. While there is apparent need for a wind farm commissioner, this government continues to ignore the much greater need for full-time a disability discrimination commissioner. I agree with former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, who said:

It sends a very clear message about where people with disabilities fall in the pecking order.

Twenty per cent of Australians live with disability and about 37 per cent of discrimination complaints received by the Human Rights Commission are related to disability. They need someone in a role dedicated to defending their rights. This government must shelve its ludicrous plans for a wind farm commissioner and instead reinstate a disability commissioner. (Time expired)

Hinkler Electorate: Hervey Bay Hockey Association

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (13:38): I recently attended the official opening of Hervey Bay Hockey's new $805,000 playing facilities. It was only in September last year that I had the
absolute pleasure of turning the first sod on that project. This project shows how governments and not-for-profit organisations and businesses can partner for the benefit of regional communities.

During the 2013 federal election I committed $350,000 to the Hervey Bay Hockey Association for artificial turf. The funding was provided through the Australian government’s $350 million Community Development Grants Program. Whilst in government, the state LNP also contributed $100,000 through the Get Playing program. The local hockey community spent the past 15 years fundraising $300,000 to contribute towards the project. The project was also supported by Fraser Coast Regional Council, the Hervey Bay RSL and local business Con Souvlis Betta Home Living.

The new state-of-the-art facilities and synthetic playing surface will enable the association to host quite significant events, which will attract visitors from outside the region and boost the local economy. Ultimately, the aim of projects like this is to ensure Hinkler residents enjoy the proven benefits of exercise and team sports. Catering to the challenging and dynamic needs of young Queenslanders, local sporting clubs like the Hervey Bay Hockey Association perform an extremely important role in our community.

I appreciate the countless hours spent and the enormous collective effort involved in successfully running a club. I would especially like to congratulate association secretary Cathy Milijasevic. It was a great job and it would not have been possible without her. *(Time expired)*

**Scullin Electorate: Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Australia**

**Mr GILES** (Scullin) (13:39): On Saturday it was my privilege to represent the Leader of the Opposition at the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry dinner in Melbourne. This was a wonderful event and a great opportunity to celebrate the work of this organisation and indeed to celebrate the great contribution of the Italian community in Australia, and particularly in Melbourne. It was wonderful to think about the role the chamber has played in fostering trade links between Italian and Australian businesses over nearly 100 years but, beyond that, to build a much closer understanding between two cultures and two countries. It also brought people together in a very good cause—namely, supporting kids with cancer through the My Room project of the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne. I am sure much money was raised and it will make an extraordinary difference.

But fundamentally I thought the occasion was a celebration of Australia's multiculturalism. Representing an electorate in Melbourne's northern suburbs, I am only too well aware of what a difference the Italian community has made to my city and to our way of life. It is no exaggeration to say that the imprint of Italian culture has transformed Melbourne. The theme of Saturday's event, 'Gusto Italiano', the taste of Italy, was evident on the night through the contribution of great Scullin businesses like Bertocchi and Pantalica Cheese but also in the sense of style, the sense of confidence and the sense of understanding across cultures that really characterises modern multicultural Australia.

**Page Electorate: Alstonville's 150th Anniversary**

**Mr HOGAN** (Page) (13:41): In 1885, 150 years ago, Andrew Freeborn and his brother Thomas selected land at Duck Creek Mountain which later came to be known as Alstonville. The Alstonville community this year is celebrating this milestone with a year-long program of
celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary. There are many events on over the 12 months. There is a bowls day at the Alstonville bowling club on Sunday, there is an anniversary dinner in September and there is obviously the Alstonville Show in October. But there are many events spread over the 12 months of this year where Alstonville is getting together to celebrate this marvellous occasion.

I would like to pay tribute to the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and its officers—Ina Le Bas, Ian Kirkland, Liz Marshall, Perry Wells and Alison Draper—who have done a lot of research into this. I also pay tribute to the Alstonville Wollongbar Chamber of Commerce and Richard Lutze, the president. Ian Kirkland has done a lot of work personally on this.

I would also like to acknowledge the sponsors of the year-long celebrations who make this all possible: the Alstonville Plaza, Apex, Think Water Alstonville, Lions, Sarwood Timbers, the Alstonville Wollongbar Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Waste, SVM TV, Alstonville Tree Felling, the Federal Hotel at Alstonville, the Alstonville Plateau Bowls and Sports Club, Plateau Dental Care, Duraplas, Red Earth, the Ballina Shire Council and North Coast TAFE.

**Throsby Electorate: Employment**

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:42): Today I call on the Prime Minister and the coalition government to take the situation of unemployment in my electorate of Throsby seriously. We have 9.4 per cent unemployment, nearly double that for young people. We have a crisis and it warrants the nation's attention.

Before the election, the Prime Minister would jump from workplace to workplace with hard hat and fluorescent clothing, saying he had the ear of workers, he understood the needs of manufacturing and he had a plan for the future. We were promised a million new jobs. In the Illawarra, we are still waiting.

One of the government's first acts upon achieving that side of the House was to axe the Australian Jobs Act. This was the act that required companies running large projects, particularly projects with part government funding, to show cause why they should not be using Australian products, particularly Australian steel. The government cut that act and this obligation is no longer on those companies.

We recently reached a free trade agreement with China, and I am a supporter of open trading arrangements. But the provision within the agreement which removes the local work test, making it a lot easier for companies sponsoring big projects to bring workers in from overseas when there are workers here who are ready, willing and able, is a knife at the throat of regions like mine which are suffering under high unemployment. *(Time expired)*

**Durack Electorate: Geraldton Hospital**

Ms PRICE (Durack) (13:44): I want to talk about a serious public health matter in Geraldton. The Geraldton regional hospital is the only public hospital in Geraldton and serves as the nearest hospital for many regional towns throughout the Mid West. The current 70-bed facility was built to replace the old 120-bed facility in 2005. This meant that the size of the hospital was inadequate from day one. In the last few years, there has also been a spike in emergency cases and a higher demand for in-patient services. The hospital does not have an acute psychiatric unity, which limits the ability to provide care for involuntary patients and provides a risk for patients and also concerns for staff.

I invited the Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, to visit the hospital following her appointment to the portfolio in December to discuss possible solutions to meet the health
needs of the Mid West. I am confident the minister will visit the electorate within the year. I understand the state government and the St John of God hospital have been discussing a potential public-private solution which would see an increase in the use of the private hospital beds by public patients. This sounds very sensible to me, and I call on the state government to accelerate their discussions so that this issue surrounding insufficient hospital beds available in Geraldton and in the broader Mid West region can be resolved urgently.

Reclink Australia

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:45): I rise today to commend the work of Reclink Australia, a fabulous not-for-profit organisation that works tirelessly to ensure that our young people from disadvantage, homeless people and people of all disadvantages are connected in their local communities through sport and the arts. Reclink provides and supports sports and arts programs for 4,500 people across this nation. It is a not-for-profit that is close to my heart as its founding member is a member of my community who has served our community well and gone on to support the broader Victorian and Australian community with his far-reaching work.

I would also like to commend the Andrews Labor government. On Sunday at the 21st Reclink Community Cup it made another $10,000 contribution to Reclink and called on the Abbott government to reinstate fully the funding that was provided by the previous federal Labor government to this important not-for-profit organisation that draws young and disadvantaged people together across this country and gives them opportunities to make a contribution through sport and the arts. I urge this government to reconsider and reinstate that funding as a matter of urgency.

Renewable Energy

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (13:47): Two weeks ago we had the very regrettable if not totally surprising news from Alinta that they were closing the Port Augusta Flinders power stations. While I will not go into the whys and wherefores of why this has come about, it is a plain case of government policy. In this case, the renewable energy target got ahead of itself, oversupplying the Australian electricity market, and it has led to the early demise of these power stations. Given that they had been producing around 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the state's electricity supply, that will present some problems going forward.

Last week I hosted a number of local governments in Canberra. The mayor and CEO of the Port Augusta council were here. We met with a number of ministers, including the Minister for Industry and Science. There are a number of issues around Port Augusta and Leigh Creek, a town that is purpose-built for coal mining and owned by the South Australian government. It will see a complete role change as a result of this decision. In Port Augusta, in particular, I have become aware of a lot of things since the announcement that I might not have anticipated before. For instance, the Port Augusta council will lose $500,000 a year in rates. There is a lake there called Bird Lake that is supplied with water from the nearby power station's cooling system. It will dry out and become basically a stinking mess. The council has lost a number of land sales as a result—(Time expired)

Indi Electorate: Lake Eildon GeoTour

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:48): Colleagues, do you remember a time when pirates would hide their treasure and mark the spot so no-one could find it? Well, geocaching works in a
similar way. It is a recreational outdoor sport based on hiding and discovering treasure with the use of a global positioning system or GPS. The great Australian Lake Eildon GeoTour takes place in the heart of my electorate of Indi. In its first three months, the tour logged 223 teams that participated in the event. This equates to 2,367 people who visited the area.

The tour is the brainchild of local Eildon businessman Stephen Handbury. Mark Howard from Eildon Real Estate—and I am delighted to welcome him and his wife, Jill, to parliament today—provided sponsorship and promotion. The international award came from Oris Watches. Thank you very much to Peter Borghouts for that.

The aim is to establish Eildon as the training centre for geocaching in Australia and to conduct workshops for other communities to share the knowledge of how such an event increases tourism. It is open to all ages. It is a family event. Community groups can participate, as can bike riders, four-wheel drivers and tech nerds—anyone with a sense of adventure. I would particularly like to invite colleagues from across the area to come to Indi—to come to Eildon—and go treasure searching and learn this wonderful sport that is gripping the nation. Again, I thank my constituents for taking a lead role in this area.

Canning Electorate: Broadband

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (13:50): I bring to the attention of the House today the progress of the NBN in Canning. I do this because I feel it is of vital importance to correct some of the untruths members opposite have been touting around my electorate. Under Labor, fewer than 2,000 premises in the Canning electorate had been connected to the NBN after four years and $6.4 billion in funding. Notwithstanding the fact that rollout maps used as a campaign tool by those opposite listed street upon street in Canning as being under NBN construction, there was absolutely no construction taking place at all. Those areas were never connected to the NBN under Labor. It was only after the coalition government took over that more than 16,500 premises in the electorate were connected to superfast broadband. That is almost 10 times the amount delivered by those opposite in less than half the time.

With that said—and I am pleased to see the member for Perth in the chamber—the member for Perth was questioning the Minister for Communications about the rollout of the NBN in Armadale and Kelmscott. Not only are these two suburbs located some 30 kilometres outside of the member's electorate but they fall into the constituency for which I am the federal representative, not her. For the benefit of the member for Perth, residences in Armadale and Kelmscott are among 50,000 that were named in NBN Co's 18-month rollout plan in December of last year. While I appreciate the member for Perth was not in the federal parliament during the chaos of the Labor years, I would like to make it clear that, while she was busy indulging in illusions about the NBN her party could not deliver, we are actually getting on with the job of delivering to the people of the Canning electorate good, fast NBN.

(Time expired)

Perth Electorate: Morley Senior High School

Ms MACTIERNAN (Perth) (13:51): For 10 years, students and staff at Morley Senior High School have sponsored a sister school in Cambodia, raising $30,000 for infrastructure and educational tools. On Friday, I joined a brilliant group of students for a fundraising breakfast for their much-loved sister school 90 minutes from Phnom Penh. The students themselves—a fantastic case study of Australia's multiculturalism—told us how much they
have learnt from this relationship and how much they have come to appreciate what they have, after seeing how little others have. They have also been using event management experience as part of their business course. Giving rewards the giver as much as it rewards recipient.

The ANGKOR Project was established by educationalist John Garnaut and involves 28 schools across Perth. Under the leadership of Principal Gay Fortune, Morley Senior High School has been on board since the beginning. Not only have students raised money and visited the school but staff have volunteered their time, providing teachers with training and mentorship. One important project has been to fund the building of wells and toilets, which has seen girls remaining at school after puberty—a great leap forward. The project is now working with education authorities to assess the impact this school sponsorship has had on educational outcomes. Morley Senior High School, good on you for training your students to be good global citizens.

Cowan Electorate: Kingsway Football and Sporting Club

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (13:53): On Saturday I was at the Kingsway Football and Sporting Club in Madeley watching the Thirds game and saw the recently completed upgrade to the facilities, named Dave's Deck. Kingsway is a strong football club with a big juniors program and a number of senior teams. The clubhouse at Kingsway is the envy of many other sporting clubs in the Cowan electorate; however, it has become tired and in need of renovation, given some of the decor has a 1980s look about it. The club is well used for sporting events but also for broader community events and private functions. The committee and membership of the club have acknowledged this, and in recent years much work has been put into upgrading the facilities and that decor.

Local businessman and dedicated clubman Dave Holbrook has made many donations to the club and has organised much of the work. Through his connections with the steel industry, both the ground's facilities and the clubhouse have been steadily improved over time and the construction of the very good looking facility—Dave's Deck—is a testament to his efforts. The dark wooden deck and metal railings, together with new toilet facilities, will serve as a very good extension to the bar area.

I understand that the club has looked after the overall cost of more than $150,000, and I congratulate them on that. I note that there are ongoing issues regarding wheelchair access to the deck, but it seems this could be easily overcome with a change to the path straight from the carpark. In any case, I hope that the City of Wanneroo will see that solution and work with the club to achieve the best and most practical solution.

In conclusion, I congratulate club president Rob Steel, Dave Holbrook and the Kingsway Football and Sporting Club on all the improvements they have achieved for their members.

Climate Change

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (13:54): Australia has one of the highest emissions of carbon dioxide per capita, yet the Abbott government is not only not taking action but repealing action taken by previous governments. They are remaining indifferent to action on climate change, and it is humiliating on a global scale.

Renewable energy is a significant aspect of ensuring a sustainable future, and it is unacceptable to ignore this, as the Prime Minister did so recently, describe wind turbines as
'ugly', 'noisy' and 'visually awful'. He additionally stated that he wished the Howard government, in which he was a senior minister, had never implemented the renewable energy target policy. Wind turbines and other renewable energy sources offer great reductions in CO$_2$ emissions and are crucial to protecting our environment. The immature view that the Prime Minister voiced towards them shows the short-sighted perspective his government holds towards sustainability.

The Abbott government has also greatly cut Australia's foreign aid contributions. Less economically developed countries will be worst hit by the consequences of climate change, even though they have contributed the least. It is clear that the Abbott government has a narrow-minded view of Australia's place and responsibility internationally. It is intolerable for Australia as a nation with the resources available to it to simply sit back and dismiss any action on the matter.

Future generations will be resentful towards and disappointed in us when they are faced with the tremendous consequences they will experience because of climate change. History will depict us poorly; and, when asked why no action was taken, the only answer will be: because some people wanted to maximise short-term profits for a few large companies and because they thought renewable energy was 'visually awful.' So wrote Ishah De Silva, from year 10 at PLC, who did work experience in my office last week.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (13:56): I rise to speak about an organisation of which I have the honour of being patron, the Australian Security Medals Foundation. Last Friday night, the organisation held its annual gala charity dinner at the Australian War Memorial to present awards to extraordinary individuals. They were presented to recognise men and women who have acted beyond the call of duty, who have in their professional and volunteer capacity put their own safety at risk and in many cases saved lives.

This year, there were five Australian Security Valour Medals and five Australian Security Medals. In addition, three Save A Life medals were awarded to members of St John Ambulance. Congratulations to the recipients: Tom, George, Kathy, Neville, Charlie, Gary, Emir, Jye, Mathew, Zlatka, Eddie, Kamal and New South Wales police Deputy Commissioner Nick Kaldas.

In addition to recognising the courage and dedication of these individuals, the Australian Security Medals Foundation raised thousands of dollars for beyondblue on the night. I commend Steve Jackson and the ASMF board for what they do and look forward to continuing to support their important work.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:57): Last Thursday night, shadow communications minister Jason Clare and I met with around 100 Canberra residents who are still waiting for the NBN. We listened to their stories, we heard their frustrations and we shared in their feelings of betrayal.

Before the election, the Prime Minister promised that all Australians would have access to the NBN by the end of 2016. Then the government admitted, at the end of 2013, that they would be breaking this promise; and now, under this government, large parts of the ACT will get a second-rate NBN that relies on old copper—that is, if Canberrans can even find their
suburb on the roll-out map. Residents in suburbs like Monash and Theodore are struggling to get access to any type of internet, and it is extremely expensive if they can get it. It is simply not good enough—not good enough, Minister for Communications.

Under Labor, every home in the ACT would have had access to the world-class fibre-to-the-premises version of the NBN. Labor has a vision where everyone can access the tools they need on the web—tools for training, tools for learning and tools for sharing. We envisage a country where no-one is left behind. The NBN represents just another broken promise to the people of Canberra.

Since this government came to office, we have seen broken promises on education, broken promises on health and broken promises on funding to the ABC and SBS.

**Australian Labor Party**

*Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:59)*: I note with interest that the ALP are holding their national conference soon and, among other things, will be discussing a new draft national platform, which includes the words: 'We are a movement in service to the nation we love, a country built on fairness, equality, justice and inclusion.' Yet this is the party that, in this place, has voted against pension increases of $30 a fortnight to part-pensioners with limited assets. This is a party that is supporting increasing tax on superannuation. So, what is fair and just? The only government that is fair and just to the battlers is the coalition government. The only party that is fair and just—(Time expired)

**The SPEAKER:** It being 2 o'clock, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

**STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE**

**Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17**

*Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00):* On indulgence, I wish to advise the House that the government will host a national memorial service in Canberra on 17 July for the first anniversary of the downing of flight MH17. This service will remember those who lost their lives and it will give thanks to those who were involved in the recovery and the investigation. A year on, we remember the 298 innocents who perished on flight MH17, especially the 39 men, women and children who called Australia home. We continue to support families who deal with the pain of loss and who have a deep yearning for justice. We remind ourselves of the compelling words of the Maslin parents that love conquers hate.

Anniversaries are always difficult times, so we will continue to stand with all who lost so much and who are now rebuilding their lives. I inform the House that the Australians on MH17 will never be forgotten. There will be a permanent memorial in the House of Representatives garden to them as there is for the victims of the Bali bombings. We will also honour the Australian personnel and officials involved in Operation Bring Them Home and those who continue to play critical roles in the investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice. In the midst of tragedy our officials and our personnel did us proud.

The government will invite the families of all the victims to the service as well as all members and senators. I understand that the Malaysian and the Netherlands governments will also be holding services, because this was an atrocity that touched many nations.
We took the families of flight MH17 into our hearts a year ago. I hope that this service might help to sustain them as they face this very, very difficult anniversary.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): I thank the Prime Minister for updating the House. Labor wholeheartedly supports not only the memorial service but the permanent memorial to those who lost their lives aboard MH17. For those loved ones left behind, it is still a time, I believe, of slowly passing shock, of disbelief and of mourning. This parliament has acknowledged their grief in this place but we cannot share it. We did repatriate their loved ones, but we are unable to fill the void of their loss. Like the Prime Minister, we hope for an end to the quest for a reason, but that will never be enough. Anything we can do, we should, we must, and so we wish the memorial and the project well.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:03): I wish to inform the House that the Minister for Trade and Investment will be absent from question time this week. He is currently in India for trade talks and for meetings of the Australia-India CEO Forum. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Education Funding

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister’s own department circulate the Federation green paper that provides an option that would see the Australian government walk away from any responsibility for funding public schools?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:04): The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has certainly been engaged in very constructive discussions with a whole range of state officials on a whole range of issues about a whole range of subjects as part of the Federation reform white paper. As for the matters that were in a paper this morning, let me say this: the Australian government does not and will not support a means test for public education. Full stop. End of story. If the states and territories want to charge wealthy parents fees for public schools, that is a matter for them. Charging wealthy parents for their children to attend public schools is not this government’s policy. Let me repeat that: charging wealthy parents for their children to attend public schools is not this government’s policy. It is not now. It won't ever be. I entirely endorse the statement earlier today of the Minister for Education.

Trade

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the government is opening up new markets for exporters across our country, and especially in my electorate of Forrest. How does the government’s economic plan boost jobs and growth?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): I thank the member for Forrest for her questioned. I can inform her, as I hope all members of this House remember, that just last week we signed the free trade agreement between China and Australia, and under this free trade agreement fully 95 per cent of our exports to China will enter duty free, including so many of the exports from the wonderful electorate of Forrest. Beef will enter duty free, dairy
will enter duty free, wine will enter duty free and most of our minerals will enter China duty free under this agreement. It is very good news for Australia. It is good for our exports. It means lower prices for consumer goods. More trade means more jobs. So it is good for Australian workers and it is good for growth.

This particular free trade agreement completes a historic trifecta of trade. I congratulate the absent Minister for Trade and Investment on his extraordinary work in this area, because some 55 per cent of our total goods and services exports are covered by these agreements and some 95 per cent of our exports to these markets will be duty free once the agreements are fully in place. Many Australian businesses are already seizing opportunities under these agreements. Our agreements with Korea and Japan are only months old, yet exports are booming. There has been a 26 per cent increase in frozen beef prime cuts to Korea and a massive 84 per cent increase in the same product to Japan in just 12 months. Australia now has 58 per cent of Japan's beef market. In the marvellous electorate of Forrest, Korean beef importers are now talking to Margaret River Premium Meat Exports about ways to boost exports of wagyu beef from Western Australia to Korea. Reid Fruits, in beautiful Tasmania, has boosted cherry exports to Korea more than 30-fold thanks to the elimination of a 24 per cent tariff. Wine exporters are looking to the future, like the head of Helm Wines, near Canberra, who says that the China free trade agreement 'will be fantastic for exporters'. There are pharmaceutical companies, there are advanced manufacturing companies—all of them looking forward to the total abolition of tariffs on their exports to China, Japan and Korea. We are supporting people who are having a go, building a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia.

Education Funding

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's previous answer on this issue. Given the Prime Minister has said that if the states impose a schools tax that is a matter for them, what action has the government determined to take should any state or territory impose a schools tax?

The SPEAKER: That is stretching a long way towards hypothetical but I will give the Prime Minister the call.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:10): I repeat: it is not the Commonwealth's policy. It is absolutely not the Commonwealth's policy. What the states and territories do in respect of public schools is entirely a matter for them. Unlike members opposite, who are always trying to raise yet another scare campaign, there are some Labor leaders who are prepared to talk seriously about our future. I notice that the South Australian Labor government is prepared to have a serious talk about tax reform.

Mr Dreyfus: Abandoning government schools!

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: . I notice that the South Australian Labor government is prepared to have a serious talk about energy reform, including nuclear energy, in this country. The South Australian Labor Premier said when asked about this today that it was 'only a discussion paper', but the South Australian Labor Premier went on to say: 'We have been asking them to canvas the broader range of options; there is a broad debate going on about Commonwealth-state relations, which is a good thing.' We are perfectly happy to see a broad debate about the
future of reform in this country, but I do have to say that the actual running of public schools is entirely a matter for the states and territories.

Mr Burke: The running, not the funding.

Mr ABBOTT: I hear members opposite catcalling 'not the funding'. I can inform members opposite that over the next four years there will be a 28 per cent increase in Commonwealth funding for public schools. I say to members opposite, you can run all the scare campaigns you like but, in the end, people want to know where you stand. They are starting to get some answers. What members opposite stand for is taxing super, putting up rent and bringing back the people smugglers.

Northern Australia

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on how the government's northern Australia white paper will help unlock the potential of this vital region? How has the white paper been received in the community?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:12): I thank the honourable member for her question. She, along with almost all of the members representing northern Australia, were present in Cairns last Friday for the launch of the northern Australia paper, Our north, our future. I welcome the support that has been received from both sides of the House, and from state and territory governments, for this outstanding initiative—a long overdue initiative—of this government.

We recognise the enormous potential there is in northern Australia. Lots of people have been saying that for a long time. There are one million people and three million square kilometres. Lots of people have been talking about the potential—we are acting now to help deliver on what that region can achieve.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari will desist.

Mr TRUSS: We need to work in a whole range of areas—we need to provide a level of security, land tenure, so that investors can invest with confidence. We need to provide support to assist with the development of businesses and new market opportunities in the region.

Darwin, in the honourable member's electorate, will be the centre for the one-stop shop and also the headquarters of the northern Australia initiative. It will be focused right across the North; it will be delivering real results. We have devoted funds to help deliver our commitment to settle all native title claims within 10 years. There is $20 million to assist native title holders in their negotiations with businesses to ensure that economic growth will be shared amongst all Australians.

We want to unlock a lot of the potential by providing basic infrastructure for the North that it has lacked for so long. There is a commitment to build new roads, like the Tanami Road, the Arnhem and the Barkly Highways—those sorts of roads can make a difference in opening up northern Australia. We have committed also to finalise the business case for Ord Stage 3; we are looking at the potential to extend the Ord River project across the Western Australian-Northern Territory border into the Territory. There is money also for a feasibility study for a railway line from Mount Isa to Tennant Creek and to upgrade the Mount Isa to Townsville line. These are significant commitments; these are commitments that will make a difference.
There is to be a new CRC for the North; support for research in medicine, tropical science and other areas where northern Australia can take a particular leadership role. The North is already home to sophisticated cities and a lot of natural talent. We want to tap those abilities to make sure that northern Australia is able to achieve its potential and therefore benefit the whole of the continent in building a stronger nation.

Distinguished Visitors

The Speaker: Before I call the member for Port Adelaide, I wish to advise the House that we have with us in the visitors gallery today the former member for Mallee, Mr John Forrest, whom we make most welcome. We also have Mrs Hanna Hopko, who is a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and chairman of its Committee on Foreign Affairs, and we make you most welcome.

Questions Without Notice

Education Funding

Mr Butler (Port Adelaide) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. As a result of the $30 billion of cuts to schools locked in by this year's budget, the Catholic Education Commission has said:

...fees will increase, schools could close and the quality of education will be compromised.

Given the Prime Minister's $30 billion in cuts are just the start of his plan to cut all Australian government funding to schools, what extra damage will his secret and extreme plan do to Catholic schools?

The Speaker: I call the Hon. Minister for Education.

Mr Pyne (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:16): I do admire the audacity of the member for Port Adelaide and the acting shadow minister, who has now become known as 'Mr President'—

Opposition members interjecting—

The Speaker: Silence on my left! The member for Wakefield is warned.

Mr Pyne: in asking a question about school funding. It is Labor's way to keep trying to pretend that somehow they are going to provide rivers of gold to public and non-government schools beyond the forward estimates. Both he and the shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition are being asked time and time again over the last 12 months—

Opposition members interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Hotham is warned.

Mr Pyne: whether they are committed to the apparent river of gold beyond the forward estimates, and none of them has ever committed to it. They have not committed to it because they do not have the money. They are trying to sell a pup to parents and the ATU; they have not been able to fess up to the fact that, actually, the government has got it right. We are increasing school funding—by eight per cent, eight per cent the year after that, six per cent the year after that and four per cent the year after that. We are focusing on the things that matter in schools—whether it is the national curriculum or teacher training or parental engagement or school autonomy. We are focusing on getting outcomes for students, having resolved the school funding debate.
I particularly admire the audacity of the Labor Party asking about school funding, when it was the Abbott government that put $1.2 billion back into school funding, which the Leader of the Opposition had removed in the pre-election fiscal outlook. They thought they would get away with removing $1.2 billion from school funding. Imagine my surprise, Madam Speaker, when I became the Minister for Education and discovered that we had $1.2 billion less to spend on school funding because of the Leader of the Opposition. I set about convincing the Treasurer and the Prime Minister—which was not hard—that getting the funding right as a foundation for our schools policy was the right approach and so we did. We put $1.2 billion—we fixed it—back into school funding. We have Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory back into the national school funding model—something Labor had failed to do. Also in the dying minutes of this answer I wish to draw a contrast between the maturity of the South Australian Labor Premier today in comparison to the Labor opposition here in Canberra: Jay Weatherill, as Premier of South Australia, in a rare moment of perspicacity, has made the obvious point that this is only a discussion paper that has been released today in the newspapers. It is a discussion paper; it canvasses many options. But the Commonwealth government is not responsible for schools in Australia; that is the responsibility of the states and territories—and well may it be so—and we will continue to support them in their good works.

National Security: Citizenship

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (14:20): I would like to congratulate the member for Melbourne for his wife giving birth to a baby a few minutes ago. My question is to the Prime Minister. In 2009 the member for Wentworth lost the support of the Liberal Party and ultimately the opposition leadership because a Treasury official lied to the Senate. Is it okay, Prime Minister, that an Australian citizen could lose his citizenship because a government official lies or makes a mistake, and the citizen has no way of correcting such a lie of mistake? Does the Prime Minister understand the separation of powers and the Magna Carta and what they are all about?

The SPEAKER: I think that question offends every standing order in the book, and it is out of order.

Budget

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (14:21): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, will you update the House on how the government’s small business measures will help rural businesses, particularly in my electorate of Calare?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:21): I really do thank the member for Calare for that question. He has been raising a number of good news stories from his electorate with me over the last few weeks. He stands up for everyone of the 12,300 small businesses in his very large electorate. He has supplied me with an email from Vicki Wilson, who runs Town & Country Rural Supplies in Bathurst—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will desist.

Mr HOCKEY: where there are a number of small businesses—and the burial site, which I have visited, of Joseph Benedict Chifley. So it is rather ironic that this email should come from her: ‘I am writing to congratulate you and your government on the changes to the
The depreciation schedule in the recent budget. Being the proprietor of Town & Country Rural Supplies, I have had a sharp increase in sales and large inquiries of fencing supplies, stock handling equipment and stockyard supplies. The sales of this equipment has not only meant a large increase in my turnover; it also means a lot more employment on local farms by contractors and the like.' How good is that! Isn't that a great story? We are the best friends of Australia's small businesses. There is no doubt about that.

Last week, the $5.5 billion package for jobs and small business in Australia came to fruition. The money parts went through the Senate. The tax cut for over 700,000 Australian incorporated small businesses went through the Senate.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will desist.

Mr HOCKEY: Of course the $20,000 instant asset write-off—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin!

Mr HOCKEY: There are only a few days left to go out there and to buy individual items of equipment, anything up to $20,000, and offset that against your tax on 1 July. What we want to see is Australian small businesses going out there and buying the product that helps them to improve their productivity, that helps them to improve their business and profitability, which in turn means that you are going to see more jobs in Australia.

At the same time we are opening up new trade opportunities. As the Prime Minister said, the free trade agreement with China is going to be a massive opportunity for so many small businesses right across Australia to access an enormous market, particularly with the rise of the Asian middle class. We are going to see greater demand for our services and our exports. We are going to empower small businesses to enter those markets. What a great job the minister for trade has done. He is now over there as we speak opening up a new market in India—and that is good for all small businesses.

Education Funding

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. A paper circulated by the Prime Minister's own department suggests a schools tax could be imposed on parents with children at public schools. Is this new schools tax designed to make up for the Abbott government's cuts to states and territories for public school funding?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:24): There have been no cuts. Funding goes up every single year.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon will desist.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney has asked the question and will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: As the minister for education made clear in his previous answer, Commonwealth funding for schools goes up eight per cent this year, eight per cent next year, six per cent the year after that and four per cent in the final year of the forward estimates. Our
funding for schools goes up and up and up. We have fully delivered on our pre-election commitments. In fact, we have overdelivered, because we put back in $1.2 billion that members opposite had cut out—$1.2 billion that members opposite had ripped out of the state school systems in two states and one territory. We put it back because of the splendid arguments put to me and the Treasurer by the minister for education.

We hear time and time again from members opposite of the so-called billions that were cut. This was money that never existed. It was pie-in-the-sky money that was promised beyond the forward estimates by the former government—

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham has been warned and will desist or leave. The choice is hers.

Mr ABBOTT: They never had any intention and they certainly never had any capability to spend the money. But I have a simple question for the member who asked me: if she thinks $30 billion has been cut out, will she put it back? If this is a real funding gap, will the opposition put it back? Will they put it back?

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr ABBOTT: She is coming to the dispatch box to tell us the truth. Will she or won't she put that $30 billion back? That is the question; give us the answer. Is the money going back? Because if you will not say yes—

Mr Dreyfus: Raving—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is doing a bit of raving himself and will desist.

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table both the budget overview and—

The SPEAKER: For the edification of the member for Sydney, you will remember, perhaps, that public documents may not be subject to tabling.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: That does not excuse you from trying to table a document that cannot be.

Budget

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister update the House on the reaction to the government's budget from small business? How is the budget helping small business to invest and grow?

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:28): It is great to get a question from the member for Brisbane. Her electorate is the home of more than 30,000 small business family enterprises and hundreds and hundreds of Tony's tradies as well. Congratulations! It is great to get a question from her. She was also very kind to host a meeting with women of entrepreneurship, which was a spectacular insight into the diversity, particularly of women. Some are starting their businesses from home; some are growing very large businesses. It was a great example of what is happening and how we can support enterprise by energising enterprise.

You only need to look at the newspapers, or, as our colleagues have done, talk with small businesses over the weekend. At the Stonecats Frankston YCW Football Club President's luncheon—what a great occasion that was—I was representing you, Prime Minister; we
would have had an even bigger crowd there. Gerard Wintle was there talking about the interest he has had from those in the printing industry.

Mr Butler interjecting—

Mr BILLSON: I do not know why the member for Port Adelaide is having a go at me. I am happy to call you an acronym. I know the President of the United States is POTUS. You can be POLP—President of the Labor Party. I do not know why you are getting cranky with me.

We were hearing a lot of good news about our $5.5 billion jobs and small business package. It is making such a difference. We saw today in The Age another example of not just how small businesses are benefiting but also how businesses supplying and supporting small businesses are benefiting. We have Mark Beitz, the dealer principal, at Bartons in Queensland quoted in a Fairfax story today as saying that the $20,000 immediate deduction is:

... really triggering an avalanche, especially now the legislation has been passed and people have confidence they can get the tax benefit in the current financial year.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Pause before you breathe again.

Mr BILLSON: He went on to say:

There's been a rush of tradies—
Tony's tradies—

buying single cab utes and an uplift in second hand light commercial vehicles.

This is fantastic. We are seeing businesses right across our country taking steps to support the growth of their businesses and helping this nation recover many of the 519,000 jobs lost in small business under Labor. But this is not some kind of one-off Hollywood feature. It is not even a miniseries, and we know how popular miniseries can be. This is as predictable as the nightly news.

We are working as hard for small business every day looking for new policy opportunities—our conviction to get behind those enterprising men and women. This week—hopingly, later today—the Senate will pass our repair and reform of employee share schemes legislation. We have to fix what Labor damaged when in office. This week we will be introducing the unincorporated tax cut for those two-thirds of small businesses that the Leader of the Opposition forgot about in his budget-in-reply speech. We will also be implementing legislation to extend unfair contract terms protections currently available to consumers to small businesses. This is all about energising enterprise and showing that we are working as hard every day for small business men and women as they are. (Time expired)

Education Funding

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. The New South Wales Treasurer has today described the Prime Minister's $30 billion worth of cuts to schools as 'not sustainable'. Why does the Prime Minister continue to deny his $30 billion of cuts to schools when the Prime Minister's own Liberal colleagues are publicly criticising him for those cuts?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:31): Because there are no cuts. Every year Commonwealth funding for public schools goes up and up and up. I repeat for the
benefit of members opposite: school funding goes up eight per cent this year, eight per cent next year, six per cent the year after that and four per cent in the final year of the forward estimates. As I have said before, we actually put $1.2 billion more into public schools—money that members opposite had cut out. In a sneaky pre-election trick they ripped $1.2 billion out of public schools in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and this government put it back.

There is more than $4 million more for public schools in the forward estimates. Public school funding goes up by some 28 per cent overall over the forward estimates. There are no cuts whatsoever. If members opposite think there have been cuts, I have a very simple challenge for them: put them back. If members opposite are not prepared to put back what they claim are cuts then there are no cuts, they are not particularly significant or, more importantly, yet again members opposite are simply being deceptive. They are simply telling fibs to the people of Australia yet again. Members opposite simply cannot be trusted. We know duplicity and deception are a way of life for members opposite.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence in the cacophony.

Mr ABBOTT: We all know that neither Prime Minister Gillard nor Prime Minister Rudd could trust the Leader of the Opposition, as we have had on our screens over the last couple of weeks.

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There are no props.

Mr ABBOTT: He backstabbed two prime ministers.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

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

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: If his own party could not trust him, neither can the Australian people.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister inform the House what steps the government is taking to make medicines more affordable not only to the people of Reid but throughout Australia?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:34): I thank the member for Reid, my good friend. I look forward to soon tramping again with him through the streets of Strathfield, which is a very important part of Sydney, and talking to his constituents about this important area, which is the cost of medications. Legislation that could be before the Senate as early tomorrow is designed to bring down the cost of over 2,000 brands of common medicines—medicines that treat high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart attack, heart conditions, osteoporosis and depression. Some of the most common medicines taken by millions of Australians are slated to reduce in price sharply, instantly after October 2016.

This is an extremely important component of our PBS reform measures. There are other key ingredients that introduce competition into the supply chain of medicines and, most importantly, save the government and taxpayers money. While we do not fund on the PBS
every medication, the ones we do are affordable for consumers. While we can keep the cost of those medicines coming down we save the budget money, and that is vitally important because over the next five years we expect to invest $50 billion into the PBS for life-changing and lifesaving drugs.

As I often say, when new drugs arrive and we commit through our PBAC process to list them on the PBS, new money for the budget does not arrive with them. The measures before the Senate this week are critical in making sure that that supply of medicines puts consumers first. The aspects I have talked about will make a difference to people's lives. By increasing the uptake of generic medicines—those that are off patent—we know that we can encourage consumers, with advice from their doctors and pharmacists, to choose the medication that is most affordable to them and most affordable to the taxpayer.

We look forward to Labor's bipartisanship on this issue. I know that, after the Auditor-General took a fairly sizeable swipe at them in the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement, the member for Ballarat said:

Labor ... looks forward to Minister Ley announcing significant savings ... Labor welcomes the Minister's commitment to exceeding this—

Labor's—

benchmark and delivering even greater savings for both patients and taxpayers.

I am very pleased that we have in fact delivered greater savings for both consumers and taxpayers and built in meaningful reforms into the future. I look forward to Labor's support in the Senate.

Education Funding

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports today about the government's proposal to have parents pay a school tax. If the states take up this government proposal, which the Prime Minister has praised today as 'creative thinking', how much more will Australian parents have to pay to send their children to school?

The SPEAKER: That question is dealing with hypotheticals. If the Leader of the Opposition would like to rephrase his question, he may do so.

Mr SHORTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is still to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports today about the government's proposal to have parents pay a school tax. Under the government's proposal, which the Prime Minister has praised today as 'creative thinking', how much more will Australian parents have to pay to send their children to school?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): Let me repeat again and again and again for the Leader of the Opposition, who is a slow listener if not a slow learner, the government's position, which is that there is no such proposal—none whatsoever, not today, not tomorrow, not ever. We are not proposing to means-test the parents of children attending public schools, full stop. It would not be a good idea, and we do not actually run public schools—principles of government 101.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on both sides.
Mr ABBOTT: States and territories run public schools. Not only is he running yet another mindless scare campaign but he does not understand the basics of our Federation: that states and territories run public schools. Get it, Bill. Get this: states and territories run public schools.

What we do do and will continue to do is fund public schools. I think it is the third time I have said it. Let me repeat it again for the slow-listening slow learner over there: this year, Commonwealth funding for schools goes up eight per cent; next year, it goes up eight per cent; the year after that, it goes up six per cent; the year after that, it goes up four per cent. Total funding for schools over the forward estimates goes up 28 per cent. That is a $4 billion increase. Our funding goes up and up and up every year.

If, as members opposite keep saying, there is some kind of $30 billion funding gap, they are absolutely required to tell us how they are going to meet that gap. If there is a $30 billion funding gap, will the opposition fill it should they become a government? If they are not prepared to say now, 'Yes, we will find $30 billion more for schools, just like we'll find $18 billion more for foreign aid and just like we'll find $50 billion more for public hospitals'—if they are not prepared to say here and now that they will find another $30 billion for public schools—this line of questioning is revealed as simply fraudulent.

Mr Randall interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Canning will desist.

Asylum Seekers

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister advise the House of the importance of strong border protection policies in stemming the flow of boat arrivals from Iran? Why is a consistent approach to this issue so important?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:42): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question, and I note her deep interest in this matter. The coalition government is resolutely committed to combating the ruthless criminal people-smuggling networks that have been the cause of many deaths at sea by overcrowding people on unseaworthy vessels heading for Australia. Under Labor's disastrous time in government, there were more than 1,200 deaths at sea—although the true scale of this tragedy is likely to be much higher, as a number of boats reportedly went missing.

The coalition government is dealing with the many legacies of Labor's failed border protection policies, under which there were around 52,000 people who tried to come to Australia via the people-smuggling trade. This includes over 13,200 Iranians, most of whom had flown to Indonesia before destroying their travel documents. Former Labor foreign minister Bob Carr said of Iranian asylum seekers: 'They are not fleeing persecution. They are seeking economic improvement.' Over 8,800 Iranians, predominantly male, remain in Australia—in detention centres or on bridging visas—with a further 660 Iranians in detention on Nauru and Manus Island.

One of the key outcomes of my visit to Iran in April was to seek the agreement of the Iranian government to consider the return of failed Iranian asylum seekers who came to Australia under Labor's watch. I can report that a delegation of senior Iranians have visited Canberra to commence negotiations, and I am advised that the discussions were constructive.
But I note that the member for Melbourne Ports has been grandstanding in the media yet again about our engagement with Iran. What a dishonest rant from the member for Melbourne Ports, because there is a glaring omission in his confected outrage. The member for Melbourne Ports fails to acknowledge he was part of the Labor caucus that weakened our border protection laws, and he is going to be part of a Labor caucus that would do it again if they ever got into government. Through the support of Labor members, including the member for Melbourne Ports, Labor's failed border protection policies —

**Mr Dreyfus interjecting**—

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

**Ms JULIE BISHOP:** saw the floodgates open to Iranian and other people-smuggling syndicates. That is why we are engaging with Iran. We are engaging with Iran to help fix up the mess left by Labor.

**Mr Champion interjecting**—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wakefield has been warned. One more and you'll leave.

**Ms JULIE BISHOP:** The coalition will not allow the criminal people-smuggling syndicates to determine our immigration policies. Labor cannot be trusted on border protection, Labor cannot be trusted on national security and Labor cannot be trusted to govern this country.

### Education Funding

**Mr BUTLER** (Port Adelaide) (14:44): My question, again, is to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister's department worked up options to cut Australian government funding to public schools, did the department model how much more Australian families would pay under the Prime Minister's secret plan to cut school funding?

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:45): All that the member for Port Adelaide is doing is exhibiting the hollowness and the hypocrisy of Labor's position by focusing on school funding when he is from the political party that cut school funding by $1.2 billion when they were in government and that are now attacking this current government for a so-called shortfall of $30 billion in the future. But they have not committed to putting that money back in—not the member for McMahon, not the member for Port Adelaide nor the member for Maribyrnong—and they have been asked about it on numerous occasions on radio and television. Reading the newspaper a couple of weeks ago, it was very clear that the member for Port Adelaide was using every possible—

**Mr Burke:** Madam Speaker, the question goes quite specifically to modelling within the department of the Prime Minister. The minister has not gone anywhere near that point.

**The SPEAKER:** I presume that the Manager of Opposition Business was trying to call a point of order on relevance.

**Mr Burke:** I have found that using the word does not help, Madam Speaker, so I thought I would just refer to it from a distance!

**The SPEAKER:** It is not going to help now either. Resume your seat.

**Mr PYNE:** Obviously, I am talking about school funding, which is very much relevant to the question I was asked by the member for Port Adelaide. It is passing strange that the Labor Party would want to talk about this subject because it talks again to economic credibility.
Where is this apparent $30 billion, this mythical $30 billion, in the future? Where are they going to find that money if indeed they ever commit to it? Where is the $18 billion for foreign aid? They rail against changes to foreign aid, but they do not actually come up with where the source of $18 billion in foreign aid is going to come from. They have a mythical $50 billion change to health funding for public hospitals, but they do not explain where the money is going to come from.

The coalition welcome the debate about economic credibility. We are very pleased to have the political subject back on economic credibility, because we are the party that started restoring the damage left by Labor when they lost office in 2013. For the second time in my political career, we have had to do this job. The first time was the Howard government—of which you, Madam Speaker, were a member. In 1996, we had to restore the finances of the Commonwealth, and did so. And then in 2007, Labor blew it again. In 2013, we were elected to fix the mess that Labor had left us and we are setting about doing just that.

Mr Abbott interjecting—

Mr PYNE: Of course, as the Prime Minister points out, I am fixing in education what needed to be fixed from the wreckage left by the Labor Party when they lost office. We are not only restoring funding to schools that Labor ripped out, that they trousered from public schools; we are also focusing on what matters, things like the national curriculum, teacher training, independent public schools and parent engagement. That is why every state and territory, Labor and Liberal, have signed up to the independent public schools initiative. I am pleased that Jay Weatherill, the Premier of South Australia, said today:

"We've been asking them to canvass the broader range of options. There's a broad debate going on about Commonwealth/state relations, which is a good thing."

I agree with the Premier of South Australia. (Time expired)

Workplace Relations

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (14:48): I have a much more serious question to the Minister for Education and Training. Will the minister update the House on the importance of maintaining—

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr HAWKE: It is a very serious question. You will want to know the answer. Will the minister update the House on the importance of maintaining transparency and accountability in the union movement? What stands in the way of achieving this vital reform?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:49): I do appreciate the question from the member for Mitchell because I know that he, like all local members on this side of the House, and probably the crossbenchers, takes accountability and transparency in the union movement very seriously.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield will remove himself from the chamber under 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: But we are not the only ones. I was very pleased yesterday to be watching Insiders from the Australia Broadcasting Corporation—we are very pleased that they run such
a great show—and I saw Barrie Cassidy manfully attempting to get out of the Leader of the Opposition a straight answer about his knowledge of what happened with Winslow Constructors in the 2000s when he was the state secretary of Victoria. He tried five times. About Winslow Constructors, he said:

What do you know about that?

He did not get an answer. He tried again:

But you can't remember whether this was done?

This was the so-called payments for union memberships. Again, a third time:

You must recall whether at any point—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs, on a point of order.

Mr Dreyfus: Yes, thank you very much.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Your point of order? Get on with it. You are wasting time.

Mr Dreyfus: I am waiting for some silence.

The SPEAKER: No, just on with your point of order.

Mr Dreyfus: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am surprised that you can hear me. But on the assumption that you can hear me, I want to raise a quite serious matter which is—

The SPEAKER: You are wasting time.

Mr Dreyfus: I am not wasting time. I am raising a serious point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is it?

Mr Dreyfus: arising from the practice as to how, when there is a royal commission of the Commonwealth of Australia—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Dreyfus: I have not yet—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You have raised the sub judice question and the answer is it is not covering royal commissions.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You just did.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

Mr PYNE: For a third attempt, the redoubtable Mr Cassidy attempted to ask the Leader of the Opposition:

You must though recall whether at any point companies paid union fees.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I refer you to page 189. Resume your seat.

Mr PYNE: Again, no answer.
Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I referred you to 189. Remove yourself under 94(a).

Mr PYNE: The fourth attempt:
… but we're not talking about that, we're talking here about the companies actually picking up the bill.

Bill still manages to obfuscate. The fifth attempt:
… but you do accept … that at some point companies would've paid the union fees.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I said remove yourself under 94(a).

Mr PYNE: He says:
It's entirely possible …

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: 189. Resume your seat.

Mr PYNE: So, finally, after five attempts from Mr Cassidy on the ABC, the Leader of the Opposition finally admits it is entirely possible that businesses like Winslow Constructors paid the union fees of their employees without actually knowing that they were joining up to the union. The Leader of Opposition has very serious questions to answer—

Mr Danby interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne Ports will desist.

Mr PYNE: about what he knew, when he knew it and why he will not answer the questions that we have put and Mr Cassidy has put.

More importantly, we will help out. Because I am a generous man, we will help him out. Tomorrow, we will debate the Registered Organisations Commission bill in this House and we will put it to a vote. The Leader of the Opposition will have the opportunity tomorrow to vote on the Registered Organisations Commission and show his bona fides on whether he supports honest union officials or whether he supports dodgy union officials. If Labor votes against the Registered Organisations Commission bill tomorrow, what they are indicating is that they support dodgy union officials and not honest ones. I will give him the chance tomorrow to put his money where his mouth is.

The SPEAKER: I refer the member for Perth to page 189 and she will resume her seat. As for the member for Isaacs, if he attempts to disrupt question time in a similar manner, he will leave immediately. It is in my discretion to say that you may remain for the rest of question time, but push it one more bit and you will be out.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:53): I advise that we have a parliamentary delegation from Timor-Leste led by the Hon. David Dias Ximenes. We make the entire delegation most welcome

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Education Funding

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:53): I join you in welcoming the delegation. My question is to the Prime Minister. The federation green paper states, 'The Commonwealth would no longer provide a funding contribution to government schools.' Can the Prime Minister outlined the options for states to make up the difference in the federation green paper?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:54): Usually after a series of questions to me, they do not ask me questions for months and months! I am very much enjoying the opportunity to be back on the very strong ground for the government of school education in this country. I find it remarkable that the Labor Party would want to be talking about this subject when they presided over the collapse of literacy and numeracy rates for our students when they were in government.

In the six years between 2007 to 2013, most of the state and territory governments were Labor. In fact, I think at one point every government was Labor. Over the last 10-year period, outcomes in literacy and numeracy for Australian students have crashed not just relative to our competitor countries but in absolute terms. The House might not remember, so I will remind them, that over that period spending on schools increased by 40 per cent. Spending increased and results declined under Labor's watch. That is because Labor never focused on the basic things that parents know make a difference in schools—teacher quality, for example. The OECD says that for Australia teacher quality is the No. 1 determinant of the outcomes for Australian students. More than any other country in the OECD, it is teacher quality. So what are we doing in the Abbott government? We are focusing on reforming teacher training at universities

Mr Burke: On the point of order, Madam Speaker: it is a straight answer, but not to the question that was asked. Do you reckon for the second half he could be relevant? Because that has not even approached it.

The SPEAKER: The question was very nearly out of order. The minister has the call.

Mr PYNE: As usual, you are being very generous to the opposition about their questions. I do appreciate the opportunity to talk about the Australian government's record of achievement in school education. Not only are we focusing on teacher training at university with the cooperation of all of the universities and the states and territories but we are also focusing on getting more autonomy in schools. That is because all of the research shows that the more autonomy is in schools, the better the outcomes are for students. Every state and territory has signed up to that.

We have reformed the national curriculum. From next year, primary school curriculum will be decluttered. Four subjects will be concertinaed into one subject; that means 'all put together' for those of you on the other side of the House who are not aware. There will be more room in the curriculum for teachers to focus on science, maths and English. We fixed school funding. We put the $1.2 billion back in. We are increasing school funding every year: eight per cent, eight per cent, six per cent and four per cent. That adds up to a 28 per cent increase over the next four years.
I am very proud of our record of achievement in school funding. I look forward to any more questions from the opposition on this subject.

Asylum Seekers

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on the success of the government’s turn-back policy in halting the people smuggling trade and stopping deaths at sea?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:58): I thank the member for his question. I thank him sincerely for his interest in making sure that he can support this government to secure our borders, which is exactly what this government is doing. When the Rudd government was elected in 2007, they inherited from the Howard government four people in detention, including no children. After Labor was elected, after only a matter of a few years and under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years, they had 1,992 children in detention. Today, because of the successes of our policies, we have been able to get that number down much closer to 100. We have been able to stop the boats flowing across the seas. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out earlier, some 52,000 people came on 800 boats during Labor’s watch. Not only did it result in an $11 billion blowout under the budget but it also tragically resulted in the deaths of 1,200 people at sea.

We have not had a successful people smuggling venture in over 300 days. At the heart of our success and at the heart of the success of Operation Sovereign Borders—and the Australian public get this—is the fact that we have been able to turn around boats when it is safe to do so. I am interested to see that the Labor Party still continues to tie itself in knots over this very important issue. They cannot yet decide whether or not they will Support Operation Sovereign Borders. They cannot yet decide whether or not they will support turn backs where it is safe to do so.

I am running a bit of a book on where it is the frontbench might be on this very important issue. Let us have a look at the Labor frontbench. The member for Greenway—she is against turn-backs. The member for Brand—he is for a turn-backs policy. The member for Blaxland—we saw on the weekend he is for a turn-backs policy. El Presidente of the Labor Party there, the member for Port Adelaide—he is against turn-backs. Mr Marles, my opposite, is for the turn-backs policy. The shadow Treasurer is against. The member for Sydney is against. The member for Watson is against turn-backs. The member for Isaacs is absolutely, adamantly against. The member from Jagajaga is against. The member for Grayndler advised on the weekend that he is against turn-backs, and the member for Gorton is against. That means that the tally so far, in the run-up to the national party conference, is 9-3. But there is an important one who has gone missing in action already—and it is true to say that, when it comes to Operation Sovereign Borders and having the guts to stop the boats, this Leader of the Opposition is missing in action. He is absolutely missing in action. What the Australian people voted this government in for at the last election was the commitment that we gave to them that we would stop the boats—and stop the boats we have. But let me assure the Australian public: if this opposition leader is elected to government at the next election, the boats and the deaths at sea will start again.
Education Funding

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister's department worked up options to cut Australian government funding to public schools, was there any consultation with the cabinet?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:01): I do appreciate the opportunity to answer this question again. I have the opportunity now to reveal that Labor, of course, have not committed any extra funds to schools over the course of the forward estimates or into the future. Do not just take my word for it, Madam Speaker, because the member for Adelaide, who is on maternity leave at the moment, was asked in March last year by David Lipson on Sky, 'But again I'll ask you, will Labor commit to take that funding for years 5 and 6 to the next election?' and the member for Adelaide said, 'But, David, it might not shock you to know this is not our election policy launch today.' That was in March last year.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. The question is asking about consultation with the cabinet. The minister has not gone anywhere near that point.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the minister to address the question.

Mr PYNE: Madam Speaker, I can address the question by telling you that, as the Minister for Education and Training, I talk to the Prime Minister about school education all the time—not just the Prime Minister; I talk to the Treasurer about it; I talk to all my colleagues about it, because the cabinet is absolutely gripped by what we are trying to do in school education, not only in school funding but in terms of more autonomy, in terms of reforming the national curriculum, teacher training and parental engagement, I am always talking to my colleagues and consulting with them about how we can improve the outcomes for students, building on the catastrophic record of the Labor Party when they were in office at state and federal level over the last 10 years.

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

Mr PYNE: I could not be more relevant. I am dealing directly with consultation in the government around the cabinet.

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a different point of order?

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, if the answer is no, he should just say that and sit down.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat and not abuse the standing orders!

Mr PYNE: What we are seeing here, of course, is an attempt by the Manager of Opposition Business to stop the quotes from the member for Adelaide being read out. David Lipson went on to say: 'Isn't it a bit hollow, though, to call on the government to do that if you're not committed to doing it yourself?' It is a very good question. The member for Adelaide said, 'Well, obviously we'll make a budget reply in a few weeks time.' Well, they did that in 2014. It did not mention school funding. They had another budget reply this year, in 2015—no mention of school funding. The shadow Treasurer has been asked about it time and time again and not committed to any extra funding for schools. The member for Port Adelaide was asked about it by the union and the Labor states and territories in The Australian a couple
of weeks ago, in a very good story by Sarah Martin from The Australian, from our great state of South Australia. Again, he obfuscated. The Leader of the Opposition has been asked about it by Neil Mitchell on radio. He refuses to commit to it. So we are seeing the hollowness of Labor's campaign, the hypocrisy of their latest scare campaign, demanding of the government something they will not commit to themselves, whereas we are increasing funding. We are increasing funding over the next four years, and students will be the better for it, but they will also be the better for us focusing on the basics that matter.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Will the minister please inform the House of steps the government is making to make pensions fairer and more sustainable for all Australians but especially those pensioners in my electorate of Petrie?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (15:05): I thank the member for Petrie for his question. We had the opportunity recently to be at the Kurrajong Sanctuary retirement village in Burpengary and to discuss these very issues. What I was able to tell them was what we were able to legislate in the House today—that we are increasing the pension for those with a low and moderate level of assets. Those pensioners in Petrie will join 170,000 others around the country who will get an increase in their pension from 1 January of $30 a fortnight, and more than 90 per cent of pensioners will be either unaffected or will have an increase in their pension as a result of the measures that we are introducing.

It is interesting to note that those opposite today voted against a pension increase for those with a low and modest level of assets. But it was not only that that happened, because we read in The Australian today that, as Labor tossed and turned over these issues, the dynamic duo that now forms their economic team, the member for McMahon and the member for Watson, were rolled in the shadow ERC over this. So the special brand of genius that they both brought to the Immigration portfolio they have brought to their economic team. If they cannot manage to run an argument in the shadow ERC, how can they pretend to the Australian people they could run one in the actual ERC?

What has also happened is that they have created a policy vacuum opposite, Madam Speaker, and that policy vacuum has been filled by the Australian Greens, would you believe it? The vacuum of policy credibility was created by those opposite, and the Australian Greens have had to enter that vacuum. But there is also good news for the constituents in Petrie because we are fixing the budget mess that was left by those opposite, and this measure, the single-largest saving measure, will pass the other place. Those opposite in the debate were wondering why this was now necessary.

The member for Lilley would know, because he is the one who gifted us the fiscal mess. I noticed that the member for Lilley was with Dasher this morning down at Aussies. Maybe they were rehearsing a re-enactment for episode 4! But they are in denial about the fact that they have created this policy vacuum and the Greens have filled it. If they are very serious about their opposition to the bill that they voted against today, they can fix it. They can commit to reverse this measure, because it does not come in until 1 January 2017. If they will
not do that, we know that this is a hollow commitment from a hollow man hollowing out the soul of the Labor Party.

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

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions in Writing

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (15:08): Madam Speaker, in accordance with standing order 105(b), I ask that you write to the Minister for Defence seeking reasons for the delay in answering a question in writing. The relevant question appears as number 720 on the Notice Paper.

The SPEAKER (15:08): I will so write.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:08): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings. I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:


Debate adjourned.

BILLS

Private Health Insurance (Prudential Supervision) Bill 2015
Private Health Insurance (Prudential Supervision) (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015
Private Health Insurance Supervisory Levy Imposition Bill 2015
Private Health Insurance (Risk Equalisation Levy) Amendment Bill 2015
Private Health Insurance (Collapsed Insurer Levy) Amendment Bill 2015
Energy Grants and Other Legislation Amendment (Ethanol and Biodiesel) Bill 2015

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Approval of Work

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:10): 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: Multi-User Barge Ramp Facility—East Arm Darwin, Northern Territory.

As I advised the House when referring this project to the Public Works Committee, it is proposed that the Department of Defence and the Northern Territory government's Land Development Corporation construct a hardened barge ramp, a marshalling area located adjacent to the ramp and a roadway to link the barge ramp to the existing staging area at East Arm Port, Darwin, in the Northern Territory. The Land Development Corporation will provide existing land and road access infrastructure. The multi-user barge ramp facility will be owned by the Land Development Corporation and situated on its property. The Defence contribution is capped at $18.3 million, which is inclusive of $2.2 million for the development phase of the project and $16.1 million for the construction phase. The project will meet an important defence capability requirement for our amphibious landing craft, particularly in providing the Royal Australian Navy with logistic support capability of the new landing helicopter docks while providing the Northern Territory government with a new logistics asset which will enhance Darwin's expanding commercial logistics infrastructure.

The Land Development Corporation and Defence have reached an in-principle agreement which will form a deed of licence to address access rights for Defence, Defence's funding contribution, and appropriate governance and maintenance arrangements. The committee has conducted an inquiry and is of the view that the project signifies value for money for the Commonwealth and constitutes a project that is fit for purpose and expedient to carry out.

On behalf of the government I thank the committee for once again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval, Defence will finalise the deed of licence agreement. Construction is expected to begin in late 2015 and should be completed by mid-2016. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Public Works Committee
Approval of Work

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:12): 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: Residential accommodation and staff amenities at the Australian Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan.

As I advised the House when referring this project to the Public Works Committee, it is proposed that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade undertake a range of works on residential accommodation and staff amenities at the Australian embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. This referral was made at the very end of the autumn sittings of parliament, and I would like to acknowledge the committee's efforts to conduct an expeditious and sensitive inquiry into the project. The proposed works that were the subject of the committee's report will, subject to parliamentary approval, commence later this year. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.
Public Works Committee
Approval of Work

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:13): 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: The Cox Peninsula Remediation Project.

As I advised the House when referring this project to the Public Works Committee, the Department of Finance proposes to undertake remediation of contamination on sections 32, 34 and 41 on the Cox Peninsula, Northern Territory.

The Commonwealth currently controls and manages contaminated landholdings on the Cox Peninsula, which is the subject of the long-standing Kenbi land claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. The Commonwealth has undertaken to relinquish sites covered by the claim and has an obligation to remediate the land under the polluter-pays principle, to ensure that those who access the site do so without risk to their health.

The remediation works will be conducted over four years and, due to the complex nature of the works and distinct Northern Territory weather patterns, will include the installation of an underground containment cell on section 34, specifically designed to house non-leachable materials. Non-contaminated material will be recycled as appropriate at existing facilities in the Northern Territory.

The project will create opportunities for Indigenous participation and employment. The department will ensure that a range of employment and training positions are available to local Indigenous residents, where possible. Our commitment to undertaking these remediation works is evidence of the Commonwealth’s commitment to seeing this long-running land claim resolved. Once remediation is completed the land is to be transferred progressively to the traditional owners.

The Public Works Committee has conducted an inquiry into the project and concluded that it is expedient that the remediation works be carried out. On behalf of the government I would like to thank the committee for once again undertaking a rigorous inquiry. I am delighted that the committee had the opportunity to visit the Cox Peninsula to see firsthand the need for the works. The committee has asked that the Department of Finance provide annual reports on the progress of the remediation works, and the department will certainly do so.

Often, when moving these motions, I am usually concerned with projects to be delivered by other portfolios and so I am pleased on this occasion to be the minister responsible for the project as well as for this motion. In its report, the committee commended officials from the Department of Finance and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for the excellent work they have done in getting the project to this point and for the close collaboration between the two departments. I wholeheartedly endorse those comments and I add my own thanks to the officials involved for their efforts. I particularly want to acknowledge the work done by Tooey Elliott and Adrian Kirk in getting the project to this point.
Subject to the successful passage of this motion, the remediation project is expected to commence later this year and to be completed by 2018. With that, I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:17): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: OneSKY Perth Air Traffic Services Centre—Modernisation Works.

Airservices Australia and the Department of Defence are planning to replace their existing air traffic control systems with the new civil-military air traffic management system being delivered under the OneSKY project to provide a common platform for provision of air traffic control in both civilian- and military-controlled airspace.

To achieve this outcome, Airservices is proposing to refurbish existing facilities in Perth, Western Australia, to modernise the facility and to upgrade the existing the supporting infrastructure to enable delivery of the new system. This is in addition to works in Melbourne and Brisbane, which I referred to the Public Works Committee for inquiry just last week.

Under the OneSKY project, the Perth air traffic management system will provide civilian and military air traffic services for Perth airport and the nearby Royal Australian Air Force Base Pearce, and will become a key component of a national disaster recovery and business resumption capability in Australia.

The current Perth air traffic management system facility has been in operation since the late 1990s. Today, the building houses the civil and military air traffic controllers, separately managing arrivals and departures into Perth and Pearce, and includes both an operations centre and an equipment room. The proposed works include a new plant room, an upgrade and reconfiguration of the existing buildings and infrastructure and an upgrade to the fire protection system.

The proposal also includes upgrades to the existing site security systems, together with a closed-circuit television system and a new perimeter fence. The project is valued at $23.1 million, excluding GST. These costs include all development and delivery costs, management and design fees, construction costs, fittings, contingencies and an allowance for escalation.

Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed works are scheduled to commence in late 2015, with a staged practical completion and commissioning in late 2016. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:19): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Campbell Barracks Redevelopment Project, Swanbourne, Western Australia.
The Department of Defence is proposing to construct new, modern, adaptive and purpose-built facilities and improved infrastructure to support the requirements of the Special Air Service Regiment in Campbell Barracks at Swanbourne in Western Australia.

The existing SASR facilities at Campbell Barracks are outdated and not to a standard which will ensure the SASR can efficiently manage a high level of operational readiness, capability and ability to meet Defence requirements. Many of the buildings are at the end of their design life, do not meet relevant Building Code standards and have inherent building, fire compliance and work health and safety issues. These facilities are unnecessarily eroding Defence's facility operations budget.

The redevelopment project will replace ageing and obsolete facilities with an infrastructure solution which will enable the SASR to maintain and develop its current operational capabilities efficiently and effectively. The project will provide a new operations precinct, which includes working accommodation, new and refurbished operational support squadron facilities, a new entry precinct and a fibre transmission facility. The project will deliver upgraded facilities, services and infrastructure and demolition of 34 obsolete facilities.

The project is valued at an estimated $223.6 million, excluding GST. It includes the construction costs, management and design fees, furniture, information and communications technology, fittings and equipment and contingencies and escalation allowances. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to begin in early 2016 and to be completed by late 2018. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate Amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 2), omit the table item, substitute:

2 Schedule 1

20 June 2015

20 June 2015

(2) Schedule 1, page 3 (line 1) to page 14 (line 7), omit the Schedule, substitute:

Schedule 1—Energy supplement replacing seniors supplement

Part 1—Main amendments

Social Security Act 1991

1 Subparagraph 8(8)(y)(viib)

Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

2 Subsection 23(1) (definition of seniors supplement)

Repeal the definition.

3 Paragraph 916D(3)(c)

Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

4 Paragraph 1061R(d)
Omit "seniors supplement under this Act or the Veterans' Entitlements Act", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of this Act or Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act".

5 Paragraph 1061T(2)(b)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B".

6 Paragraph 1061TA(2)(b)
Omit "seniors supplement under the Veterans' Entitlements Act", substitute "energy supplement under Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act".

7 Part 2.25B
Repeal the Part, substitute:

Part 2.25B—Energy supplement
Division 1—Qualification and payability
1061U Qualification for energy supplement
A person is qualified for energy supplement if the person is the holder of a seniors health card.

1061UA When energy supplement is payable
(1) Energy supplement is payable to a person in relation to each day on which the person is qualified for the supplement.

(2) However, energy supplement is not payable to the person in relation to a day if:
   (a) before that day:
      (i) the person had elected not to be covered by this Part; and
      (ii) that election had not been withdrawn; or
   (b) subsection 55(5) (failing to nominate a bank account) of the Administration Act applies to the person.

Division 2—Rate of energy supplement
1061UB Rate of energy supplement
(1) If subsection (2) applies to the person on a day, the person's daily rate of energy supplement, for that day, is 1/364 of the amount worked out using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Person's family situation</th>
<th>Amount of energy supplement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not a member of a couple</td>
<td>$366.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>$275.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Member of an illness separated couple</td>
<td>$366.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Member of a respite care couple</td>
<td>$366.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Partnered (partner in gaol)</td>
<td>$366.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) This subsection applies to a person on a day if on that day the person is residing in Australia and either:
   (a) is in Australia; or
   (b) is temporarily absent from Australia and has been so for a continuous period not exceeding 6 weeks.

8 Section 1190 (note)
Omit "the rate of seniors supplement (see section 1061UB) and".

Social Security (Administration) Act 1999

9 Section 12D (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

12D Energy supplement

10 Section 12D
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

11 Section 48B (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

48B Payment of energy supplement

12 Subsection 48B(1)

13 Subsection 48B(2)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

14 Paragraph 48B(3)(a)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

15 Subsection 48B(4) (paragraph (a) of the definition of instalment period)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

16 Subsection 48B(4) (note to paragraph (a) of the definition of instalment period)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

17 Subparagraphs 66A(2)(a)(i) and (3)(a)(i)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

18 Subsection 68(1)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

19 Subsection 69(1)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

20 Paragraph 75(1)(b)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

21 Section 78A
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

22 Section 90A
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

23 Section 123A (paragraph (e) of the definition of relevant payment)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the 1991 Act".

24 Saving and transitional provisions

(1) Paragraph 916D(3)(c) of the Social Security Act 1991 applies on and after the commencement of this item as if a reference in that paragraph to energy supplement included a reference to seniors supplement.

(2) Despite the amendments made by items 7 and 12 to 16, Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act 1991, and section 48B of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999, as in force immediately before the commencement of this item, continue to apply on and after that commencement in relation to an instalment period ending before that commencement.
(3) An election referred to in subparagraph 1061UA(2)(a)(i) of the Social Security Act 1991 that was in force immediately before the commencement of this item continues in force on and after that commencement.

Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986

25 Paragraph 5H(8)(gb)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

26 Subsection 5Q(1) (definition of seniors supplement)
Repeal the definition.

27 Section 59A (note 1)
Omit "Note 1", substitute "Note".

28 Section 59A (note 1)
Omit "and the rate of seniors supplement (see section 118PB)".

29 Section 59A (note 2)
Repeal the note.

30 Subsection 62E(1) (note 1)
Repeal the note.

31 Subsection 62E(1) (note 2)
Omit "Note 2", substitute "Note".

32 Paragraph 118B(3)(c)
Omit "seniors supplement under this Act or the Social Security Act", substitute "energy supplement under Part VIIAD of this Act or Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act".

33 Part VIIAD (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:
Part VIIAD—Energy supplement

34 Section 118P (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:
118P Eligibility for energy supplement

35 Subsection 118P(1)
Omit "for seniors supplement", substitute "for energy supplement".

36 Subparagraph 118P(1)(b)(iv)
Repeal the subparagraph, substitute:
(iv) energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act.

37 Subsection 118P(2)
Omit "for seniors supplement", substitute "for energy supplement".

38 Subparagraph 118P(2)(d)(iv)
Repeal the subparagraph, substitute:
(iv) energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act.

39 Section 118PA (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:
118PA When energy supplement is payable

______________________________
CHAMBER
40 Subsection 118PA(1)
Omit "Seniors supplement", substitute "Energy supplement".

41 Subsection 118PA(2)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement".

42 Division 2 of Part VIIAD (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

Division 2—Rate of energy supplement

43 Section 118PB (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

118PB Rate of energy supplement

44 Subsections 118PB(1) and (1A)
Repeal the subsections, substitute:

(1) If subsection (2) applies to the person on a day, the person's daily rate of energy supplement, for that day, is 1/364 of the amount worked out using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy supplement Item</th>
<th>Person’s family situation</th>
<th>Amount of energy supplement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Member of a respite care couple</td>
<td>$366.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For member of a couple, partnered, illness separated couple and respite care couple see subsections 5E(1) and (5) and 5R(5) and (6) respectively.

45 Subsection 118PB(2) (heading)
Repeal the heading.

46 Division 3 of Part VIIAD
Repeal the Division, substitute:

Division 3—Payment of energy supplement

118PC Payment of energy supplement

(1) Energy supplement under this Part is to be paid by instalments.

(2) An instalment of energy supplement is to be paid to a person as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of an instalment period.

(3) The amount of the instalment is worked out by:

(a) working out the person's amount of energy supplement for each day in the instalment period (using the daily rate of the supplement for that day); and

(b) adding up the amounts resulting from paragraph (a).

(4) In this section:

*instalment period* means a period:

(a) in relation to each day of which energy supplement is payable to the person; and

Note: For when energy supplement is payable to the person, see section 118PA.

(b) that either begins on any 20 March, 20 June, 20 September or 20 December or does not include any such day; and
(c) that either ends on any 19 March, 19 June, 19 September or 19 December or does not include any such day; and
   (d) that is not included in a longer instalment period.

47 Subsections 122A(1A) and (1C)
Omit "seniors supplement", substitute "energy supplement under Part VIIAD".

48 Saving and transitional provisions
(1) Despite the amendments made by items 33 to 46, Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, as in force immediately before the commencement of this item, continues to apply on and after that commencement in relation to an instalment period ending before that commencement.

(2) An election referred to in subparagraph 118PA(2)(a)(i) of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 that was in force immediately before the commencement of this item continues in force on and after that commencement.

Part 2—Consequential amendments

Income Tax Assessment Act 1997

49 Section 52-10 (table item 22B.1)

50 Section 52-40 (table item 22B)
Omit "Seniors supplement", substitute "Energy supplement".

51 Section 52-65 (table item 16A.1)
Omit "Seniors supplement", substitute "Energy supplement under Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986".

52 Section 52-75 (table item 16A)
Omit "Seniors supplement", substitute "Energy supplement".

53 Saving provision
Despite the amendments of sections 52-10 and 52-65 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 made by this Schedule, item 22B.1 of the table in section 52-10 of that Act, and item 16A.1 of the table in section 52-65 of that Act, as in force immediately before the commencement of this item, continue to apply on and after that commencement in relation to a payment of seniors supplement made before, on or after that commencement.

Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004

54 Paragraph 222(5)(d)
Repeal the paragraph, substitute:
   (d) energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act 1991 or Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986; or

55 Paragraph 246(4)(d)
Repeal the paragraph, substitute:
   (d) energy supplement under Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act 1991 or Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986; or

Part 3—Transitional provisions

56 Transitional provision—seniors supplement

CHAMBER
If a person has been paid seniors supplement under Part 2.25B of the Social Security Act 1991 or Part VIIAD of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 in relation to a day on or after 20 June 2015 and before 20 September 2015, then the amendments made by this Schedule do not apply in relation to the person in relation to that day.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:22): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015
Consideration in Detail

Debate resumed.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:23): I am pleased to continue my remarks from earlier today about the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015 and government amendments that we have already circulated. These amendments clarify and enhance the decision-making and accountability mechanisms to be used in the disbursement of funds from the MRFF. They reflect the policy approach already announced, but for public assurance the government is very willing to insert arrangements into the legislation that were originally intended to be implemented administratively. By shifting this detail into the legislation, the government can disabuse concerns raised by the opposition that disbursements from the fund may lack sufficient governance or expert leadership. The amendments ensure robust decision making and strong accountability mechanisms.

In summary, the amendments to increase transparency in the decision-making process include the requirements for an expert Australian medical research advisory board, setting out the advisory board's role, governance and reporting arrangements; an Australian medical research and innovation strategy; Australian medical research and innovation priorities; and decision-making mechanisms for the disbursement of funds from the MRFF to be reliant upon the strategy and the priorities.

As Australia's pre-eminent health and medical research body, the NHMRC has a vital contribution to make to the proposed arrangements and will continue to do so, contrary to the claims of the opposition. The independent Australian medical research advisory board that I will appoint will have eight members, including the CEO of NHMRC. The board will collectively possess expertise in medical research, policy relating to health systems, management of health services, medical innovation, financing and investment, and commercialisation. The role of the advisory board will be to set the Australian medical research and innovation strategy every five years and to determine the priorities arising from this strategy every two years. The Australian medical research and innovation strategy will ensure that a coherent and consistent approach is adopted in the funding of medical research and medical innovation from the MRFF over a five-year period.

The strategy determined by the advisory board must take into account the national strategy prepared by the NHMRC, and it should also refer to the government's science and research priorities. The priorities will inform the proposals for disbursement that I will take to cabinet each year for decision through the budget process. The government's decisions on MRFF disbursements will be accountable decisions—accountable to parliament in biennial reports.
The MRFF represents a major injection of new funds into the medical research sector, adding to the research funding allocated by the NHMRC through the Medical Research Endowment Account. The MRFF and MREA will operate alongside each other and in clear sight of each other. My biennial reports to the parliament will disclose how the spending profile for the MRFF adds to other categories of Commonwealth funding on medical research and innovation, to demonstrate that the new fund builds upon existing funding. That is another important safeguard in the amendments that will give public confidence around assurances that the government has already given.

The proposed amendments also clarify the finance minister's role. The finance minister is not the decision maker of funds from the MRFF, contrary to what the opposition had thought during the second reading debate. Debits from the MRFF special account will only be made by the finance minister after being required to do so by the health minister. The role of the finance minister merely credits amounts between accounts as a bursar of funds, acting on instruction of the health minister. What we are putting in legislation today has been the government's intention all along, and public statements by my colleagues and I have indicated as much. However, I trust that bringing this additional clarity into the legislation will allay the concerns that have been raised about this vital initiative.

I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (15:27): I thank the minister for explaining those amendments that have now been circulated and moved in her name. But the question of detail about how these funds will be disbursed and the degree of public confidence and sector confidence that there will be around the disbursement of these funds is not mere detail—it is utterly central to the reputation of the health and medical research sector in Australia. We will not oppose these amendments, although we see them as second-class. We think the amendments that we moved and failed to pass in the House, which would see these funds go through the Medical Research Endowment Account and therefore be distributed according to normal NHMRC processes, are by and away the better alternative, but we recognise that we did not have the numbers in the House to get those through. Madam Speaker, I know that you are very familiar with the medical research sector in Sydney; can I say that it is one of the great sectors in Australia. Its reputation goes back to 1936, when Billy Hughes, who was then the Minister for Health—a man not normally praised on this side of the House—created the National Health and Medical Research Council, with the ambition for Australia to 'punch above its weight', using Billy Hughes's words. Since that time, medical and health researchers from Australia have well and truly punched above their weight. In Labor's view, one of the reasons for that is that people in Australia and people around the world have been able to have confidence about the peer review and competitive nature of the NHMRC funding process; applications for funding to conduct medical research funded through the NHMRC, funded by the Commonwealth taxpayer, is competitive and peer reviewed and has proper oversight.

These amendments certainly improve this bill from the original form, but we still take the view that the better way for this to proceed would be for the funds that are able to be collected by the government—however they do that—be put through the MREA, the medical research endowment account, subject to those age-old processes that have helped underpin the extraordinary reputation that the Australian health and medical research sector has.
We will not oppose the amendments in this House but, as the minister knows, a Senate inquiry has just commenced. I am advised that we will have some public hearings over the course of July where these issues will be able to be fleshed out a little bit more, and they will then be subject to further debate in the Senate.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (15:30): I endorse the comments made by the member for Port Adelaide. We are currently looking at a range of areas where the current government appears to be taking out the process where we have independent peer review and assessment.

I would just like to ask the minister a question: where do you see the work that is being done on data linkage between the Commonwealth and the state going with this medical research fund? It is absolutely critical that we have in place a mechanism that enables the PBS and the Medicare data to be linked, with anonymous identifiers, to the hospital records. Without the ability to bring the Commonwealth and state datasets together, we are actually going to be losing the raw material from of much of this medical research.

I want to take this opportunity to ask the minister: has she been dealing with this issue? There was a brief period where we did have linkage and we had extraordinary results emerging. Since then, we had a pull-back by the Commonwealth. I understand the Commonwealth has now made some slight forays, and they have said that for short-term projects they would allow this data linkage. But, if we are serious about medical research, we do need to get both sets of data together in order to have insight into illness and wellbeing in Australia. Minister, can you shed some light on this?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:33): The subject matter that the member for Perth has raised is not the subject matter of this bill at all. This is a piece of finance legislation that sets up the Medical Research Future Fund. It is important that we actually get this fund set up. I do not appreciate the delays that Labor has initiated along the way, or Labor's comments about a Senate inquiry and further huff and puff about what we are doing—when we all know very clearly what we are doing.

The member for Perth talks about data and data linkages, and that is actually a good subject for discussion and I am happy to have an offline conversation with her. I make a couple of points, however, in response to her comments. There is enormous analytical capability around the data that is collected through the MBS and PBS. We certainly acknowledge that. I know that the secretary of my department is very focused on the ability of the Department of Health to correctly and appropriately bring to bear the intelligence around this analysis. So I look forward to a ramping up of that, as we go forward.

The other point I would make is that, in correcting and replacing Labor's failed eHealth Record with the coalition's myHealth Record, a system that will be opt-out not opt-in, it will initiate the collection of an enormous amount of data from each and every Australian through their personal electronic health record. I expect that well over 95 per cent of Australians, if not more, will have this health record. You can of course choose to opt out if you wish to. That will provide an enormous amount of data that can be mined appropriately, with due privacy considerations, at a time that makes sense for medical research.

As always, I thank members of this parliament who take an interest in medical research. I would urge the member for Perth to urge her own side to pass this bill through the Senate expeditiously.
Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

**Third Reading**

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:35): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Medical Research Future Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.
Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:37): by leave—I move
government amendment (1):

1A Schedule 3, page 19 (after line 8), after item 1, insert:

1A Sections 32D and 32E

Omit "Legislative Instruments Act 2003" (wherever occurring), substitute "Legislation Act 2003".
Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:38): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015

Second Reading

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

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:38): I am so pleased that the gallery is full of young people, who will be eventually seeking their first position, their first employment opportunity. We always welcome young people to the centre of democracy in this nation. It is certainly appropriate that they are here
for the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015.

The coalition, I need to assure those young people in the gallery, is providing strong and necessary support to help young job seekers get off welfare and into work. This legislation will introduce a revised four-week waiting period for young people accessing youth income support. It replaces the measure in last year's budget, which related to a six-month waiting period for those under 30 years of age. The message remains the same: you do not get to lean on the taxpayer if you are not prepared to have a go. You are not going to get a hand up or a handout if you are not prepared to have a go. It is so important that under the new measures in this bill, young people under the age of 25 have to wait four weeks in addition to the regular one-week waiting period before they can access what will be youth allowance up to the age of 25.

We want to send a strong message but we also want to make sure that that safety net is in place. So there is the hand up, there is the handout but you have to be prepared to have a go. We want to send a strong message which encourages our young people into work when they are job ready so they do not have the option of walking from the school gate and straight through the front door of the local Centrelink office.

The government wants our young people to know that choosing welfare is not a career choice. Minister Morrison has made it clearly known that we want young people to make the decision to work and that is why in this year's budget we are implementing a strategy to assist them. We are promoting a strong work-first approach amongst early school leavers. We are committed to helping young Australians overcome challenges and the barriers to participating in work and study. I cannot emphasise enough the handout is still there, the hand-up is still there but you have to be prepared to have a go.

In this year's budget, the coalition announced a $330-million youth employment strategy to help job seekers improve their chances of finding and keeping a job. It includes a number of measures to provide intensive support to vulnerable young people in the community, and there are genuine vulnerable young people in our communities—those who have mental health concerns, those who may have been long-term unemployed as well as young migrants. We are investing in this year's budget through the right mix of services to provide the opportunity to more young people to be job ready, to gain a job and, most importantly, to stay in a job.

This country wants to see young people in work and is encouraging them to work. What we are asking of our young people is perfectly realistic and is the process any unemployed person would be required to do in seeking to gain employment—that is, get a curriculum vitae together, work with a jobactive provider, apply for jobs, take employment opportunities which arise. That is certainly relevant in regional Australia because sometimes the perfect job that you want will not be there first time. It will not be there when you actually want it and sometimes you may have to get into the car and drive to the next town, drive to the next region to take that job. I encourage those young people out there listening is to take that job because you never know what door that might open.

This year's budget has a strong focus on helping more job seekers, especially young job seekers, to find employment. As part of the coalition's Growing Jobs and Small Business package, the cornerstone of the May budget, the Assistant Minister for Employment, the
member for Cowper, announced a $330-million youth employment strategy to help young jobseekers improve their chances of finding and most importantly, retaining that job. Under the government's strategy, more than 45,000 young jobseekers will benefit annually to improve their employment prospects, to improve their chances of getting that job and retaining that job.

We recognise that in some parts of the country youth unemployment is double or triple the unemployment rate hovering around six per cent—that is, regional Australia and the western suburbs of our capital cities. By investing $330 million through new programs in the youth employment strategy, we are trying to give our young people an improved chance of finding a suitable job and it includes: $212 million for a new youth transition to work program; $106 million for intensive support to help those young job seekers at high risk of unemployment; $14 million to ensure early school leavers are suitably engaged in further study or work. It is why we have invested $5.5 billion in our small business package. The minister for small business continually pushes that point in question time, in parliament and right out in our communities because it is through small business where the vast amount of the jobs of the future will indeed come from.

We are taking the pressure off small business through tax cuts—the lowest company tax rate since 1967, down by 1.5 per cent to 28.5 per cent—and the immediate deductible asset write-offs and by slashing red tape. The 2015 budget is designed to lift business confidence in this country, and it is doing just that. It is doing just that in the Riverina. I am sure it is doing that in Maranoa. It is designed to grow the economy, to promote investment which will create and drive more employment opportunities, particularly—especially—for young people.

What is clear of the opposition is that Labor does not have a plan to tackle youth unemployment. In his 14 May budget-in-reply speech, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Maribyrnong, did not mention—would you believe it?—a single new idea to help young job seekers and address youth unemployment. It used to be the farmers that were left out of the budget speeches and the budget-in-reply speech. Now it is the young unemployed. Not one practical measure was uttered by the member for Maribyrnong—not one. And, over the past year, Labor has stumped up just a measly $21 million through its Youth Jobs Connect program, which will assist only 3,000 job seekers.

The contrast between the opposition and the government could not be more stark. The coalition's Jobs and Small Business package will help 15 times the number of people and has 15 times the amount of funding that Labor has committed to tackle the youth jobless situation. If the Leader of the Opposition were serious about addressing youth unemployment, getting more young people into work, he would work constructively and support the government's plan to help job seekers move from welfare into work.

The coalition has listened to what people had to say following the measure introduced last year. We listened. We consulted closely. We needed to. The feedback they provided was that six months is too long—it was; it was way too long—and that 30 years is too high. We consulted. We did something that we never heard of in six years under Labor. Labor just came in and—wham, bam—threw out the policies, with no consultation with the community and no consultation with stakeholders. But we listened. And certainly we discovered—we were told in no uncertain manner—that six months is too long and that 30 years is too high. So we
changed the policy. We understand that some young job seekers need a bit of extra help in order to get their foot in the door.

The message they sent is that we should be investing more to help young people into work, and that is what we are doing. Accordingly, that is what this bill seeks to do. Through the measures in this bill, the government is responding to each of the concerns which have been raised, supporting our young people to gain the experience and the skills they need to find sustainable employment and sending the very clear message that Centrelink is not a one-stop shop for our young people. We want people out of Centrelink. We want young people going into jobs, and we are putting the necessary mechanisms and processes in place to enable them to do just that. It is not the sort of country we want to run and not the sort of society we want to lead where young people go straight from school and straight in the Centrelink front door. We want to encourage Australians into work, particularly those young people, and we want to send the right message to young Australians.

The government proudly has a fully funded plan to grow the economy and to create opportunities for the future. When I say 'fully funded', how important is it that we absolutely know where the money is going to come from in the forward estimates to ensure that these plans work? That is another thing that, under Labor, we saw so little of. They were big on ideas but very, very short on delivery—certainly very short on ensuring that, even in the forward estimates, even beyond the forward estimates, they had the money to be able to make sure that their policies were fully funded. So much of it was predicated on the mining tax, on realising the rivers of gold that were supposed to come from that particular measure, and we all know what a flop that was.

When I speak of ideas, this was supposed to be Labor's year of ideas. The Labor Party has failed to develop—I am sad to say—any meaningful plan to tackle youth unemployment. But there is one person in this place, aside from all of those on this side of the House, who is helping to tackle unemployment, particularly among youth, and that is the member for Cowper, the Assistant Minister for Employment, the Deputy Leader of the House. He has backed the Jobs and Small Business package. It was announced in the budget. He has continually pushed it out in the electorate, out in the nation. If anybody knows the value of it, it is the member for Cowper. Fifteen times the people and 15 times the amount of funding that Labor has committed to tackling youth unemployment are in that measure.

In a 14 May media release—coincidentally, on the same day that the member for Maribyrnong gave his ill-fated budget-in-reply speech—the member for Cowper said:

"The Abbott Government's Youth Employment Strategy provides $330 million to help young job seekers improve their chances of finding and keeping a job," …

"In stark contrast, Labor has no plan to tackle youth unemployment.

"In the past 12 months they have had a couple of talk-fests and put a measly $21 million on the table to help only 3,000 young people.

"Under the Coalition's Youth Employment Strategy the Government is spending $330 million to help around 45,000 young job seekers per annum to improve their job prospects.

I am not just quoting him because he is a fellow National Party member. I am quoting him because he is right. The member for Cowper, the Assistant Minister for Employment, wants to see young people in jobs because young people are our future. I know that in Cowper, unfortunately, young people are overrepresented on the unemployment queues. I know that
the minister does not have just a macro idea of looking at this; he is also very engaged in his own local electorate.

Labor have showed that they lack a complete understanding of the budget, of sensible financial management and certainly, in this regard, of the needs of young job seekers. We can go to a table which shows that, in Labor’s year of ideas on youth unemployment, the effects could not be more stark. On the coalition side we have $6.8 billion for jobactive. We have $1.2 billion for wage subsidies. We have $212 million for youth transition to work. We have $106 million for intensive support for vulnerable job seekers. We have $18.3 million for the National Work Experience program. We have $14 million for early school leavers. And what do we have on the opposite side? What do we have from Labor in the year of big ideas, the year of ideas on youth unemployment? We have two talkfests and $21 million.

We are over talkfests. The young people of Australia want to know that the adults are in charge, that the people entrusted with Treasury and with government, the people who were given support in September 2013, are getting on with the job of helping them into work. We want to help people who are transitioning or people who are either intergenerationally unemployed or have left school and find themselves in a fix and unable to find work, to help them in a proactive way into a job, not just for the short term but a job that will make a meaningful difference to their life in the long term because they will be able to retain it. This is why this bill is so important.

The measures in this bill, combined with our Jobs and Small Business package, provide strong support to assist young job seekers to get off welfare and into work. I certainly commend the actions of the member for Cowper, the Assistant Minister for Employment. I certainly commend the Abbott-Truss government for listening to the people, making sure that the measures were altered after we consulted with communities. We consulted with stakeholders and we listened, something those on the opposition benches did not do. Governments do not always get it right and we accepted that this measure needed altering—that is, because we listened. I sat here for three long years under the Gillard-Rudd administration where policies were brought in, where change was not made where it was so necessary and the key community stakeholders in whatever policy area were jacking up and making a fuss, but Labor never listened. This side of politics, the Liberal-Nationals, do listen. We have changed the policy and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (15:54): The measures contained in the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015 demonstrate some of the mean nature we see coming from this government. It does nothing to address the youth unemployment crisis that we have looming in our country particularly in regional areas. We will see more young job seekers forced into poverty as a result of this bill.

Two of the measures I wish to highlight that will have an impact on people and force them into poverty include, firstly, that job seekers under the age of 25 will receive nothing for the first month. This is not trying to help people get off welfare; this is stopping people from having the means to get to their first job interview. This is stopping people who may have finished high school, may have finished university or may have finished TAFE from having the means to get to their first job interview. How do they pay their rent, how do they put food on the table and how do they buy that decent outfit, that suit, to go to a job interview?
Starving young people for the first month means that they cannot start actively looking for work because they do not have the means. What some of the government speakers have said, whether it be the minister in the consideration in detail stage of the bill we have before us or government backbenchers, is, 'That's okay, they can move back home.' It is a bit hard for regional kids to move home after studying in Melbourne and applying for jobs in Melbourne, travelling each day and paying for the train each day. It is a bit hard for country kids who have been studying in Bendigo to leave Bendigo to move back home and travel to that job every day. Whether you are living in a regional area trying to pay rent or you have moved home and have to pay for the train fare, you still need an income. In this bill, the government is trying to cut the first month, the month when you most need support when you are looking for work.

The government likes to suggest that all young job seekers are people who do not have qualifications. As the member for Herbert said when this debate first started, they have to get off the couch, stop eating cheezels and playing the Xbox. Not only is that insulting but also it shows a lack of understanding that this government has of people who are currently looking for work—as I mentioned, university students who have just finished their degree who are competing in a very tough market. To get their first job, they are going up against people with experience. I know from talking to young people in my electorate how hard it has been. They are excited, they have just finished university and months and months after they are still putting in job applications, they are still going to interviews but they cannot get a job. It is not through a lack of trying, it is not through a lack of fronting up to interviews; it is simply that there are not enough jobs available for the young people who are looking for work.

The cuts to youth allowance are also quite harsh, changing the age at which young job seekers qualify for Newstart, meaning that people between 22 and 24 will be pushed onto the newer lower rate of youth allowance. That is a cut of about $48 a week, almost $2,500 per year. There has been no testing to see what the cost of living is today. It is purely and simply a way to grab money from our youngest job seekers. The government seeks not to support but to punish young people who are looking for work. For some reason the government seems to think that it is cheaper for a single young person to run a household than it is for an older person to run a household. That is just not true. Rents are not determined by your age. Petrol prices are determined by your age. There is a fundamental unfairness in what the government is proposing. They are seeking to punish young people when they need our greatest support.

One of the areas which is really frustrating which government has failed to address is support for young job seekers in the regions. Youth unemployment in our regions is the highest it has been in a generation. In my own area of Bendigo it is 18.2 per cent. That is almost one in five young people who are unemployed and looking for work. That suggests that they are not lazy, as the government likes to portray, or that they are seeking welfare, or that they have gone straight from the school gate to welfare. That is not the case. When one in five young people are unemployed, it means that we do not have enough jobs. We are in the middle of a jobs crisis for young people. My generation will be the first of many generations that will have people who may never work, people who are unemployed right now who cannot get that first start, who cannot get the job experience which is vital so that they will get a job and hold a job.
Entry level jobs just do not exist today. They do not exist the way they did a generation ago. When people now in their 50s and 60s first left school, university or TAFE, there was always an entry-level job for them to go to. The Commonwealth Bank had cadetships and from the age of 16 you could start working in the Commonwealth Bank and work your way through. There were apprenticeships. In my own area of Bendigo, Thales, which manufactures the Bushmasters, a generation ago had 100 apprentices, 25 in each year level. Today it has two—two apprentices compared to 100 apprentices, meaning there are fewer apprenticeships available today in my part of the world. That is just one example and it has been replicated across our economy and our community.

Then there are the university students and graduates. Today it is hard for a teacher straight out of university to secure their first job. Today it is hard for arts and economics graduates to get government graduate positions because there are fewer of them today than there were a generation ago. The government’s own policy towards employing young people leaves a lot to be desired. Right now less than 2.5 per cent of the entire Public Service, the entire number of Commonwealth government employees, are under the age of 25. This raises two problems. Firstly, where will our Public Service be in a generation, because we simply do not have enough young people starting now and working their way through? Secondly, what is this government as an employer actively doing about making sure there are good job opportunities for young Australians?

This government fails to have a concrete jobs plan that will generate real job opportunities for young people who are seeking work at the entry level when they leave school, at the TAFE level when they finish a TAFE certificate and at the graduate level when they leave university. Most particularly, this government is not doing enough to create and secure good jobs in our regions.

Young people in my electorate have spoken to me about their experiences when seeking work. It is important we consider these examples. It is important to consider what they have been through and how much harder it is going to be in the future if these measures go through for young people on unemployment benefits seeking a job.

Leigh is a 25-year-old job seeker who has had very little paid work since finishing his TAFE degree. In fact, his Job Network provider has been able to find him only one day of paid work—dismantling tents after the Elmore Field Day. Leigh made it very clear that he will move and travel for work. He is more than willing to. Even though he has an automotive TAFE diploma, he is willing to do whatever job is presented to him. So far all Leigh’s Job Network provider and the community have been able to offer him is one day of work dismantling tents after the Elmore Field Day. It is, quite frankly, not good enough. It is not fair on Leigh that that is the only opportunity that has been presented to him.

Despite the lack of possible jobs Leigh’s Job Network provider has offered him, he has applied for hundreds of jobs. He talked about how depressing it is to get another rejection. Sometimes he does not even get a rejection from the companies he has applied for jobs with. This is what it is like. This young person is very keen to work but he is caught at a time when the economy is not delivering real job opportunities for young Australians. Today there are simply not the entry-level jobs that existed a generation ago.

Kate is another young person who spoke to me about her experience of being unemployed and looking for work. Kate lives in Kyneton, which is in the lower part of my electorate. She
has a university degree. When describing what it is like being an unemployed young person when there are limited job opportunities she said:

People don't like it when you are unemployed. They think you are lazy and wasting their tax paying dollars.

We hear again and again similar rhetoric from government members. She continued:

In the year that I have been unemployed I have applied for one hundred and seventy jobs. Less than ten bothered to reply.

Those 10 responses were all unsuccessful applicant emails sent out in bulk. She has not been able to secure an interview, despite sending out all these resumes.

Kate says that by far the hardest thing about being jobless is being on Centrelink payments. At the moment she gets roughly $316 per week. It barely covers the basics: $180 for rent, $20 for petrol, $45 for gas and electricity, $25 for the phone, $10 for car insurance and $5 for medication. That leaves her about $30 a week for everything else she may need—food, rego and clothes. That is on the current payments. Just imagine if she were 24 and were on less. Just imagine if tomorrow she found herself unemployed with no income. How would she pay her rent? How would Kate put petrol in her car? How would she pay for gas and electricity? She could not. This government will force her into poverty.

These are the experiences of two young people in my electorate who are already doing it tough trying to find work under the current system. What concerns and alarms me is the government have put no thought into how much harder it will be when they force people onto no income for a month and then force people on Newstart onto youth allowance and what impact that will have on their budget. The other part that concerns me is if a young person has a job and is made redundant and unemployed. These people have insecure work. They work in hospitality and catering. They are less likely to have any form of savings than people at the other end of their working life. They are not going to have money in their accounts to be able to cover the first month if they become unemployed. The government has put no thought into how those people will get help if they find themselves unemployed or underemployed because there has been a downturn in the cafe or because there has been a downturn in chicken manufacturing and they have had their hours cut. Any which way you look at this bill, this government is trying to force young people into poverty and blame young people for the circumstances in which they find themselves.

This bill continues the government's attack on young people and will leave young job seekers under the age of 25 with nothing to live on for a month. The bill will change the eligibility for Newstart, pushing young job seekers between 22 and 24 onto the lower rate of youth allowance. This is a cut of at least $48 a week, or almost $2,500 a year. The government is doing this knowing that it will be pushing lots and lots of young people into poverty when we should be encouraging them and supporting them to look for work.

More importantly, though, what cannot be ignored is this government's failure to have a genuine jobs plan that encourages and creates industry that employs young people. We have seen an explosion of insecure work. We have seen a rise in the number of overseas young people coming in and being able to get jobs at the expense of local young people. The number of young people who are employed is almost equal to the number of young backpackers we have in this country: a quarter of a million young people currently unemployed in this country, and a quarter of a million backpackers currently working here. They are from the
same demographic: young people. We are seeing job after job go to these overseas workers at the expense of local workers. Yet what we are not seeing from this government is a genuine effort to clean that up and to create entry-level jobs for young people. All we are seeing is more attacks on people, with legislation that abandons young people and will force more of them into poverty. It is more rhetoric and less help for those who most need it.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:09): I rise today to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which is a dynamic component of the 2015-16 budget. In the recent budget, the Abbott government unveiled the Growing Jobs and Small Business package, the biggest small business package in Australia’s history. This is a vital policy, illustrating the Abbott government’s commitment to create jobs and address unemployment—which, as we have just heard, is higher in the bush, such as in my electorate of Durack, than in metropolitan areas. I am very pleased that Australia’s biggest small business package has now received parliamentary approval.

After years of glossy posters and rhetoric, the last government left little but a massive debt, a legacy they will hold forever. But the Abbott government, I am pleased to say, is fair dinkum about getting Australia’s economy back on track. Since being elected, the Abbott government has created around a quarter of a million new jobs, including 42,000 last month alone. Of the 42,000 new jobs created last month, I am pleased to say that 29,800 were taken up by females in part-time roles. The economy is responding to the strong economic management by the Abbott government, with unemployment dropping by 22,000 last month. This is in stark contrast to the 519,000 jobs lost under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government, where they had no respect for small business, the engine room of our economy, having six small business ministers in six long years. I am proud to be a part of a government that is committed to creating jobs for Australians. As we found out last Thursday, and as I have said, there were an extra 42,000 jobs last month, adding to about a quarter of a million new jobs created since the government was elected in September 2013. I am particularly happy with the rise of part-time jobs for females as, according to the last census, unemployment among women was at 4.4 per cent Durack—go Durack girls!

This government is dedicated to improving the employability of unemployed Australians, investing $18.3 million in additional work experience places. This will provide on-the-job experience and immediate contact with a potential employer. I have met many young adults in Durack who have gained a job following work experience, either with the work experience employer or with a different employer. We all know this can be a very vicious cycle when trying to get your foot on the employment ladder. Employers want employees to have experience, but, without having a job, how can a young person get the experience that employers require? This bill includes a measure which will make job seekers more employable. In what must be music to the ears of small business owners, this measure reduces the costs of employing new staff. This measure will bring job seekers and employers together. The Growing Jobs and Small Business package has been welcomed in Durack amongst both job seekers and employers. It will assist businesses to prosper and to take on the four sectors of the workforce which I would like to see thrive in Durack: the young job seekers, the mature workers, the parents and the long-term unemployed. I call on the opposition to have a heart, support the bush, pass this bill unamended and not play politics with this important measure. I was particularly offended by some of the comments by the member for Bendigo. If the
member looked a little closer, she would see that this government is serious about helping young Australians, especially those in the bush, get the skills that they need to secure employment.

Under this bill, young people will become more employment ready than before. From 1 July next year, people under the age of 25 who are the most job ready will be able to apply for Newstart and will have the four-week period where they will be able to get their application skills up to date for the modern workforce. During this period, young people will have the opportunity to develop an up-to-date resume, agree to a job plan, create a job seeker profile on the JobSearch website, and also meet with a Job Active profiler who is going to help them secure employment. This has been welcomed by young people seeking a job in my vast electorate of Durack. Our government has also made a further $8.1 million available in emergency relief funding to provide assistance to job seekers who, through no fault of their own, have slipped through the cracks of mainstream education and therefore need that little bit of extra care and assistance to be job ready.

Members of both sides of the House in the past will have heard how much I value education. I am particularly passionate about making it easier for students from the bush to access tertiary education. With this in mind, I am very pleased that students will not have to wait four weeks to be eligible for youth allowance to be able to continue with their tertiary education. Young people who return to school or take up full-time vocational education or university study will not be subject to the four-week waiting period, which is great news for the over 20,000 people aged between 15 and 24 in the electorate of Durack, which make up a whopping 12 per cent of my electorate.

Job seekers who have been deemed as having significant barriers to finding a job will not have to wait either. There are many who will not be subject to the four-week waiting period. People who are living with a disability will not have to wait. Women who are pregnant will not have to wait. People who have served this period in the last six months will not have to wait. People who have left state care in the last 12 months will also not have to wait the four-week waiting period.

This measure is fair and I call on the opposition to support this bill and thereby support young people in the bush. As many in Durack know, it is alarming that unemployment in regional Australia hit a 12-year high earlier this year. But country people are not that fussy when it comes to getting jobs because country people cannot be fussy; they simply have to take what they can get. There are not the same opportunities for people who live in the regions as there are in metropolitan areas. That is why this bill is important. It ensures all job seekers accept any suitable job, not just one that they would like to have. In this day and age, and in the circumstances, I think this is a fair and targeted measure.

Unemployment benefits are for those who are looking for work and finding it hard to secure employment. It is not for ever and ever a taxpayer funded payment with no end in sight. This is not a heartless government. As part of this bill, we will be funding intensive support trials for vulnerable job seekers. I am proud to say we are also providing new support for youth with mental health conditions. On top of this, we will provide new support for vulnerable young migrants and refugees, and support parents preparing to go back into the workforce.
This bill will go a long way to bridging the gap in employment opportunities between regional and metropolitan Australians. These measures hit squarely on the head a key issue I am passionate about which is getting young people into the workforce. The bill assists youth not just in getting a job but also in starting a career. I am proud to be a member of the Abbott government and proud to be supporting this measure. This bill is a vital component of the biggest small business package in Australia's history.

This is part of the same package delivered by the Abbott government, which has presided over the creation of a quarter of a million new jobs in the past two years. Durack will benefit from this bill. Job seekers—young, mature and new to the workforce—will reap the benefits of this government's plan; so too will small businesses, our largest employer base and the backbone of our economic society. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:18): I rise to join the debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. This bill will see job seekers under 25 with nothing to live on for one month. The bill sees this government pressing ahead with changes to the eligibility age for Newstart, pushing job seekers who are between the ages of 22 and 24 onto the lower youth allowance. This is a cut of at least $48 a week, $2½ thousand a year, for young unemployed people. It distresses me to think that we have a government that is so intent on knowingly pushing young people into poverty.

It is particularly nasty for young people in my community, a community that has higher than average unemployment generally and very high youth unemployment. These figures do not reflect on a community where young people do not want to work, contrary to the assertions of those opposite and from some comments made by the member for Durack, suggesting that if they return to study they will not have to wait four weeks. I remind the House that the intention of this government, through its apprenticeships program, is that if they return to study they will go into debt. If they do a tertiary qualification in higher education, the intention is they will go into debt. In my electorate, it leaves us with a sinking feeling that there are some safety nets in here for those families who can afford to take on that debt. In my area families are reluctant to go into debt, so this is all bad news.

I am reminded of a conversation I had recently in my electorate office with a very, very concerned resident. He and his wife both worked all their lives. Their eldest child finished year 12, so had met all the things we want a young person to do. We want them to complete school. She is an active person in the community, playing representative basketball. She kept herself fit. She studied hard and got that VCE. At the end of the education process, like many of her classmates, she found it difficult to find a job. When suggested she go to Centrelink, she was mortified because she did not want to become someone reliant on the government. But when told about a job seeker number and that that was where you had to get them, off she went. He relayed to me how mortified he was, after years and years in the workforce and raising his family, when he found that his daughter could get very little support. She got a job seeker number but she had not been employed long enough to get the kind of assistance she needed to find a job.

This family took the tough decision. Their daughter is studying. At the cost of an $18,000 debt, she has enrolled in further study. I think that this is only one story coming out of our communities and I think that this legislation is going to embed those difficulties for people in
my electorate. That is because finding a job is very difficult in my community. The young apply for jobs. Indeed, most weeks I receive emails from local young people, often with a university degree, who are finding it difficult to get jobs. People with trade qualifications are finding it difficult to get jobs. I recently met with some gentlemen in their late 20s, two of whom had PhDs, who were struggling to find jobs.

Those leaving school often have experience. Many of the young people in my electorate have had part-time jobs as they have studied and as they have completed secondary school—often more than one part-time job. They find very quickly that those part-time jobs do not hold much weight in what is a very tough employment situation that we have locally. Sometimes, they come to my office wanting work experience, thinking of volunteering in the office or perhaps asking if I could write a reference to assist them and work together with them to get a job. Some complain about the quality of the job service providers, as the father of that young lady did. Some are simply desperate to secure employment.

You will forgive me in this chamber if I mention how offended I am for the young people in my community when I hear the rhetoric coming from the other side that insinuates and implies that young people think that they want to leave school and go on the dole or that they are waiting the ideal job. The member for Durack did that much in her contribution that preceded mine, suggesting that kids cannot be fussy in the country, implying that somehow in the metropolitan areas they are. I am deeply offended by that kind of rhetoric on behalf of the young people in my community and their hardworking families. I want to put that on the record. These are motivated, quality and hardworking young adults who I referred to, not the stereotyped no-hopers sitting around playing video games that those opposite seem to think our electorates are crammed with. Many have a relatively long part-time work history alongside study, as I have mentioned. They are not waiting for their ideal job, as suggested by our Prime Minister.

The Abbott government has stated that this legislation will set a clear expectation that young people need to maximise their efforts to obtain work, implying that that is not already the case, implying that it is the fault of young people that this country's employment figures are where they are and implying that somehow young people are flawed and not trying hard enough. I have spent time listening to them, listening to their stories of how many positions they have applied for and assisting them to create CVs. Sometimes they have multiple CVs, because those with higher education qualifications may have a work history of having been employed in entry-level manual labour, so they have one CV for seeking those positions and one CV for seeking entry-level professional positions. They are struggling to get interviews for either, because the jobs are not there.

These are people who live a 45-minute drive—which is sometimes an hour and a half in peak hour—from the CBD of Melbourne, which is our primary employment sector. These are people living in an affordable area. They are from families who have purchased homes in affordable areas and raised their families there, only to find that now finding employment for young people is very difficult. This rehashed image may have worked the 1970s—this view of the old world—recalling demonised, stereotyped pictures of young people sunning themselves in Byron Bay on beaches rather than working, but it is misleading and this government knows it. Being in receipt of government income support already has a range of mutual obligations. Current activity tests and other participation requirements are already
some of the strictest in the OECD. The assumption that those young people who cannot find work are simply not motivated and lack the will to work is not true.

I have seen no substantive evidence or research that shows that a lack of motivation is a major contributor to unemployment. Most likely, as I said, it is a lack of jobs, particularly entry-level jobs. It is the lack of qualifications, skills and experience that contributes to unemployment. It is the unwillingness of employers to take on a young person. The fact that youth unemployment is always consistently higher than the average shows this to be true. This youth unemployment increase has been on the rise since the global financial crisis and has steadily increased under this government. Rather than take that on board and get the jobs plan in place, they seek to find savings by punishing young people and by leaving them with no income for four weeks. That might work in some of the homes of those opposite, but it would not work in my home and it does not work in the homes of the people who live in the electorate of Lalor. Many of those families are already under financial pressure and this will be yet another burden for them to take into their family budget.

Some young people worry that their proud achievement of the year 12 completion—sometimes they are the first their family to do so—is clouded by the secondary school that they attended or by their ethnicity. I reassure them that our schools are rightly proud of their educational outcomes and of the well-rounded young adults who graduate; but this is not played out in the job application process. Indeed, there is significant motivation for finding employment, because trying to live on Newstart or youth allowance is incredibly difficult in itself. Youth allowance of $123.40 a week, in my view, is not much of an incentive to sit at home.

That is $18 a day. It is $8 for a zone 1/2 myki ticket. That $8 to get to a job interview in Melbourne's CBD. It is $18 for you to put petrol in the car if you have a licence, pay the insurance on the car, make the payments on the car and pay the registration on the car. That is if they finish school, they are 18 and they have a car. Guess what? Most employers would like them to be 18 and have a car and a licence to get that precious job. If they get up the line, get the interview and get short-listed, the demands on them are very great. So I do not believe that young people are sitting around at home on their measly $18 a day thinking that they are living the life of Riley. This puts enormous pressure on families. To cut the payment off for four weeks and to leave young people with nothing for four weeks is a punishment that they do not deserve. As I have said, Lalor is home to hardworking families on modest incomes, families who do not have deep reserves, families who struggle to meet all their bills and payments on time. My community has a high rate of mortgage stress and rental evictions. This will see many more young people staying at home for longer and longer periods of time.

One of the first things I did when I was elected to this place was to bring the service providers together to discuss the housing and homelessness issues our community faces. A basic human right is secure living circumstances, and this legislation will put young people in independent living situations at risk, driving young people to the payday lenders to cover their bills, to make their contribution to the rent if they are sharing a house with other young people. You can see this as it is happening in my electorate. Young things have found their first job, put some savings together, found some friends, created a share house and paid the bond. They may have been renting now for six or eight months. If one of them loses their job, there will be no income for four weeks. If that young person moves home, the rent for the
other people in that share house increases. We are talking about putting added stresses onto young people, onto their living arrangements, onto their independence, and adding to the eviction pressures in my local community.

With no income, where will these young folk find the money for transport to attend a job, to go to the job provider, to attend interviews, to dress appropriately, to keep connected to the Internet, to have a reliable computer? These are very serious things this government intends to do. But the worst of these measures is the signal they send into the community that somehow our young people are not trying hard enough, that somehow our young people are doing it easy. That is not the case in my electorate. It is not the case, I suspect, across this country. I agree with the member for Durack in that I do not believe it is the case in the country either.

I fear this is just another example of this government seeking to divide our community. It is just another example of this government seeking to find winners and losers, to reward the winners and to punish the losers. I think about what is happening in the apprenticeship area, and it gives me no more comfort at all. I think about the 25,000 apprentices who have sought to take up the loan offer given by this government. I remember back to the rhetoric about how good that was going to be for young people. Only 24,000 apprentices have taken up the Trade Support Loans debt scheme, compared to 192,000 Australian apprentices in 2012-13 who got the Tools For Your Trade payments. This government is seeking to divide. Now it wants to punish our young people. (Time expired)

Mr Ramsey (Grey) (16:33): The amendments in the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015 are obviously aimed at the issues around youth unemployment in Australia. Unemployment is an absolute tragedy, particularly long-term unemployment, which can lead to intergenerational unemployment. The outcomes for people who live their life without a job are terrible, pretty much across the board.

Areas of my electorate at the moment are suffering unemployment above 10 per cent. In the Upper Spencer Gulf region we saw the announcement last week around the closure of the Alinta power station. There are a number of issues with the Olympic Dam BHP mine at the moment. There are lay-offs with the closures of iron ore mines run by Arrium. These things have all contributed, and youth unemployment is in excess of 20 per cent in this region. If people spend three to five years of their young lives unemployed, it is highly likely that it will be a life sentence and that that will be the outcome for the rest of their life: they will spend most of it unemployed. We simply must do everything we possibly can to try to break that pattern and give our kids a chance.

There are many reasons why kids cannot find work. Some of the speakers, including the member for Lalor, who has just departed the chamber, have raised the issue of unemployment levels. That is one of the very important ones and it is not to be underestimated. I realise that in absolute terms there are not enough jobs to employ every person in Australia who is looking for work at the moment, and that is why the government is concentrating on a jobs package, a small business package, in the budget, to stimulate the economy and create more work. Last month's unemployment figures in South Australia were nothing short of disastrous. The one thing that South Australia is leading the nation in at the moment is unemployment—7.6 per cent. It is a great concern and a disgrace, because the rest of Australia, as tough it might be out there, is not going that badly.
But I would like to focus on the jobs that we cannot fill in Australia. For instance, there are currently 198,000 457 visa holders in Australia. Of course, some have high skill levels and they are here because we cannot provide that skill set from our workforce. But many do not, and they are filling jobs that we cannot get Australians to do. There are also tens of thousands of international workers across the nation on a variety of visas like regional work visas. For instance, our abattoirs are largely staffed with overseas-sourced workers, as are our taxis. A part of Australia that I have some responsibility for, outback Australia, would cease to operate if it were not for overseas workers. Our tourist industry in the outback of Australia is staffed predominantly by people who have come from overseas. Even in the agriculture industry itself, a substantial number of our shearers come from New Zealand. And good on them. We could not get by without them, and I have nothing against these people coming to Australia to work.

Any of us in the chamber who are of the right group would remember Professor Julius Sumner Miller. He would ask, 'Why is it so?' It is a great conundrum. It is a great question. Why can we not get Australians to work in these jobs? Many of them are good-paying jobs. Australia was built on the prospect of 'having a go'. Post World War II migrants flooded to the country and went wherever the work was. I remember a time a few years back when I was in the Blue Mountains on a bus trip. I got the job of sitting up with the driver and I met Tom, the Italian bus driver. I said: 'Tom, that can't be your name. What's your real name?' He said, 'It's Tommaso,' and I said, 'Well, I shall call you Tommaso for the rest of the day.' And I did. We got on very well and he spoke of his life and how, when he came to Australia, he had gone wherever the work was. We discovered, in fact, that he had helped build the Port Pirie television station transmitter that I can see out of my office window when I am in Port Pirie. He had worked on that, because he went where the work was.

I have another short anecdote, if I might. I often say that in many ways remote Indigenous communities are the canary in the coalmine when it comes to assessing the impact of passive welfare. Generally, what happens there is exactly what will happen in the rest of our communities if we follow the same pathway. It is recognised how much damage is being done in these communities by the one-way welfare deal. Australia will support community members to stay at one point doing not very much, or very little, for as long as they like with no obligation. That is poison for those people and it is poison for the rest of us.

At Kenmore Park I met an older Aboriginal gentleman. He had two ladies with him—his wife and I think it was her sister. He told me of his life. He said: 'I had to go where the work was. I logged forests in the south-east of South Australia, I logged in Western Australia, I picked bananas in Queensland and I went shearing. I went wherever the work was and then I returned to the land and my family. Then when I needed to work again I left.' He lamented and said, 'We can't get the young kids to do the same today.' It is the same in our mainstream societies. So many have lost the resolve and the determination, because we support them to stay where they are and we support them to make the wrong decision, not just for Australia but also for themselves.

These amendments seek to at least send a message. The government tried to send a stronger message last year, and we accept we cannot get that legislation through the Senate. So we have returned this year with reform lite, if you like. Some reform is better than none. These amendments now propose a one-month waiting period in which young adults under the
age of 25 who are job ready—that is, they live in an area where there are good job opportunities, have reasonable literacy and numeracy skills and have recent work practice and therefore are the kinds of people who should be able to find work if it is available—cannot access youth allowance or special allowance for four weeks, if they fall within these very restricted and generous guidelines. It is a very moderate message, but it is a message nonetheless. The message is that this nation wants its young people to make a success of their lives. To do that we want them to start out their post-school life with a job—any job—because any work is better than none. There are better health outcomes, there are better mental health outcomes, it is better for the pocket and it is certainly much better on the young workers' CVs when they go to look for another job. We need to put ourselves in the position perhaps of a potential employer. If someone comes in with a CV that shows that they have not worked for five years, regardless of their skill set and regardless of how much they may have attempted to educate themselves and improve their literacy, it is highly unlikely that they will land the job if there are other people available. The employer will want to know: ‘What have you been doing for the last five years? Why haven't you been working?’

If a school leaver spends the first three or five years unemployed, that is likely to be the pattern of their life. So the message to these kids is to have a go, chase down the opportunities and take the non-preferred job to get a start. By all means, look for another job when you already have one and upgrade your prospects, but the message is, ‘Don't throw in your job before you have a new start.' I listened to the member for Lalor and she said, 'If this person loses their job, then they will lose their entitlement.' That is not the way the legislation will, in fact, work. If they lose their job for a good reason—for example, if they have been made redundant or if a business has closed—then of course they will not be subject to these tests. But if they have resigned from their job or been fired for poor performance, then they will be, because we want those people to persist at their jobs. If they do not like their job, they need to work on trying to get a new and better one.

This is good reform delivering moderate savings to the budget bottom line. Most importantly, it is sending a moderate message to our children: it is in the nation's interest and, more particularly, your interest to take your opportunities. I will conclude my remarks there.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (16:43): I say to the member for Grey that I appreciate his contribution. I am not sure that I accept all of it, and I certainly do not support this legislation. I think we need to remind ourselves of what this legislation will do: it will extend the application of an ordinary waiting period of seven days to recipients of parenting payment and youth allowance. These changes, to occur shortly, raise the eligibility age for NSA and sickness allowance from 22 to 25 years from 1 July 2016. The age requirement for the youth allowance will also be adjusted up from the current ceiling of 21 years to 24 years. It is really difficult to understand how anyone in the government can be supporting this legislation, other than that they see it as a way to save money and belt young people. The legislation will introduce a four-week waiting period for new claimants of youth allowance and the special benefit payment who are aged under 25 years. That will operate from 1 July 2016. It will abolish the low-income supplement from 1 July 2017. It will pause indexation of the income-free areas for all working age allowances other than the student payments and for parenting payment
single from 1 July 2015. It will pause indexation of the income-free areas and other means test thresholds for student payments from 1 January 2016.

I have been listening to the contributions being made to this debate and I have been struck by the apparent sympathy for young people coming from the other side. But with the very vindictive nature of this legislation that will apply to young people it is very difficult to understand. We know that unemployment for young people is getting worse and not getting better. For young people between the ages of 15 and 24, the unemployment rate currently stands at 13.7 per cent and at 19.3 per cent if they are between 15 and 19. A report from the Brotherhood of St Laurence's My Chance, Our Future youth employment campaign says:

The chance of finding a job has been declining since the GFC. The probability of finding a job fell sharply for 15 to 19 year olds: by early 2015, less than 15 per cent of the unemployed in this group moved from unemployment into employment from one month to the next.

This is portraying the difficulty that young people who are currently unemployed are confronting in moving from unemployment to work on a month-by-month basis. This ought to be causing people here some concern. It certainly causes me a great deal of concern. I know it worries the parents across this country of young people under the age of 25 who are eligible or old enough to be in the workforce.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's report *The teenage dream unravels: trends in youth unemployment* from March 2015 says:

It can't be said enough, amid a steady rise in the overall unemployment rate, Australia's youth continue to bear the brunt – and teenagers are faring worst of all.

If that is the case—and we know it to be the case because the data is self-evident—then we have to be very concerned about a piece of legislation that will actually hurt young people. It will not be an incentive to go back to work or find a job; it will be a massive disincentive.

For those of us who have the good fortune to be parents, we know what the challenges may be in looking after a family, raising young people and giving them an opportunity. There are parts of Australia where these opportunities are very, very difficult to find. Young people looking for work who may have left school or even a tertiary institution find it immensely difficult. If those young people with some tertiary education are lucky enough to find work, often it will not be in the field of their study. Yet they will take these jobs because they want to work. It is very clear that Australian young people want to work. I think it is quite obnoxious for there to be a view that somehow or other young Australians are afraid of work. That simply is not the case. I will just go to the *Bills Digest*, which says:

There is no substantive evidence to suggest that young Australians lack the will to work. A number of surveys of young people show that a majority want to work or to work more hours, but face a number of barriers to their doing so.

So it is entirely false to be living under the assumption that somehow or other there is a whole host of young Australians who do not want to work.

I travel a lot, I have been in this job a long time, I meet a lot of people and I have to say that I rarely find anyone who does not want to work. People want the income security that comes from a job. They want to be able to make purchases. They want to be able to look after themselves and potentially look after families, if they are fortunate enough to have one.
But this legislation will ensure impecuniosity for some young people. It will, I daresay, force some onto the streets. There will be more calls about young homeless people, because these young people cannot afford to rent or have access to property because their parents are not wealthy or because they do not get on with their parents, for whatever reason, and cannot live at home. What happens to these young people? What are we proposing they should do? Well, they will go without. This, in my view, not only is stupid but could force them to do things that we all would wish they would not do.

So I say to the government that I think these measures—the waiting period for income support, in particular—are of real concern. I, like many others, can see no justification for these measures at all. Despite the protestations of government members, who say it is all fair and it is all hunky-dory, 'Don't you worry about that,' it is not fair. It is not fair. It is patently unfair. We in this parliament say we want people to be able to look for work and we want to make sure that they are not welfare dependent. But I, like a lot of others, believe that these sorts of measures will lead to welfare dependency for many people—many, many people.

It would be all right for us middle-class Australians in this place, living on a very good income; we can afford to survive for a month with no income, potentially. But imagine if you have nothing. Many Australians would not be able survive for a month without income. Many working families would just not survive without an income, and members of many of those working families might well be under 25. We are now saying, 'That may be, but as far as we and the rest of the world are concerned we're going to legislate to make sure that you go without an income in these circumstances if you're under the age of 25.'

The government can talk about measures to create opportunities for young people, but what is clear, in terms of this government, is that you cannot provide an opportunity that makes good sense when you do not want to have good sense, because this piece of legislation does not make good sense. I refer to National Welfare Rights Network Policy Officer Gerard Thomas—and I am indebted again to the Parliamentary Library for this—who has insisted these measures 'would lead to greater levels of welfare dependency, not less'.

What do we expect young people to do if they are either unwilling or unable to seek family support in a period when they might be unemployed and not have income support? What do we really expect? These measures are really a disinvestment in the future of Australia. They do not encourage young people to take the challenge and make the effort to seek out opportunities for education, training and employment.

I am assuming that the government believes that, somehow or other, people in this category do not have costs that they must meet, that they can rely on others to provide for them—that they do not have to provide food; that someone else is paying their medical expenses; that, if they are fortunate enough to be in accommodation and if rent is payable, someone else will pay their rent and someone else will pay for their gas and electricity; and that someone else, presumably, will pay for their transport costs when they go looking for a job.

Let us be very clear. Pushing young Australians aged between 22 and 24 from Newstart onto the lower youth allowance is, effectively, a cut of $48 a week or almost $2,500 a year. Think about it. Just imagine the family budgets of working Australians—not us in this place—being cut by $2½ thousand a year. It is not appropriate, and we should not be supporting it. None of the major welfare organisations believe there is any support for these
measures. ACOSS, the National Welfare Rights Network, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mission Australia: none of them believe that these proposals are appropriate.

People need to understand what this measure means. I cannot for the life of me understand how government members cannot see that this is going to have a dramatic impact on their own communities. It is going to affect the lives of thousands of families and, particularly, thousands of young people and their families. It will concern their parents, their teachers, their friends and all the people they engage with. I think it is critically important that the government review this measure.

I know there are young people who are prepared to travel to look for work. A young person came into my office last year looking for work. She was a graduate of the University of Melbourne. She and her partner had both arrived in Alice Springs looking for work. I put her on for a stint in my office, and she proved to have some very, very good skills. But she remained there only for a short time because she picked up some full-time work elsewhere—and I encouraged her to take that job. Her partner also had full-time work. They have settled into work and, only recently, have taken out a home loan to buy a place in Alice Springs. These are young people who have the same attributes as many, many, many other young Australians: they want to work, they are prepared to travel for work, they are prepared to look for work and they are prepared to work. I do not think the message conveyed by this legislation gives young Australians any confidence that this government actually understands what their needs are or appreciates the circumstances in which they live.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (16:58): I rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Unemployment and other Measures) Bill of 2015. In a very practical sense, the measures proposed in this bill seek to introduce a revised, four-week waiting period for youth income support from 1 July 2016—1 July 2016, not 2015. This is a great outcome for those struggling with unemployment and, of course, for those suffering from its financial repercussions. It reintroduces key changes to indexation, to name a few. The best thing that anybody can do, that any government can ever do, for the young unemployed in this country is create jobs. The government understands that it is there to provide a safety net and a support network—not a lifestyle—and it is our determination to do that. I will come to more of those points in the bill as I progress.

I am very pleased to speak on this bill today because, as a government, we have a very, very clear road map of how we are going to address unemployment across our nation. I want to speak on this bill today with the reflection of my electorate of Paterson and how we as a government are seeking to address the challenge of under-employment and unemployment—unlike those opposite, who have no clear intention of addressing the issue whatsoever. All we hear from the opposition—and when they were in government—is rhetoric. No plans, no solutions and, in particular, no outcomes. Those opposite have only made illusory comments in their budget-in-reply speeches. They have only contributed to what is the issue of youth unemployment across our great nation. Unemployment in Paterson, as a general figure, is around 7.2 per cent. Youth unemployment is unacceptably high across our nation, with the current unemployment rate for young Australians aged 15 to 24 at around 13.4 per cent, as of May 2015. In the Hunter and mid-north coast regions in which my electorate of Paterson falls, the youth unemployment rate falls between 14 and 18.6 per cent; it is higher than the national
average. It takes me back to the days when I first came into this House in 1996, when we had record unemployment; in particular, youth unemployment was getting up to around 30 per cent—such is the legacy that Labor tends to leave coalition governments to fix up. These are very, very sobering figures, but they are figures that we have accepted and are addressing in government.

We are addressing the issue of youth unemployment through a number of comprehensive packages over a number of portfolio areas. This is not one issue in isolation. This requires a whole-of-government approach. As a government, we are acutely aware of the need for employment and the benefit that it has for our economy. I am pleased that the 2015-16 budget has an incredibly strong focus on job seekers, especially young job seekers, to help them not only find employment but retain employment. One of the ways in which we have done this is through our Growing Jobs and Small Business package, which includes a wide range of measures to assist our young job seekers, like those in my electorate of Paterson, through programs, including the new $18 million National Work Experience program.

Mr Hartsuyker: Hear, hear! A great program!

Mr BALDWIN: As the minister says in response: a great program. What it will do is provide job seekers with the opportunity to undertake work experience in businesses for up to 25 hours a week for four weeks to improve their chances of finding a job. Not only will it give them the experience; it will prove a thing called 'stickability'. These kids turn up, they do the work experience and they have the stickability. They have come each and every day because they are committed to getting a job. They also find out whether they actually like that work as a form of employment. There is also the new $1.2 billion wage subsidy pool so that more job seekers are eligible for wage subsidies sooner and more flexible wage subsidy arrangements are in place so that employers are able to access wage subsidies earlier to help with the up-front costs of hiring and training. There is a new $212 million Transition to Work service to help young job seekers most at risk of long-term unemployment improve their chance of finding and keeping a job. There is a $106 million package for the new pilot programs to test innovative approaches to helping young job seekers, such as those with mental illness, parents and young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds to move from welfare to work. That is the objective. It is to get people to move from welfare to work so they too can have a meaningful life and contribute to our society. With the changes to strengthening job seekers compliance arrangements and promoting a strong 'work first' approach amongst early school leavers, we want young people to move into the workforce, not onto the dole queue.

These programs will build on the Job Active. The government has recently announced a $6.8 billion employment services program, which is replacing Job Services Australia on 1 July 2015. It includes a national rollout of Work for the Dole. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you want to take our fellow taxpayers’ money then what you should be able to do and be prepared to do is work for the dole, contribute something back to the community, which is supporting you through its taxes. My coalition colleagues and I are ensuring that the young and unemployed can become more engaged with the workforce, not disengaged and isolated. Our reforms send a very strong signal that we, the taxpayers, will support you when you need it, but we will not keep you. This bill, with its practical measures, is also about educating the unemployed that welfare is not a lifestyle choice, that it is not an employment option; it is a
safety net. I think it important when educating the young and unemployed that welfare should not be seen as a long-term option over actively seeking and engaging in the workforce.

I welcome the support in the employment programs announced in the budget for our region's young people, the youth of my electorate of Paterson. We as a government understand that small business is the engine room of our economy. It is no secret, no surprise, that this is where the jobs are actually created. It is where the jobs are sustained and it is where the unemployed and those seeking work can move to. It needs to be the logical choice to move to an employer, not the unemployment queue.

Under the previous Labor government, I saw in my electorate of Paterson small businesses repeatedly crippled, hobbled at the knees. It was disgusting; it was disgraceful. I was approached by a number of small businesses who were practically drowning in unnecessary red tape. It is because of that and after meeting with these small business owners and relaying the feedback to my coalition colleagues that we have now mapped a very clear pathway for a better way for small businesses to deal with these issues in our nation and, importantly, across my electorate. This bill will deliver outcomes, and it is outcomes that we pursue.

The government's 2015 budget is a game changer for the hardworking men and women of Australian small business. Our Growing Jobs and Small Business package is the biggest economic recognition of the sector in Australia's history. Small business has been and continues to be an enduring focus and priority for this government. We are reducing the corporate tax rate from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for small businesses with annual turnover under $2 million. It is estimated that some 780,000 companies could benefit from this measure—this is 780,000 more companies that will have the opportunity to employ more young people. I see our Growing Jobs and Small Business package as a direct way in which we as a government can assist youth unemployment in our nation—this is a package of practical measures to help small business invest, hire and grow, which in turn enables them to employ more people, and in particular more youth—the youth of this nation that deserve every opportunity to be fully engaged in the work force.

The coalition's Growing Jobs and Small Business package outlines: the lowest small business company tax rate in almost 50 years; tax cuts of 1.5 per cent, down to 28.5 per cent, for incorporated small businesses with an annual turnover up to $2 million; a five per cent tax discount for unincorporated small businesses, up to $1,000 per annum; and small businesses can claim an immediate tax deduction for each and every asset purchase up to $20,000 from the night of the budget through to 30 June, 2017. Those on the opposition benches do not seem to understand that when businesses are spending they are actually creating jobs in someone else's business. When a business spends, there is a purchase made so someone has to supply that product or provide that service, so jobs are created. It will be a massive kick-start to our economy and hopefully will address some of our unemployment problems. Also, start-ups will be allowed to immediately deduct professional expenses, providing cash flow benefits, and we are expanding tax concessions for employee share schemes.

All of these things are designed to grow small business, so our economy grows, and as a result jobs are created. As I said at the beginning, this government understands that the way to address unemployment in this nation, and particularly youth unemployment, is to create a path where businesses themselves can invest, can grow, can create jobs and can be sustainable—and without quality employees they can go nowhere. You cannot grow a
business and not have the employees to support that growth. Our packages overall, across all portfolios, are designed with one thing in mind, and that is to reduce unemployment in this great country. I want to see a return to the halcyon days under the Howard government when unemployment was low and employers were struggling to find employees. That is not the case now, when people are queued up. How often do we read about a bloke who has put in 100 or 200 applications, without even getting the courtesy of a reply? There are so many people, particularly young people, who lose faith absolutely because they continue to apply for jobs and at times do not even get the courtesy of a response. I have had this situation in my own household with one of my children. I have seen it first hand. I, as a parent, understand very well how critically important it is to create jobs in this nation so kids—not just mine but every young person—have the opportunity to get into the work force, not onto the dole queue. Labor's preferred option is welfare. That is reflected in all of the speeches that they make. They want to support welfare; it is all about welfare. A point of difference is that I say it is all about employment—creating the opportunity for employment so individuals have a sense of worth that they are contributing to this nation and can grow personally. That is what this bill is designed to enable. We will provide a helping hand, we will support people, but we will not create a lifestyle for anyone at the taxpayer's expense.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (17:11): I rise to speak on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. At the outset, those of us on this side of the House are very keen to support young people finding employment; we do not demonise them. So often we hear from the government side a succession of speakers who demonise and attack young people. We on this side want to support young people—we want to help them find jobs and make sure they have good long-term jobs for the future.

The measures in this bill continue the Abbott government's cruel attack on young Australians. We have already seen this in so many other areas, whether they be health, education or pensioners, and in this bill we see it in relation to young people. There is quite a bit of unfairness in this bill, and one example is the introduction of a one-month waiting period for the Newstart allowance. This is another unfair measure; another bad measure by a bad government. The fact is this bill seeks to give young job seekers under 25 nothing to live on for a month—absolutely nothing. It is another abandonment of young Australians by this Liberal-National government, and it reflects the continued unfairness at the very core of this government. This move is particularly unfair in the context of the very high youth unemployment which we see in this country. I will certainly talk more about that later, specifically in relation to regional areas. Rather than young people being provided with support, we see them being constantly demonised by this government. Labor knows and understands that young people want to work. They want to be able to find work. They do not want to be on benefits. They want to be able to work and contribute. That is what they aspire to.

Labor will oppose this latest cut that will impact on young Australians, just as we opposed last year's attempt to leave young job seekers with nothing to live on for six months. Whether it is one month or six, Labor will not support any measure which pushes young people into poverty and hardship. The costs to the community of that lifetime disadvantage are devastating to the individuals, to their families and to their communities. This is especially
significant in regional areas, where youth unemployment is so high it is at levels we have not seen for decades. If you look at my electorate of Richmond, youth unemployment is as high as 25.8 per cent amongst our 15-24-year-olds. That is a huge figure—25.8 per cent. Particularly in regional areas, youth unemployment is so high and is a grave concern.

We have said the bill introduces a range of very harsh measures, including the requirement that young people under 25 wait four weeks to receive income support. Of course, this bill continues the Liberal-National government’s budget attack on young people with the introduction of this legislation that will leave them with nothing to live on for a month, and we certainly oppose this position. Despite record high youth unemployment, the government sought initially to punish young people by imposing a six-month waiting period for access to NewStart. It is still one month, and that is very cruel. Labor continues to oppose this measure, because we understand that punitive measures are not the way to boost youth employment—it is not the way to go. We also understand that, in this current climate of grossly high unemployment, young people need every bit of real assistance they can get to enter or re-enter the workforce. Denying access to funds for even one month will make it sometimes impossible for young people to live, to pay their rent, to eat or even to pay for petrol to get to job interviews. Of course we heard the Treasurer say last year that poor people do not drive cars; that shows how out of touch the government is. What this government is doing will make it much harder for young people to live day to day. These are measures that will push young people into poverty; that is the reality—make no mistake about it. Most major welfare organisations across the country have commented on the unfairness of these measures and highlighted these cruel measures. In fact, ACOSS, the Australian Council of Social Service, said:

The Government now proposes to reduce the six month wait for unemployment payments for young people to one month, yet neither policy has been justified, especially at a time when unemployment is rising.

Another cruel measure is the extension of Youth Allowance from 22- to 24-year-olds in lieu of NewStart and sickness allowance, and this punishes young people by requiring them to live for an additional two years on a lower rate of assistance. This measure changes the eligibility age for NewStart, pushing job seekers who are between the ages of 22 and 24 onto the lower Youth Allowance. This a cut of around $48 a week; that is $48 a week this government wants to take off young people or around $2,500 a year. That is a very significant amount of money for a young person. Labor will oppose this measure because it is unfair and wrong. Also unfair is the application of a one-week waiting period to all working-age payments. This is another shameful cut by the government that will leave people on income support with nothing for a week. We also oppose the pauses to indexation changes over time, as these changes will hurt vulnerable people even more.

All this comes at a time, as I have said, of record youth unemployment. We know youth unemployment is around double the national average—in fact, the highest in a decade. In some parts of Australia, particularly regional areas, like my electorate of Richmond, more one in four young people cannot find a job. That is a huge statistic—one in four young people cannot find a job. Labor is the only party taking unemployment seriously; we are the only party that has a plan to address the youth jobs crisis in this country. At no stage during the global financial crisis, the most significant global recession since the Great Depression, was the youth unemployment rate as high as it is now under the Abbott government. Youth

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unemployment is currently at levels not seen since the mid-1990s. For the last 12 months, the average trend unemployment rate for young people looking for full-time work has been 15.7 per cent for people between 15 and 24 years old, and, as I have said, in regional areas it is often much higher.

Labor understands that, without a successful transition from study to work, young people will experience life-long employment disadvantage. We also understand how important it is to provide effective youth programs and training. Yet, what have we seen from this government? We have seen really effective youth programs cut. In last year's budget we saw the Abbott government completely cut all three youth unemployment prevention programs: Youth Connections, Partnership Brokers and National Career Development. These cuts were made despite the programs delivering excellent results since they were established by Labor in 2010. These are services that have been available to any young Australian and have helped tens of thousands of people from all communities and social backgrounds. I want to highlight in my electorate the Byron Youth Service, which has provided so much valuable support through Youth Connections, and that service may face closure due to these harsh cuts. For a service like Byron Youth Service to be facing closure is devastating for the young people of that region. Youth Connections provided the majority of their funding. Youth Connections has a truly impressive success rate in finding alternative ways to help people finish year 12, with over 80 per cent of participants in work or study 18 months after completing the program. Youth Connections reaches many people who would otherwise be left to face a lifetime risk of higher unemployment and lower earnings. Seventy per cent of Youth Connections students are from rural and regional areas; 20 per cent are Indigenous; and 40 per cent are from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Those programs are really important, and yet this government has cut them all and not replaced them with anything, leaving those young people with no options for engaging in effective programs.

I also want to mention that, when it comes to educational opportunities, one of the most ruthless attacks from this government is that on the higher education. The deregulation of university fees and the proposed 20 per cent cut in funding means that we will end up with $100,000 university degrees. I can tell you, and I hear this from rural and regional families all the time, that the fact that the Abbott government is going to bring in such harsh cuts means that their kids will not be able to access higher education. They cannot in any way afford such high university fees.

We have also seen the Abbott government cut funding from skills by slashing programs that provided apprenticeship opportunities and support. Apprenticeship related programs are vital to that important transition from training to work. The Abbott government's own record to date condemns young people with $1 billion in cuts to apprenticeship programs in the 2014-15 budget. It has also replaced apprentice support with apprentice debt; rebadged and cut funding to Australian Apprenticeship Centres; and abolished the Joint Group Training program. In fact, the government has put forward no new ideas for training young people for the jobs of the future. All we have seen when it comes to any skills and training initiatives is cuts, cuts, cuts. Of course, before the election the Prime Minister promised that the coalition would provide better support for Australian apprentices, but, in fact, the government has done exactly the opposite. It was another blatant lie from this government as it proceeds to make very deep cuts to the apprenticeship programs. It has now produced two budgets, and all we
have seen are many more cuts and absolutely no support. The government has cut funding for vital and proven services that assist young people to transition swiftly and successfully into the workforce. We have seen so many cuts in those training areas and in youth support areas and the increase in university fees; it is making it very difficult for younger people to gain effective training.

In contrast to the government’s cuts, Labor recently launched the first part of our plan to tackle youth unemployment—namely, Youth Jobs Connect. Youth Jobs Connect is a $21 million pilot program that will help young people move from unemployment to work. We have announced this policy because youth unemployment levels, as we have said, are at such record high levels across the country. Despite continuous calls—not just from the Labor side but from throughout the community—for the Abbott government to articulate a jobs plan, they have not done that at all. They have shown no interest in that. They are so out of touch and are obviously not concerned about the future for young people, when you look at the content of bills like this. It seems their only plan is to continuously put barriers in the way of young people seeking employment opportunities. There are constant barriers, not just this bill but also all the other barriers that I have already outlined.

Only Labor understands that a successful transition from study to work will help prevent young people from experiencing life-long employment difficulties. We certainly understand that. Youth Jobs Connect is an intensive six-month program to help disadvantaged young people under 24 get into work. There will be a focus on developing strong links with local employers to provide young people with work experience and employment opportunities within their businesses. Also, mentoring and training in core employability skills, along with, when required, literacy and numeracy skills, will help about 3,000 young people to find and keep a job. That is what Labor is doing. We are committed to addressing many of the concerns that are in existence when it comes to our young people being provided with effective training, mentoring and assistance to find employment.

On the other hand, this Liberal-National government continually denies younger people access to any means and assistance that might be help them get a job. This bill fundamentally seeks to marginalise the youth of this country through a very misguided and unfair approach through the use of punishment. They are being quite cruel. We know that does not work. We know such punitive measures do not work. We know the most effective tool is to provide incentives, support and training and to provide younger people with all those skills they will need to enter the workforce. We know that is important. We know that jobseekers need support to find a job—not savage attacks that make it harder for them to be able to find work.

As we have said, Labor will oppose this government’s latest cruel and savage cuts to younger people. Whether it is for six months or one month, Labor will not support a measure which punishes young people into poverty and hardship. I have had that feedback in my local area, where people were saying, initially: ‘Yes, the six months is cruel.’ Well, the one month is equally cruel. I do not think that Australians want to have a country that leaves young people with nothing to live on. I do not think they want to be in a country where young people are pushed into poverty. This legislation represents an abandonment of young people by this government. That is effectively what it does. They do not seem to care. They seem so out of touch with the fact that younger people will be pushed into poverty by their actions. It reflects the gross unfairness at the very core of this government’s budget.
At the end of the day, this government have no plan for jobs and they have no plan to deal with the youth unemployment crisis. It is particularly pertinent in regional areas. I implore those government members, particularly some from regional areas, to talk to people in their communities and understand how important it is for the government to have an effective plan to provide training and support for younger people and how important it is to make sure that youth programs are in place. Instead, we are seeing the government cutting all those youth programs. We need to see programs in place to make sure that assistance is there for younger people.

On this side, Labor will continue to oppose any of those cruel measures that will push younger people into poverty and make it more difficult for them. We will continue to stand up for young people by opposing all of the unfair measures of this government. We did it with the six-month wait for Newstart, and we will continue to do it with the one-month wait as well. It will not just be on this bill; it will be across all those other measures—whether they are the youth programs that provide support, whether they are the training and skills programs to make sure younger people can get all the skills they require to enter the workforce or whether they are about defending the right of our younger people to access education, particularly higher education. This comes on top of some claims we hear today about the government's schools tax that we might be seeing. This government seems to be going out of their way to impose punitive measures upon younger people—and we will continue to oppose them.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (17:27): Before speaking about the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015, I want to address some of the statements made by the member for Richmond with a quick history lesson. In December 2008, youth unemployment was 13.6 per cent. In December 2012 it was 17.3 per cent. As she leaves, the member for Richmond will think: 'Well, that was a failed Labor jobs plan for the youth of our society, wasn't it?' Another failed Labor jobs plan: we always hear about Labor and their jobs plan, and look what happened? Youth unemployment went up by around four per cent.

The member for Rankin sitting in this chamber here today will recall the history lesson I gave him recently. When he was adviser to the Treasurer, unemployment was at a higher level, according to their forecast, than it is now. We have created 280,000 jobs since coming into government. We have helped the private sector, helped small businesses, helped the economy and helped the youth of our society. What did Labor do? There was the mining tax. There was the carbon tax. Did they help the youth get entry-level roles? No, they did not—definitely not. However, let us move on to some positive announcements and forget about Labor's rhetoric and unfulfilled promises.

In the 2015-16 budget, the government announced a jobs and small business package which increases support services to those impacted by changes in this bill. We have invested close to $20 million for additional work experience places, providing on-the-job experience and connection to an employer. I know from my own personal experience that these are great initiatives. You get experience from an employer in a practical role, which might lead on to paid work. It gives the employer and the potential employee a chance to grow together and learn about each other's skills and opportunities.
We are providing close to $20 million in new support for youth with mental health conditions and $22.1 million in support for vulnerable young migrants and refugees. And we are continuing to support parents to prepare for employment, with $18.9 million. These trials focus on the most disadvantaged and will help them to prepare for work, find a job and stay in a job. But this debate today should focus on the income support waiting period only, as all other elements of this bill have been debated previously.

From 1 July 2016 young people under 25 who are the most ready and who apply for youth allowance or other special benefit will serve a four-week waiting period before becoming eligible for payment. During this four weeks, importantly, they will receive continual assistance, like meeting with a Job Active provider, agreeing to a plan, developing an up-to-date resume, creating a profile on the JobSearch website and providing evidence of applications. Further, we have made $8.1 million available in emergency relief to provide assistance to job seekers affected by the measure who are experiencing hardship.

Importantly, students will not be subject to the four-week waiting period. Further, in recognition of the importance of education and training in preventing future unemployment young people who return to school or take up full-time vocational education or university study will be able to seek more suitable payments, such as youth allowance for students, and would therefore not be subject to the four-week waiting period. And job seekers who have been assessed as having significant barriers to finding a job will not be required to serve the four-week waiting period. These are all important elements of this bill.

In South Australia in May 2015, the unemployment rate for 15-19 year olds was 22.7 per cent—far too high, and often something that has been far too high during 13 years of a state Labor government. I must give credit, though, to an organisation in South Australia that works with young people in employment and also other areas—SYC. They are based in Adelaide but they do great work nationally. A couple of their divisions are focused on providing meaningful assistance to young people in finding work. They also recognise the changing landscape for young people seeking their first real job. As employers opt increasingly for employees who have at least two years' work experience it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people actually to get those first two years' experience—particularly in their chosen career field.

This is something that SYC—and, I am sure, many others around Australia—are trying to help out with, similar to how our work experience initiative with the private sector and other organisations is so valuable. So I want to congratulate the SYC team—Paul Edginton, the chief executive, and Michael Clarke, who is another member of their executive—for the great work they are doing in my state and around Australia.

In terms of opportunities for young people today, there are a couple of sectors that really stand out. I have seen some really positive statistics in recent times, such as for retail trade. Woolworths has set up a new store at the Brickworks area in my electorate, employing many young people—12,000 South Australians, and 5,400 are under the age of 25. That is a significant percentage of employees. They also have 272 who are under 25 of 506 at the Masters store at the airport. That opened only recently and is doing great things.

In the accommodation and food services sector, which service the tourism sector, young people are 18.8 per cent of those employed in that sector. And health care and social assistance employ 7.7 per cent. And some of these sectors are growing—aged care, health
care and tourism are all on the way up, and we will see more young people taking advantage of the growth in those sectors.

I want to make particular mention of a successful businessman who employs so many young people and who does some great training of young people in my electorate: Roger Drake, AM. He was a state finalist for Senior Australian of the Year 2015 and owns and runs Drake Supermarkets.

Mr Laundy: He's a great man!

Mr WILLIAMS: He is a great man—you know him, too, don't you, member for Reid?

He places high importance on staff training. Drakes is a registered training organisation, and offers opportunities for all employees to undertake nationally recognised training. A few years ago, Drakes training was recognised for their passion and dedication by winning 'Employer of the Year' at the Australian Training Awards. As we know, training is extremely important in helping young people to get a job.

In closing: as you have heard, Mr Deputy Speaker, we are taking measures to ensure that young job seekers accept any suitable job, not just a job they would like to have. I know that they need to look at options, including travelling—and we have provided incentives for them to travel to rural areas where there are job opportunities, whether those be in hospitality or agribusiness, which are some of the growing sectors in our economy. Unemployment benefits are for those who are looking for work and who are struggling to find any work. We think this is fair and targeted.

In jobless families, the government is making sure that the welfare cycle stops, and that we are assisting those who are less privileged and finding it tough to work through those challenging times and to get meaningful employment. This is an important initiative; we are going to execute those programs that will deliver results, and by reducing taxes and helping businesses we are going to provide a better economy and more opportunities for young people. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (17:34): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015.

This is a bill which speaks to this government's contempt for young Australians and for Australia's social compact. It represents a triumph of ideology over evidence. It was very interesting to hear the closing remarks of the previous speaker, the member for Hindmarsh, when he spoke about fairness and assistance for young job seekers. These are two things that are very little in evidence across this government's attitude to youth employment generally and that re nowhere to be found in the provisions of this mean-spirited bill.

The purpose of this legislation is, of course, to amend the Social Security Act 1991 and a number of pieces of related legislation. It will make some very significant changes, most of which—with, perhaps, one exception—are extremely objectionable and which will dramatically affect and hold back the course of too many young lives.

In outline, this legislation will extend the application of the ordinary waiting period of seven days to recipients of payments like the parenting payment and youth allowance. The ordinary waiting period currently applies to Newstart and sickness allowance recipients. It will also raise the eligibility age for Newstart and sickness allowance from 22 to 25 years of
age from 1 July next year. The age requirement for youth allowance will also be adjusted upwards from the current ceiling of 21 to 24 years.

Cruelly, the four-week waiting period for new claimants of youth allowance and the special benefit will be introduced. The low-income supplement will be abolished and indexation is to be paused for the income-free areas for all working-age allowances from 1 July, and similarly with the student payment from 1 January 2016.

If a lot of this sounds familiar it is, of course, because it is. This bill is not the first time the Abbott government has tried to attack young people and their futures with these kinds of measures. Labor strongly opposed the previous incarnation of these cuts in this parliament and in the community, and it will do so again. Labor remembers, just as young people in my electorate and in the electorate of my friend the member for Rankin remember, the previous iteration of this legislation, where it was proposed that young people receive no income support whatsoever for a period up to six months. Let me be clear again: Labor will never support leaving young job seekers under 25 with nothing to live on for six months—or indeed for one month. This is a cut of at least $48 a week, or almost $2,500 a year.

Last week I spoke in this place about the youth unemployment crisis that affects the northern suburbs of Melbourne, including those in the electorate of Scullin. The youth unemployment rate in April hit 20 per cent. Whilst there is always some volatility in month-by-month figures, this rate has consistently been at least in the mid-teens. It is extremely worrying, to say the least. The rate is usually only as high as this over the summer holidays, when more young people are available and looking for work. That it is so high in the middle of the year should be setting off alarm bells for this government, as it is for me and my colleagues. Instead, we see an attitude of cruelty, of vindictiveness, of treating young lives as somehow disposable. How are young people supposed to find work when there simply aren’t a sufficient number of entry-level jobs available?

Unemployment more generally has been above six per cent for over a year. It is tough out there—make no mistake. There is no plan for jobs from this government and no plan to equip young people to work the jobs of the future. Cutting people’s already meagre payments is a simplistic and superficial approach to a complex problem. Again, it is the triumph of ideology over evidence and reason. Labor understands that job seekers need support to find a job and not be attacked or stigmatised. The young people who I speak to in the Scullin electorate are very keen to find and remain in employment, as are their parents and their grandparents, whose concern for young people, both those in their family and more generally, is a key feature of every street corner meeting that I attend.

The Australia Institute recently conducted a very valuable study, *Hard to get a break?*, which found:

Younger workers aged 17-24 years were most likely to identify the lack of jobs and their own lack of relevant skills as the main barrier to them finding a job than the other age groups. In the younger group, 36 per cent considered the lack of jobs the key problem compared to the average of 20 per cent across the other age groups. Similarly, 31 per cent of this group felt the appropriateness of their skills was the most important issue compared with the average of 13 per cent.

A University of Melbourne study found:
… poor macroeconomic conditions tend to drive young people out of full-time work and into inactivity or part-time work … males who did not complete secondary school suffer the largest increase in unemployment risks as the unemployment rate increases.

So what the evidence tells us we should be doing is skilling young people up—particularly vulnerable young people, particularly vulnerable young men. Instead, this government continues to try to knock them down, to deny them every chance to reach their full potential in life.

Unfortunately it appears that we have a government in Australia that is obsessed with making ordinary people's lives harder, not better. Last year's and this year's budgets have made the macroeconomic conditions in our economy so much worse. Consumer confidence and business confidence are down. People remain reluctant to spend, with a government that has no regard for levels of employment. This in turn means that businesses are less willing to hire new staff. It is a vicious circle, but it is one that this government could ameliorate if it just took a step back from these attacks on young people.

As the Parliamentary Library's Bills Digest notes, despite the fact that the waiting period has been significantly reduced, from six months to one month, and is now only to be applied once to claimants rather than on an on-going basis, it has been argued that four weeks without access to income support would still place many young people in severe financial hardship. The Bills Digest states:

If young people subject to the proposed new waiting period are unable or unwilling to call upon family support or the assistance of charities, then they could lack sufficient means to find a job. Further, if they have no savings or other means of support, these young people would be more likely to be preoccupied with the immediate needs of paying for food and rent than with finding paid employment.

This is something that government members would do well to relate to. The extraordinary cruelty of the original proposals this government put forward is one thing: six months with no income support whatsoever, and not one period of six months to be cut off from any support from the state or society; this is something that could have been repeated on young people. The consequences are not simply about foisting the support of individuals onto their families, where they have families able to support them, or onto charities under other circumstances; the impact goes deeper than that. The Bills Digest has identified something that we understand, something that we on this side of the House know: this also a huge barrier to enabling people to equip themselves to find work in circumstances where it is very tough to find work, with youth unemployment in the areas that I represent at around 20 per cent. This is something that this government does not or will not understand.

The same principle applies so clearly to the imposition of the activity test in terms of child care, where we are seeing exactly the cohort of people—in that case our most vulnerable young children, in this case young people who may well be at risk of falling between the cracks—who need investment, who need support to get a start on the ladder of life, having that denied to them. This is unnecessary cruelty which carries grave consequences for all of those individuals and for the shape of our society at large. This goes fundamentally to the sort of society that we see ourselves as being. It comes down to the social compact that ought to bind Australians. In Labor's vision we do not see these young lives as things that are simply disposable. We see a critical role of government as having a plan for jobs but also a plan to
enable people to equip themselves to find those jobs, to engage in secure work, to achieve their potential and to enhance all of our potential as a society.

In this regard I do welcome one belated acknowledgement on the part of this government—that is, successful Labor policies like Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers tackled exactly this problem of helping young people who may be disengaged from education and the job market transition into employment in a sustainable way. We on this side remember that six months after leaving Youth Connections, 94 per cent of the young people who had been through the program were still engaged in education and employment, and after two years more than 80 per cent were still in work or education. Those remarkable figures meant nothing, sadly, to those opposite when they cut this program in last year’s budget. We acknowledge that there is now a rebadged version of this program, which is welcome, but too little too late—especially when this government is cutting schools and universities and imposing draconian cuts on young job seekers, such as those set out substantively in this bill.

I note that Labor will be supporting one measure that is yet to be considered by this place—namely, the abolition of the low-income supplement. Of course the onus now should be on the government to split this element from the rest of the bill so it can be voted on. It is typically sneaky of the government to try holding this part hostage so it can complain—again unreasonably—that Labor is standing in the way of these savings. Labor is prepared to act in good faith; I call on the government to do likewise.

What I take issue with fundamentally is those opposite attacking vulnerable, young Australians as a way to make budget savings when there are other, far bigger, potential sources of budget repair. Last week the Minister for Social Services repeatedly described the pension as a ‘welfare payment’. I think that would come as news to a lot of pensioners. I know that it did to those in my electorate—who raised the issue with me—and to many other Australians.

We have a social compact in Australia that the Abbott government is seeking to tear up. This compact has an international dimension, recognised in the various human rights covenants that Australia is party to. I note that in four out of five reports of the parliamentary joint committee on human rights, the committee has raised significant concerns regarding the right to social security as recognised in article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Under article 9, the removal of a pre-existing social security right is subject to stringent scrutiny. The committee examined the measures, as introduced in the bill that preceded this one, and found that the six-month exclusion period measure, as previously proposed, was ‘incompatible with the right to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living’. It is very hard to argue with that.

The committee also found that the exclusion period change and the proposed changes to the qualifying age for Newstart allowance and sickness allowance were ‘incompatible with the rights to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of age’. Despite these legitimate and powerful concerns, the best the government could do was assert in its statement of compatibility that, while the exclusion period and age change measures would limit these same rights, the limitations were considered reasonable ‘proportionate to the policy objective’ and for ‘legitimate reasons’. Unsurprisingly, this bald and callous assertion is not expanded on much beyond stating:
The amendments in this Schedule do not affect eligibility for social security pensions or benefits, rather they affect the rules governing when those eligible for certain payments can start receiving their entitlements. The amendments focus on promoting self-support by requiring people to meet their own living costs for a short period where they are able. New claimants who need immediate financial assistance will still be able to access exemptions and waivers provided they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

What sophistry! If only life was so easy and straightforward. Maybe it is for members opposite, but it is not for the one in five young people who are unemployed in Melbourne's north today.

But this is the problem with this bill and the government's approach in a nutshell: it is ideology over evidence and it relies on people magically finding work where none, or none suitable, is available. We urgently need a more sophisticated and nuanced approach to this complex problem; one that works with people, not against them. I think all of us in this place want to see unemployment reduced. We want to see more people working; working in high-quality secure jobs; jobs that set them up for secure and high-quality lives.

Labor's position is starkly different from that of this callous government. You do not reduce unemployment by having people go without enough money to buy food or keep a roof over their heads. We recognise—a part from the basic dignity that is at risk here—that this is not the best preparation for anyone to find a job. Driving people into poverty or destitution solves nothing. It just makes a bad situation far worse. In government, Labor had policies that made a positive difference; policies that generated jobs growth and got people into work. Unemployment was actually lower under Labor than it has been at any stage under this government.

Reducing unemployment should not be seen as budget savings. It should not be seen as a burden. It is an investment in our young people. It is an investment in our capacity and our collective wellbeing. Unfortunately, it is the case that we have a government that is not concerned about youth unemployment or about the future of this country.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (17:49): It is good to have this opportunity tonight to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015.

To my mind, four things are required to address unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. Firstly, there needs to be skills and training, to prepare people for the opportunities of the future. There needs to be opportunities, because training without somewhere to go is not that useful. And there needs to be services and support, often provided by government or agencies of government. And probably above all, there needs to be a good attitude, a positive attitude, to the opportunities out there.

When I look around my electorate and the communities and the people of my electorate, I see some people who really know how to work hard, and they do great jobs. Some people are prepared to do anything. Often low-skilled people, people who have come from refugee or migrant backgrounds, are prepared to do some of the not very nice jobs in the electorate—including hard manual labour type jobs that are out there. So, above all, attitude is a very important element of all this.

I remember once when I was at a local high school—this was not long after I got elected; it might have been in 2008 or 2009. I was having a discussion with a year 10 class—I will not
name the school—and one of the students said to me, 'If I don't want to work, I shouldn't have to'. Fortunately that is a very rare failure of attitude. Or maybe it is okay that someone should say, 'If I do not want to work should not have to.' But I think there is a responsibility in this nation that if someone decides they do not want to work, they do not want to make that sort of effort, they do not want to make a contribution then they should also never take the support of the taxpayer.

Fortunately that was the only time I have ever heard that said so I think that is a great endorsement on the people of my electorate and probably across the whole country. That self-centred viewpoint with such a lack of responsibility, I have only ever heard it once. Most of the time people have a very good attitude towards work. Every day when I walk into the shopping centre my office is at I see people hard at work whether it is in the fruit shop, the bakery, Woolworths or elsewhere. In Malaga or in Wangara, the light industrial areas, again, many people are at work and that is great.

I talked a bit about the four elements required to do something about unemployment. I would like to take up the opportunity side of things because obviously government does not create jobs—unless we are talking about increasing the size of the public service. Government is about facilitating private enterprise in the creation of jobs. So when the other side, the Labor Party, talked about how apparently we have no plan then obviously they were not there on budget night because the small business package was exactly about creating opportunities for Australians. It was exactly about the incentivising of the private sector to create jobs.

I think it was the member for Hume who asked a question where he highlighted a local business. Thanks to the small business initiatives of this coalition government, five jobs were created in one small business in the electorate of Hume—I think it was Hume. That is a great endorsement of a policy, which is a plan and which is helping private enterprise to create employment. I think that is where the opportunities lie.

On the issue of skills and training, I would also like to reflect very favourably on some of the high schools in the electorate of Cowan. I would like to start with Ballajura Community College, which has a very good hospitality program. I remember on many occasions where the school had invited me and other people to functions, going into the kitchen afterwards and being able to see the portfolios of the hospitality students—basically young chefs in the making—and a photo book of some of the great recipes and presentations they have done. It was very encouraging. Those are real skills for the future.

Woodvale Secondary College has certificate courses in animal studies, business, construction, engineering, hospitality, music, outdoor recreation, sport and recreation, and visual and contemporary craft. These are all part of the vocational education and training courses that exist at Woodvale Secondary College. Again, this is an example of where one of those elements of getting gainful employment in the future is achieved because the state education system is providing those course opportunities, those skills and training opportunities that young people want. We know that entry to university is not everything and it is not a measure of a person's success. Great employment—and very highly-paid employment as well—can be achieved through vocational education.

Next I would like to look at Girrawheen Senior High School, which, in conjunction with Polytechnic West, offers a certificate II in construction and a pre-apprenticeship in bricklaying and block laying. Girrawheen is not so much linked to university entry but very
much linked to vocational education and training. I certainly endorse the work they are doing at Girrawheen Senior High School.

I would like to speak briefly about what Wanneroo Secondary College as well. Wanneroo Secondary College has effectively two campuses. It has got the main campus, which does the traditional subjects but it also offers certificates in sports and recreation, information and communication technology, business, visual arts, music, textiles and first aid. But over at the Joondalup campus there are traineeships and apprenticeships. Students can get certificates in construction, make-up and nails, child care, business, metals and engineering, electrical trades, automotive, hospitality and beauty.

I look at Wanneroo Secondary College and I see a school that is doing great work identifying what the students are interested in but also their needs as well. When I look at certificates in hospitality or in beauty or in makeup and nails, in every shopping centre these are the sorts of skills that employers require. I look at what is being done at these high schools and they are always interested in the vocational education and training opportunities for young people. I see that they are doing great focused work which does equip students for the opportunities of the future.

Again I look at the four elements that I mentioned before. There are the skills and training, which I have mentioned with regard to the high schools, the secondary schools, in the electorate of Cowan. I look at the opportunities, strengthened by the government's small business package and our plan for employment. I have talked briefly about the attitude. I mentioned just one example, and I am sure it is a very, very rare example, of someone with a bad attitude—maybe that was just bravado from a year 10 student. But, when I look at the numbers of students that are doing very well in the vocational education and training courses in Cowan, I think that that is a demonstration as well of a good attitude.

Those are three of the four elements. But what I would just like to talk about to finish, of course, is what the government also provides—that is, the services and support. This piece of legislation contains a number of measures addressing social services, from ordinary waiting periods through to age requirements for various Commonwealth payments, low-income support supplements, indexation and income support waiting periods. The House debated a number of these measures earlier, so it is my intention just to address the income support waiting times outlined in this legislation.

I believe the measures in the legislation are fair and targeted and will benefit young job seekers in Cowan. Certainly from 1 July 2016 young people under 25 who are the most job ready who apply for youth allowance or special benefit will serve a four-week waiting period before becoming eligible for payment. By 'job ready' I mean someone who lives in an area with good employment opportunities, has reasonable language, literacy and numeracy skills and has recent work experience. I can see that all of these are exactly the measures of the four elements of employment, dovetailing really well into this 'job ready' definition.

In this measure, yes, we do talk about savings because that is important, given the budgetary mess that we were left and the need to balance the books and to try to get this country sustainable. But, during the first four weeks, young job seekers will be meeting with a jobactive provider and agreeing to a job plan, developing an up-to-date resume, creating a job seeker profile on the JobSearch website and providing evidence of satisfactory job searches with up to 20 job applications. I think that certainly this is important. This goes to the
obligations that I have mentioned before. It goes to the attitude as well. It is, again, the four elements of obtaining jobs that I mentioned before. These are the services and support provided by the providers that have been organised by the government.

Students will not be subject to the four-week waiting period. Furthermore, in recognition of the importance of education and training in preventing future unemployment, young people who return to school or take up full-time vocational education or university study will be able to seek more suitable payments such as youth allowance (student) and would therefore not be subject to the four-week waiting period.

Job seekers who have been assessed as having significant barriers to finding a job will not be required to serve the four-week waiting period. This will include stream B and stream C jobactive clients.

The bill also includes a number of important exemptions to the four-week waiting period: Firstly, if someone has served a four-week waiting period in the last six months, they will not have to serve another if that job ends through no fault of their own. They have done exactly what we have asked, and they will go onto the youth allowance payment. Certainly it is the case that there are protections, but there are also obligations involved with this bill.

As I said, the government are doing excellent work through the services and the support and also helping small business with the opportunities through our small business package. The state education system particularly is doing great work with skills and training. I believe that certainly in the electorate of Cowan, and across this whole country, young people have a great attitude. With these four elements, there will be the best opportunities available.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (18:04): I too rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which has a particular draconian impact on unemployed young people. It is not, as the member for Cowan said, about making the young unemployed job ready. It is actually about punishing the young unemployed for being unemployed—in effect, blaming the victim. The measures in this bill continue the undeclared class and intergenerational warfare against young people and those on lower incomes that was at the core of last year's budget, and it is still central to this year's budget. It was central as well to the Commission of Audit report, which in effect recommended the original proposal, which was to knock people off unemployment benefits for a much longer period of time in the coalition's first budget.

In this budget there has been an attempt to cover over the stench of unfairness that characterised the 2014 budget. That is why this budget has not repeated the Ayn Rand rhetoric of 'lifters' and 'leaners' that so much characterised last year's budget. But it is there in intent. It is there in intent when it comes to the suspension for four weeks and when it comes to moving unemployed people onto the lower youth allowance.

The coalition have attempted to camouflage the stench of unfairness in this year's budget by a lot of rhetoric, pomp and ceremony and stupidity about the instant asset write-off, which has come back as a boost to small business—that is, reconstructing a measure which the government abolished in the Commission of Audit and the midyear update after they were elected, and bringing it back and clothing it as somehow this fantastic employment measure. No doubt it will boost employment somewhat but it is not going to boost employment to the extent being claimed by others.
So far in the budget this year the Treasurer has not repeated the rhetoric of lifters and
leaners but at the core of this budget is the coalition's absolute commitment to trickle-down
economics, a doctrine that guides everything they do when it comes to the economy. In short,
unfairness lies at the heart of their agenda and all of the pumped up rhetoric about Labor's
repackaged instant asset write-off does not disguise the continuing unfairness in this year's
budget.

What other measures are unfair? There are the sorts of measures described by the member
for Cowan as being about job readiness. First, the Abbott government will attack young
Australians by seeking to introduce a one-month waiting period for Newstart. Let us consider
what that means. At the moment, youth unemployment is 13.5 per cent. It is a level not seen
since 2001. That means there are about 280,000 young Australians unemployed at the
moment. Think about that. That is about the population of Wollongong. So the government's
legislation will leave some young job seekers with nothing to live on for a month. And just to
rub salt into that wound, it also seeks to move some job seekers from Newstart onto youth
allowance, which is effectively a cut of at least $48 a week. That is extraordinary. That is not
about job readiness; that is about punishment. So they are stopping people from getting
Newstart for a month, moving those onto youth allowance with a big hit to their weekly
income. That is what this bill is all about.

The assumption over on that side of the House is, 'They'll be able to be supported by their
families. Nothing's wrong. All should be okay. It's not too tough out there trying to live on
$100 or $150 or on what they have left over after they meet the necessities of life.' The truth is
that many families are not going to be able to support these people if, indeed, they are living
with their families. And if they are living with their families, it does impose a very significant
burden on households. It increases the pressure. At the heart of the measures in last year's
budget and at the heart of the measures in this year's budget is the assumption that, if you
cannot get a job, it is your fault. If you cannot walk into a job straight away then you are
really not trying. They have this view even at a time when unemployment is at levels not seen
in the last two decades.

So the Liberal Party are abandoning young Australians and casting them into a winner-
takes-all bear pit where only the fittest survive. I can think of nothing more appropriate than
the imagery of Ayn Rand and all of her writings, which I know members opposite are very
familiar with. I know they are big fans, which is why it surfaces so frequently in their policy
making. Policies like this one show that the government have not learnt a thing from last
year's budget. They think that by reducing the Newstart withholding period from six months
to one month is better. They simply do not get it.

The Labor Party will never support a measure which pushes more young people into
poverty and at its core is fundamentally unfair and the Labor Party will never support a
measure which will reduce social mobility and entrench unfairness like the coalition's
$100,000 degrees policy. They simply do not get fairness because they have a policy agenda
which favours those who are better off. The government simply do not do fairness very well.
They simply do not understand the concept. They shy away from reforms that affect those
who are better off but get stuck into those who have very little. It is a stingy measure to
withhold money and it simply reflects their priorities.
We can see all this when we look at the analysis of what has happened with this budget—the sort of analysis the government refuses to do and which once upon a time was standard fare in a budget but is now abolished from the budget papers because the analysis tells the inconvenient truth of the impact of these measures. ACOSS and NATSEM have shown just how harsh their first budget was on low- and middle-income families and again as is their second budget. ACOSS estimates that the 2015 budget will cut $15 billion over four years from basic services which support vulnerable groups. NATSEM modelling shows that nine out of 10 of the lowest income families lose out under the Abbott government's budget while nine out of 10 of the wealthiest families will benefit. And above all, NATSEM modelling shows that Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey have their sights firmly set on low- and middle-income families. Under this budget a family with a single income of $65,000 and two children will be $6,165 a year worse off by 2018-19, over $115 a week. A family with a dual income of $120,000 and two children will be $3,272 a year worse off by 2018-19, over $60 a week.

The Prime Minister has been quick to criticise this modelling because he says it does not take into account second-round effects. The budget never has taken into account second-round effects. Even if you leave that to one side, the fact that the budget is not crafted on second-round effects, thousands of people are going to be worse off. He is taking money out of the pockets of households and undermining confidence.

The Treasurer and the Prime Minister used to say that surpluses were in their DNA. They do not say that anymore and for obvious reasons. When a budget which is designed to be less unfair than last year's manages to produce these kinds of terrible effects, we know there is one thing that is truly in the DNA of the modern Liberal Party—an inability to practice fairness in anything they do. When the Abbott government proposed the six-month wait on Newstart last year, it was the single most vicious, unjustified and utterly punitive measure I have ever seen a government take anywhere in my time in public policy. And what was the rationale for the policy at the time? According to the former Minister for Social Services, New Zealand had a one-month mandatory waiting period which drove young people into the workforce. There is just one problem—New Zealand did not have a one-month mandatory waiting period and it never did. The former minister simply made it up. There is not a shred of policy research or advice to be found anywhere on the planet—not in New Zealand, not in Australia and not even with the wing nuts at the IPA—that gave any rationale for that policy. Nonetheless, they pushed ahead with a policy that denied upfront support to the most vulnerable labour market group at the very time they needed support to find work quickly—because that is just what Liberals do.

This really shows that the coalition do not understand jobs, they do not understand unemployment and they do not understand the macro economy. If they did, they would not have spent five years undermining confidence with their false debt and deficit emergency campaign, which they waged not only in opposition but also in government, ironically against themselves. A lot of that rhetoric has been ditched in this year's budget, along with the lifters and leaners rhetoric.

The fear campaign they ran about the budget and the economy smashed confidence to the point where, before this current budget, consumer confidence was down 13 per cent and business confidence was down a staggering 23 per cent. Only when confidence was reeling did the coalition seem to realise that, if you constantly talk the economy down and talk up a

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fictitious budget crisis, businesses are not going to hire extra workers, expand their business or invest in new equipment. Then hey presto, having decided that they should not be doing this and they should not have abolished the instant asset write-off, it makes reappearance as a new Liberal stimulus, with very little mention of where it actually came from. With confidence so low over the past year that is what has actually happened. They have been forced to change their rhetoric and to change some of their policies, but nowhere near enough.

Their forecasts have unemployment with a six in front of it across the forward estimates, and that is for the first time in many years. Right now there are 750,000 unemployed Australians. We are simply a small economic shock away from having one million unemployed in Australia. In what are, by and large, benign global economic conditions, this result is absolutely shameful—and the coalition do not have a plan to fix it. The budget papers show that they are not expecting unemployment to fall below six per cent until 2018-19. So the coalition has the mantra: ‘Let's be brutal to young unemployed Australians and cut them off from support because that will motivate them to get back into the workforce,’ despite the fact that we have got record high numbers of both unemployed young people and unemployed people overall in our economy.

The coalition's approach to this whole debate has been shameful. They have sought to perpetuate the outrageous fiction that somehow welfare is a career choice. You hear this from the Prime Minister almost daily in the parliament. Of course he is doing what Liberals have always done—concocting scenarios that malign certain sectors of society and turning people against one another. They know that if they repeat them often enough their cheer squad in sections of the media will promote their agenda without question. This is the divide and rule mentality writ large of the modern Liberal Party.

Young Australians do not want to be on welfare. They want to work. They want to contribute to their community and to society. The measures in this bill smack of the divisive politics that are the hallmark of this government, and Labor will not have a bar of it. We will offer young Australians a hand up when they are in need and we will never divide society into lifters and leaners, as that crew opposite do almost every day.

Over the past 30 years societies across the world have become increasingly divided as income and wealth inequality has grown, but Australia has bucked that trend so far. This is something that we on this side of the House are extremely proud of. In fact, we reduced poverty and shared wealth when we were in government in a far better way than any other government in the Western world. The Australian model is now recognised as the gold standard for achieving inclusive economic growth. An IMF report released last week confirms that Australia is one of the few countries that have resisted the trend of a shrinking middle class. This is largely because of initiatives put in place by progressive Labor governments over the last 30 years—a decent industrial relations system, a decent minimum wage, universal access to health and education, a progressive tax system, a decent and targeted transfer payments system and a decent retirement income system. They are the basis for inclusive growth. They are the basis for strong economic growth fairly shared. When it is fairly shared you grow much more strongly than otherwise. The trickle-down brigade over there are heading in the opposite direction. (Time expired)

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (18:20): What a fairytale we have just been subjected to in the House of Representatives. The Labor Treasurer who took us from zero net debt to $667
billion of debt and deficits approaching $50 billion a year was saying in this House that somehow we cannot achieve a surplus. The perpetrator of all of this just walked out the door. The reason we have high youth unemployment and unemployment in an unsuitable zone is the past seven years of a very bad Labor government, which in part was led by the former Treasurer, the member for Lilley, who has just left this room.

It is very difficult to understand how he could come here today and criticise this government putting forward the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which attempts to deal with the youth unemployment crisis that is facing our nation. This bill sends the right signal to young job seekers, young people of ability who are able to get a job. We are going to take some measures to ensure that it is not the case that they go straight from high school to the Centrelink office.

We have some points of difference with the member for Lilley. He does not see a problem with young people being on welfare. This is the view of the modern Labor Party. Once upon a time the Labor Party were the party of the workers. The trade union leaders had actual trades. I am not sure how many trade union leaders over there even have a trade these days—in fact, probably very few or none. They represented workers against their bosses. But what we are seeing at the moment in Labor's opposition to this legislation is that Labor has truly become the party of welfare, the party of the handout.

It was ironic for the member for Lilley to tell us that he supports a hand-up when we see youth unemployment at high levels, with young people taking welfare, and the Labor Party seems to think that is some sort of career choice—some sort of good deal for young people. The real form of poverty comes from sustained periods on welfare. The way out of poverty is for people to get jobs. The way to get jobs is to get a strong economy—to have a government dedicated to getting a strong economy, not to redistributing wealth, as the member for Lilley likes to say. That is taking wealth from the productive and handing it around. That works for a period of time, but you get to a point in a welfare state, which we are at now, where we have an enormous government debt and a government deficit, and the member for Lilley is content to say: 'Well, let's just keep on spending that money. There is no problem. We have no difficulty going forward.' That is not the reality of what any federal government will now face from this point going forward. It is a reality crunch which tells us that we cannot afford the current welfare state model and that we need to take measures to help get people back to work and to have a stronger economy generating more jobs and more prosperity.

I want to commend the Minister for Social Services for putting the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which is before us today, because this is a very balanced, very fair piece of legislation. Yes, it has taken some time to work with the sector to get to a bill of this nature, and it does very fairly deal with people who are unable to seek work, through many different facets. We have taken account of issues such as disability, impairment, single mothers or people who are pregnant. We are being very realistic in this bill about the circumstances, difficulties and dilemmas that young people face. But it is, of course, the right signal to say to young people: 'We expect you to be fully focused on getting a job all of the time.'

When you look now at all of our major cities, including many of the electorates that the Labor Party represents and that the member for Lilley would know about, we now have problems of intergenerational welfare, where whole families have been on welfare not simply
for one generation but for more than a generation. This, of course, is no good way for these people to live. They do not want to live on welfare. They would like to get jobs and get moving. They would like their lives to progress. Real poverty comes about from intergenerational welfare. Real prosperity comes about from a strong economy providing jobs and people being able to access those jobs, and that is what this bill is about. It is about saying to all those able young people, 'Get a job when you leave high school; don't get into that welfare poverty trap,' because we know that, when a person gets onto welfare, they are more likely to stay on welfare. They are more likely to get trapped on welfare. They are more likely to lose their skills and focus over time the longer they spend on welfare.

Of course, the government, the Australian people, the Australian taxpayer and successive Labor and Liberal governments have provided free public education and access to university for almost anybody that wants to seek it in Australia, with a generous HECS loan system that is being reinforced by this government to ensure anybody can access university. We are prepared to pay for people to go to university to get a degree. We are prepared to pay for them to get another degree, to retrain to get a trade or to go through the VET sector. The government is prepared to pay for any young person to continue their training or retraining or whatever they have to do to find the right trade or get the right skill to go and get a job. Given that that is the attitude of the government, of the Australian people and of the taxpayer, all the measures in this bill before us are saying to those young people: 'That is what we want you to be doing. We don't want you to be claiming welfare.'

When you think about the situation in Australia today, there are plenty of small businesses all around this nation that would like to add more workers, and more young workers in particular. But we have the member for Lilley lecturing us about industrial relations unfairness. How is it fair that a very small business, a cafe, has to pay a higher penalty rate on a Sunday than the local McDonald's across the road? It makes no sense. It stops that small business from employing as many young people as it might like on a Sunday. It means that there are fewer shifts or, in many cases in regional areas, that small businesses are unable to open and take on a young worker. Without the flexibility in the labour market that small business needs—and I reiterate that I am talking specifically about small business and how the inflexibility of the industrial relations system affects it—how does this help young people? The answer is that it does not.

So we have a Labor Party that is rigidly opposed to labour market reform, except of course if you are prepared to offer a massive payment to an individual union, we have learnt. If, under the table, you hand over millions of dollars then you will get some productivity, some movement and some difference, but not if you want to take on young people for more shifts and, as a cafe, open your doors on a public holiday in a regional area. You will get zero flexibility from the Australian Labor Party. You will get not one iota of movement. That would generate hundreds of thousands of extra shifts and extra jobs across the country, but of course there is no big business that can offer a multimillion-dollar payment to a union to facilitate that. That, of course, is what we really see going on in youth unemployment in Australia today.

Mr Feeney: Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I appreciate that these contributions often get very willing and that there is typically an amount of latitude provided to speakers,
but I think this speaker is casting aspersions upon members of this House that perhaps he needs to reflect on.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): Please continue.

Mr HAWKE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I understand why the member for Batman made that point of order. If he knows which members I am casting aspersions on, I would refer him to the royal commission. He could report those names, and we could then get on with identifying how these payments are made and what they are for. We will see.

Returning to youth employment, which is what I am speaking about, the member for Batman could listen very carefully, because this is all intertwined. The Labor party is opposing this bill because it is 'unfair' to young people. It is unfair to tell able young people who can get a job that they have a lifetime of welfare ahead of them. It is unfair to say, 'There'll be a handout for you at all times.' The reality of life is very different, and it is Orwellian for the member for Lilley, who has created so much dysfunction in our economy and disadvantage for young people through his industrial relations policies and his economic mismanagement, to tell us that we are somehow sending people into a bearpit where they will be crucified. That is the kind of language that he uses. This is the real world.

When people leave school, they are expected to get a job not to rush down the road to go to the local Centrelink office. It is not what we want young people to do. Of course there are circumstances and there is the reality of life as well on the other side of the coin where people are genuinely disadvantaged, where they do need the support of government and where they do need to go to the Centrelink office for various actual reasons. That is why this bill is so good. That is why the Minister for Social Services consulted so widely, including with organisations like ACOSS, organisations that deliver welfare services for young people and organisations that employ young people and assist young people to get jobs.

I know many business organisations that are desperate for young people's labour. I know many organisations that need skilled young workers urgently. We know that unions continue to push for younger and younger people to be paid adult wages. When they recently won their case at Fair Work for 21-year-olds to be paid adult wages, they said they are going to push for even younger. These sorts of things do not help young people. Your first job is not your last job. In today's economy, we know young people are going to have many, many career changes. There is nothing wrong with that in the modern economy. It is flexible and dynamic. It is growing fast. It is changing fast. Young people need to be taught to train, to retrain, to compete and to do whatever they can to improve themselves to live with the pace of life that we have today. That is the reality that will face most people seeking work today. Your first job in a cafe or a fast-food chain is not expected to be your last job. It is the sort of job you have while you retrain or go to uni, or do the education work that you need to do to get the job you are interested in.

That is why it is vital government policy to support young people in this. It is not harsh for us to say that if you are able and willing to go out and get a job then we really would like you to do that. Take the work that is out there. There is of course work out there in many places around Australia. You can go to rural and regional Australia where they are desperate for young workers and desperate for labour, where nobody will turn up to do the jobs that are there. That is a complete mismatch of supply and demand in our economy.
There are serious challenges that we face as a government and of course it is the right starting point to fairly say to young people and to put in this amendment that, excluding all of the circumstances—and you will find a list of all the circumstances in the proposed amendment for the legislation—we will still provide a lot of support for all those young people who need it, including additional funding for people with mental health concerns.

In the first four weeks, young job seekers will be meeting with a jobactive provider, agreeing to a job plan, developing an up-to-date resume, creating a job seeker profile on the JobSearch website, providing evidence of satisfactory job search with up to 20 job applications. We have provided extra funding for hardship relief as well.

It is very strange that the Labor Party object to this four-week period considering that it is a reasonable and effective compromise that says to young people, 'We're going to give you a jobactive plan for those four weeks to go and get a job.' We are not going to abandon these people. We are not going to say 'law of the jungle,' as the member for Lilley tried to say. He referred many times to Ayn Rand. What we are about here is saying to a young person just starting out on the cusp of life: 'Don't go to the Centrelink office. Come and get a job plan. Come and get some training. Get started on the right track in life. We'll do everything possible as a government and as a society to stop you going over to Centrelink because it is not good for you ultimately.'

This is the key point that the Labor Party miss. Welfare is not good for people ultimately. It should not be something that we want people to go on. It should not be something that we force through government policy to put people on. It is not good for people ultimately. Welfare is supposed to be a safety net and a hand-up not a handout. However, in our society today we have a political party that, when in government, seem addicted to getting people onto welfare and keeping them on welfare—intergenerational welfare, poverty traps. The real property traps in our society come about from welfare traps. I think the synergies are all there for people to see.

It should be the objective of any right-thinking government to get people off welfare, to stop people going onto welfare, to do what they can reasonably to prevent it and to encourage an economy that is vibrant and producing the jobs. That comes down to the small business sector. It is why we have intertwined small business measures in this bill, because we have employment measures tied up in this. For the Labor Party to separate this legislation and this amendment, and say this is the worst thing for young people that could ever happen is exactly the wrong message to send.

As a government, we are saying: 'We're prepared to do anything possible to help you get a job. We'll pay for your education. We'll pay for your training. We'll pay for your retraining. We'll assist you with an employment plan, with a jobactive plan, with a JobReady plan. We'll assist you with your CV. We'll assist you to find a job. We'll assist you in any way possible to get out there and get that job if you are an able person.' Of course, we are taking care of those people in genuine need and those people who are unable to do so with more funding. We are taking care of them by allowing them immediate access. The categories are well thought-out from the minister. This is a very important reform. It will assist what the government is doing to get young people into work and off welfare. I believe it has the majority support of the Australian people to do just that.
Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (18:35): I will start my contribution to this debate by saying that the Labor Party are about creating opportunity and access to work for young people. It is not about maintaining young people on welfare for their life. We are actually about trying to prevent that by putting in place the right sorts of supports that are needed. I found it very interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about intergenerational unemployment. That grew during the Howard years and it has been growing again since this government came to power, as has youth unemployment. It really shows a lack of understanding about the issues that impact young people when they are unemployed.

The Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015 introduces the social security measures from the 2015 budget relating to youth allowance and Newstart for young people. I will say one thing positive at the commencement of my contribution: it is better than what was planned in 2014; still not good but better than what was planned in 2014, where the then minister was waging a vendetta against young people. This legislation shows that the minister and the government still really do not get the issues that face young people when they leave work.

Instead of having a six-month waiting period, as was in the original piece of legislation, it has now been shortened to a one-month waiting period, where young people—once they are unemployed—have got to go one month without any income support. To my way of thinking, it is un-Australian that a person should go one month without any income support at all. It means that that young person has got to rely on their family if they are lucky enough to have a family that has the financial resources to assist them. It also means that if a young person does not have a family who can support them, they are thrown into poverty. Where do they get their money?

There has actually been some work done that says that rather than reducing the time that a young person is unemployed, it can actually add to the time. I referred to comments made by the National Welfare Rights Network’s policy officer, Gerard Thomas. He insists that the measures could lead to a greater level of welfare dependency. His rationale for the proposed new waiting times is that if a young person is subjected to them, they cannot—as I have already stated—call on family support or assistance from a charity. Young people would have insufficient means to even help them look for a job. The support may be available from agencies, but what about if a person has got no money to hop on a bus, no money to go for a job interview and no money to buy the clothes that they need to present for an interview? It shows just how flawed this legislation is.

On the increase in the requirement for a waiting period for the extension of the youth allowance from 22 to 24, when I was 24 I was a mother with a child. There are many, many young people who have been in the workforce for many years. They are adults; they are self-sufficient. For some reason outside of their control, they have lost their job. They have still got the same financial obligations that they had before they lost their job. They still need to pay their rent. If they fall behind in their rent, then they end up either being evicted or put on the TICA list. That is a list of people who fall behind with their rent. If they have a mortgage, they end up defaulting on their mortgage. Just because you are 23 or 24 does not mean that you do not have the same obligations as a person who is 30, 34 or 40.

I find it quite difficult to understand where the government is coming from here. Although, I think I do understand the thinking of the minister. Listening to some of the contributions to
this debate, they say: 'A young person is unemployed because the young person basically chooses to be unemployed. If they wanted a job, they would get a job. This government is going to help them get a job by giving them no money. The only reason that they are unemployed is because they want to spend a life on welfare payments.' Has anyone on the other side of this House looked at the amount of money that somebody on youth allowance receives? It is hardly a luxurious lifestyle. Has anyone of the other side of this House looked at the amount of money a person receives on a Newstart? Once again, people on those payments are living below the poverty line.

This mean-spirited government is attacking those people by saying that they will not pay them a youth allowance when they become unemployed that is in line with every other benefit, welfare payment or whatever you members on the other side would like to call it. I tend to think of it as a supplement that will allow them to survive. If members on the other side of this House believe that by withholding money and saying, 'Hey mate, you're on your own for a month,' is going to make a person more willing and more able to find a job, then they really need to have a look at the people who are unemployed and the number of jobs that are available. They need to actually get out into their electorates and talk to some young people.

I converse regularly with people within the Shortland electorate and particularly with young people. We have got quite a high level of unemployment. It is higher on the Central Coast than it is in Lake Macquarie. It is very difficult for young people, particularly those on the Central Coast, to travel to look for employment. In some areas on the Central Coast, there is one bus in in the morning and one bus out at night. They are private bus companies. They travel from a number of little settlements in the northern part of Wyong Shire, which falls within the Shortland electorate. There are very few job opportunities for those young people in that area. No matter how hard we make it for them to survive and no matter how many hurdles we place in front of them, it is not going to mean that they will find a job any quicker. All it means is that they are going to live in poverty for a month.

I would add that it is more likely that they will find it harder to find employment. I refer to the comments that I was talking about before. The National Welfare Rights Network's spokesperson stated that it is more likely that young people will become totally disengaged. Rather than becoming less reliant on welfare, they will become more likely to need long-term assistance and be long-term unemployed.

I heard the previous speaker refer to ACOSS. ACOSS has expressed concern about this legislation. Every community organisation that deals with people in this space has expressed concern about this legislation. Member after member on the other side of this House can stand up and criticise Labor, blame Labor for every woe that exists, but the bottom line is that this is their legislation, and what they should be doing is trying to assist young people to get the skills that they need to get into the workforce.

They have made it harder for young people to get apprenticeships. There are fewer apprenticeships than there previously were. Organisations that were funded to help young people find work, like Youth Connections, have lost funding. The recipe that we have here is supposed to end up with a cake of 'young person with a job and a future.' For that recipe, the government is delivering lots of sticks but very few carrots. I do not think the government really understands or is across this argument. Rather it is seeing it purely from a cost-saving
point of view and is offering sticks rather than carrots. You really need to put a carrot in there as well as a stick, and you need to seriously address this.

I have already mentioned that this legislation has the potential to ensure that young people end up in an endless cycle of no income support, pushing young job seekers into poverty crisis and homelessness. I know there are some good people on the other side of this House. I know there are people there who do not want to just stand there and sling mud across the chamber. I challenge them—I really do—to think about this. We are in a fortunate position. If our children become unemployed, generally speaking we have the financial resources to help them. But there are many, many people in the community—and I would say the majority of the people that I represent here—who find it difficult to find the resources to help their young people, their children, when they are in a crisis situation. It is very sad indeed.

With the unemployment rate set to peak at 6.5 per cent or higher—and it will stay higher for a longer period of time—this type of punitive measure is very unfair and is bad for the economy. This government came to power with the promise to create one million jobs. What about the jobs that have disappeared under it? Jobs have been disappearing at a rate of knots since the Abbott government was elected, and many of those jobs are jobs that young people could have worked in.

Obviously we are opposed to these savage cuts that will impact on young people. It really demonstrates the mind set of this government: ‘You pick the most vulnerable people in the community, those people that are least able to speak out and argue for themselves, and then you attack them.’ Good government is about inclusion. Good government is about looking after everybody in our society. Good government is about ensuring that a young person leaving school actually can get a job. How do you best achieve it? By making them wait a month with no money or by putting in place the immediate assistance that they need, giving them support and ensuring that they will be able to get to that job interview, have the clothes to wear to that job interview and feel really good about themselves? They should not be treated as second-class citizens, as this legislation condemns them to be.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (18:50): I rise tonight to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. As a federal member of parliament, I have the great privilege of meeting many people throughout my electorate of Petrie, as I am sure you do in your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker. Some of the Petrie electorate locals I get to meet are young people out there having a go, doing their study, trying to get work, finishing school. There are a whole range of people. The situation is different for everyone you meet. I have met young people who are going on to do further study, whether that is at TAFE or university. I have met people who are engaged with or going into the Australian Defence Force Gap Year that has recently been announced. I have met young people who have found full-time work—apprenticeships or other types of work—and young people who are taking part in the Work for the Dole program or the Green Army Program which we have introduced in the last couple of years.

In the bigger picture, we as a government and as members of parliament want to make sure that our policies and the decisions we make today have the best impact, not just on the lives of Australians today but on the lives of future Australians. We need to be thinking ahead, planning ahead, which is important. Part of that is balancing the budget. We need to do that. I raise that because the member for Lilley came in here before and spoke about all the bad
things that this side of the House were doing and how there was not a budget crisis and we have gone away from that. The fact is that there is still a budget crisis. Every day we spend $100 million more than we earn. I consider that a bit of a crisis, when we have come off the back of eight budget deficits, six of which the member for Lilley brought down.

A number of us on this side of the House, including myself, were inspired to get involved in politics at the 2013 federal election because of the deficits that the member for Lilley and those opposite racked up, amongst other things. We have to think—and what those opposite do not think about—as we continue to increase debt is what that does to Australians, including young people, whom we are talking about here today. We already see the opposition heading into the next election, in just over 12 months, talking about more taxes on superannuation, talking about changes to negative gearing and talking about other changes they will need to make to fund the unfunded promises they have made. Of course, that affects young people in my electorate. It affects people who are in years 10, 11 and 12 right now who will go on to work. They are going to be hit with higher taxes. On this side of the House, we believe in lower taxes and smaller government. We make no apologies for that. We want to cut the red tape and we want to help businesses employ more people.

It would be detrimental of course to our country and our democracy if the Australian government did not support Australian families and individuals to help them participate economically and socially and to manage life's transitions. Safety nets should be in place. Safety nets are there for those who most need them. They give people a chance to bounce back into work, training or learning. In this bill there are strong safety nets. We know there are people who are not living at home, people who have children or people who are desperately in need of finances. That is available. So there are safety measures in place. There have been some important changes since last year, which those opposite asked for, and they are here in this bill this year, but none of that has been mentioned tonight.

The measures presented in this bill are vital to the sustainability of our social security system and Australia's budget. We want to make sure that the social security system is sustainable for the long term. Just because there is a change to welfare in some way does not mean that everyone will be worse off and will not be able to get back to work or into work. You have to have faith that young people will be able to get into work. From what I have heard tonight, those opposite believe that just because there is a change everyone is going to be worse off. I say that is not always the case and there are safety nets in place for those who are. The changes we have made from last year's budget by bringing the age down from 30 to 25 has cost the budget $1.9 billion. We have listened, and the process is in place whereby people are no longer waiting for six months; it is down to four weeks. That is a good thing. We do have to remember, though, that we have to have a welfare system that is there for people in need. As the Minister for Social Services said, we need to make sure we do not see young Australians seeking out welfare as a career choice. Most people we know do not do that, but some may think, 'When I leave school, if I go straight onto welfare I do not need to look hard for work'. As the minister said, 'We do not want to see a shuttle run from the school gate to the Centrelink door'.

These sensible measures are there to try to help young people find full-time work. That is what we want to see; we want to see young people get work. We do not want to see them stuck in a life of welfare. Some of the changes here are quite reasonable—very reasonable.
The bill will introduce four 2015 budget measures in the social services portfolio, along with certain other measure from the 2014 budget and earlier fiscal decisions. Importantly, the four-week waiting period for youth income support will replace the current measure requiring young people, with full capacity, to wait one week. It is not a long time, is it? If you finish school, currently you wait one week before you go onto youth allowance and so forth, and we are talking about four weeks—not six months but four weeks. That is not a long time to wait. We know that many people have been at home for 12 years studying. They have been doing their study at school. Often at the end of year 12 they will go away. They will go away for Schoolies, they will have Christmas and they will spend time with their families. Four weeks is not an unreasonable time to wait. As I said before, there are strong safety nets in place for those who are particularly in financial dire straits.

We want to make sure that people get into work, and we need to encourage everything we can to help people to do that. Having a sustainable welfare system for those who most need it is part of that plan to show that it is sustainable for the long term for those who are most in need of work. The one thing we can all do, and the one thing that I like to do as the federal member for Petrie, is to encourage young people. I am positive with young people. I say to them: 'If you're looking for work, here are some practical tips for your resume and how to get that job. You don't necessarily have to write your age in and you don't have to have every year there. Some of that is not relevant to employers.' We want to give them a little bit and talk about the positives. Then, if they can get an interview, that is great. What do employers look for at an interview? They want someone with good eye contact, they want someone who is dressed well, they want someone with a good handshake and they want someone—above everything else—with a good work ethic who is productive.

These are important points to teach people. They are important things to talk about when we are out there in our electorates. I say to members opposite, why not do that as well? Instead of looking for the worst in every situation—'Geez, we've gone from one week to four weeks'—remember that last year we were looking at six months, and we are bringing that down. What about something positive? What about talking to young people and saying, 'Look, you can do this.' We do have a plan for jobs. We saw that in our $5.5 billion small business package with the instant tax write-off and other measures to encourage small business. We know that small businesses do create jobs. If we can get them firing, and if we can get them doing well, then there are more jobs available. But one way that we do not do it is to increase taxes all the time. And if you are addicted to debt, like those opposite—like the Labor Party—you have to increase taxes; you have to keep doing it. So we have to ensure that the budget is sustainable.

As I said before, the Treasurer is slowly coming back to surplus. I believe that is important. We should not lose track of that. We do need to come back to surplus in the interests of all Australians—for businesses, for those people who are retired and who do not want to see their cost of living increase and for young people who are moving into the workforce and who do not want to pay higher taxes down the track. With safety nets in place not every change to the welfare system is bad, and that is what we need to look at.

Of course, we are a country with tremendous opportunities. I believe it is just so important for people to identify what it is that they want out of life and to go for it.
Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (19:00): This is not a serious attempt to deal with youth unemployment. It is not some way of improving the opportunities for Australia's young to be able to get out there, take up meaningful, long-term employment and make a contribution to the broader economy, the community and their own families and improve the options in their own lives. This Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015 is really just a continued attack on young Australians.

No-one could seriously believe the proposition that withholding support to Newstart allowance by a month is in some way going to generate a massive lift and uptake in employment by young people. Bearing in mind the 2014 budget, this is a move from what was contained in that budget, going from a six-month wait down to the 2015 budget one-month wait. But in its wake, does it actually do anything to improve the ability of young people to get a job? The answer is no. This is really just a budget cut that appeals to the prejudice of some who believe that if young people really want to get a job that they can go out there and find it and that it will be there waiting.

I think it portrays two things: firstly, that unemployment right at this point in this country is higher now than it was during the GFC, and so it is harder to find work. In terms of youth unemployment we know that there is a massive difference between the general unemployment rate and youth unemployment. The second issue is that it is not simply a matter of young people clicking their fingers and finding a job. A modern economy, particularly ours, which is going through transition—and I do want to linger on that a bit longer later in my contribution—demands modern skills. It demands a lot more in training people and getting young people ready for the legitimate expectations of our employers, rather than believing you will just simply get it.

And so, of itself, just believing that this simple measure alone will assist young people is laughable. It will not be the case whatsoever. Getting young people working, particularly in this day and age, requires a very thorough and a much longer-term view about what is required to get them ready for employers. I believe, again, that it is to the benefit of the young person that they be able to be flexible enough to transition from job to job through the course of their work life. But also, their employer rightly expects that the young people who turn up to the door will be able to meet the inherent requirements of the role that they are seeking.

As I said, it is a bit surreal to believe that this bill, of itself, will be a major spur or incentive to drive young people on to get employment. Basically, it is the latest cut to young Australians. We opposed last year's attempt to leave young job seekers with nothing to live on for six months. As has rightly been reflected on by others, in the course of four weeks you still have to eat, you still have to pay bills and you still have to meet the requirements of living in a modern society. So it is a very punitive action, which is not actually designed, as I have said repeatedly in my contribution to this point, to address the types of things that will improve the opportunities for young people to get work.

I see it in my area—and I reflect on some of the comments that have been made. The member for Mitchell, during his remarks—as have others—talked about the scourge of intergenerational unemployment. I see that in my area. This is actually a salutary lesson about the perils of long-term unemployment, when people get stuck in long-term unemployment and when they do not find jobs quickly enough. If they have been through a period of transition—in some cases we have had big, wholesale redundancy programs go through some
of our major employers and those people with specialised skills do not have the ability to move rapidly, freely or flexibly to other employment—and if they are not picked up and out of that trap of long-term unemployment, they can sit there for years.

I have seen it in my area—the children of those people watch their parent just basically count down the days without going into a job and then that becomes the new norm within that family. I am certainly motivated, and recognise that welfare of itself is not the solution to people's longer-term prosperity. A lot of people in my area know that to be the case as well. But, at the same time, you cannot eat grass. You cannot live simply on hope and nothing else. You do need to find a way from time to time to get you through, as long as that does not become an ongoing source of income support—that being welfare. That is an important point to bear in mind.

I come back to that point: we need to avoid people getting into the situation of long-term unemployment. But for younger people there is a whole string of things that do need to be undertaken to ensure that they do not get caught in that trap. I have seen this on the ground with some particularly good programs—some things that have made a real difference. For instance, Youth Connections. And I saw this through Marist Youth Care, operating out of Blacktown but also working in my neck of the woods. I saw them train up young people and put them into temporary positions where they got their work experience. They then went on to employment, particularly young Aboriginals in my area who have been able to do the social work course through Marist Youth Care. They get into employment and go back into their own families, who have battled with long-term unemployment. You see them spur their families on to get out there and break the cycle of unemployment. People within the family can get trained up or skilled up, opening up options for them to change the situation they are in and see what they can do. It has been hugely successful in transforming people's lives, not just in getting employment but also in changing their outlook on life. And this is not just in the area of social work. I saw Marist Youth Care, working in tandem with Mission Australia and Beacon Foundation, get young people trained up in a variety of different roles on the site of a major development in my area, the Sydney Business Park, through the application of Youth Connections funding. Other major employers like IKEA have taken on young people who have been identified through that process. In a major store that IKEA has just opened in Marsden Park in the Chifley electorate, nearly 73 per cent of the employees are from local suburbs. A lot of them are young people, trained up through programs funded by the federal government, like Youth Connections, that help get young people job ready. As I said before, you cannot expect to click your fingers and get into a role. You do need to get trained up and make sure that your skills are relevant to what your employer needs—and I saw that happen in my area.

What happened to a program like Youth Connections that made a difference on the ground? If you had invested in that type of program you would have thought that it would survive. No, it did not—it actually got cut. The funds for Youth Connections in our area were cut. Marist Youth Care, to their very great credit, relied on other sources of income within their organisation to maintain the training program, but they had to run down their funds to do so. This is wrong. You have a choice between making a punitive cut—as is evidenced in this program, which will not be able to dedicate anything more toward getting people trained up in an effective and meaningful long-term manner—or investing in skills. The general
community gets that this type of spending is not a cost; it is an investment in upskilling young people in our community. People get that it is an important longer term goal that has the benefit of making sure that the skills are there for employers that need them to maintain economic activity in this country.

It is even more important when you take on board this point: manual and unskilled jobs—the jobs that you could just walk into that existed in times past, the jobs that frame the view of some people that believe that young people can just get a job if they want to, if they just go out and seek it—the jobs of that era are going. They are disappearing before our eyes. Technology is disrupting this. These jobs will not be there in the future. The demand is on us in this parliament to think ahead about the jobs of the future and get people trained up. You need to be able to skill those people up with a very long term view. It starts in schools, in getting people ready to be able to negotiate their way through technological change, and having the skills that can allow them to integrate technology in their learning and in the way that they work. That is why we have been talking so much about coding being taught in primary schools. It is not so much for the mere fact that you learn coding; you start to get the development of computational thinking and start to recognise how technology works, framing the way you think about the world in that way. That is why that is important.

If you were serious about skilling up young people, you would not be denying them years 5 and 6 of the Gonski funding, which represents a massive cut to education. This government will not fund years 5 and 6, the $30 billion cut that we go on about in the budget, which translates to $270 million over 10 years in my electorate, making it amongst the worst affected. That will not skill young people up. That will not help them get on a pathway for the next level of training that they need—vocational training, for example. To date, the government's track record in that space is not one that it can be proud of. There were $1 billion in cuts to apprenticeship programs in the 2014-15 budget. The government replaced apprentice support with apprentice debt, they rebadged and cut funding to the Australian apprenticeship centres, they abolished the Joint Group Training Program and they have not put forward any new ideas for training people for the jobs of the future. This is contained in a media statement by my colleague the member for Cunningham, the shadow minister for vocational education.

So there were cuts to school funding through Gonski and cuts to vocational education. What about tertiary education? What about getting people through higher education to build their skills up there? On this side of the fence, we have been talking about the need to build STEM skills—science, technology, engineering, mathematics—and get a focus and a push on there, because these are the skill shortages that are crippling our country. I spoke about it when I was on the other side of the House and I am speaking about it on this side of the House. We do have big skill shortages in the digital economy and it has been repeated recently through CEDA's work, Deloitte, the Crossroads report by StartupAUS—you name it. A whole stack of people that are at the leading edge of technology in this country are saying that we simply do not have the people here that will help power the development of this sector in the years to come.

When I was in the United States earlier this year I was staggered to find that 20,000 Australians are working in Silicon Valley, who we could well do with here. It is understandable that they go over there for the experience and skill development, but 20,000
over there means we have 20,000 fewer here, and we are not training them up. So what happens in terms of higher education? We have seen the types of reforms that the government have flagged. They dispute our claim that this will lead to $100,000 degrees; we actually have good evidence to back up our concern. Regardless of what you think, it is clear that prices for degrees will go up, and if you are trying to have more people go into higher education to build up their skills that price signal will be an impact. It will weigh heavily on people as to whether or not they will be able to take on those degrees. From my point of view, the danger is that universities like the University of Western Sydney, recognising that people may not have the capacity to pay, will have to make a choice either to pass the fee increase on or to simply make cuts to the quality of education and therefore provide a lower standard, a lower quality, a second-class education to the people of Western Sydney. That is something I am genuinely fearful of. The whole issue of youth employment and getting people ready for work is not a simplistic one.

People may have a different opinion on some of the things that I have said tonight in this contribution. But it is undeniable that, if you want young people ready for the world of work, if you want them to be able to exercise the full range of opportunities before them, you need to do make a genuine, long-term investment in their skills development to make sure, not only that they have the skills for the workforce but, importantly, that they have a capacity and a flexibility to change; because, as we all know, it is not like days of old when you would get a job in one place and retire from there with a gold watch. Those days are well and truly gone. Now, you will go through a number of different jobs, you will require a number of different skills, and you will need to be flexible as you move. We need to get young people ready for that.

The type of legislation we are debating does not fix that. This type of legislation is just punitive. It is designed to attract a prejudice or to mask a budget cut. It will not meaningfully lead to the types of skills development that we need to ensure that people do not need to rely on welfare. And I am all for not relying on welfare; I am all for having meaningful long-term prosperous employment.

Ms Henderson (Corangamite) (19:15): I rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. As we have heard, this bill introduces a number of important measures in the social services portfolio, including the 2015 budget measures and several measures previously introduced in the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014.

Tonight I would like to focus on what our government is doing to help get young people into work. That is very much the focus of the initiatives and the measures that are contained in this bill. Reflecting on some of the recent contributions in this debate from members opposite, I find it disappointing to hear about this focus on fairness and on what our government is doing—when, let's not forget, we have inherited a terrible $557 billion trajectory of debt and deficit. It was quite laughable to hear the member for Lilley talk about the importance of delivering a surplus. He delivered six record deficits and never delivered a surplus; trashed our economy. We came into government in 2013 with rising unemployment.

I am very pleased to say that we are all focused, on both sides of the House, on the importance of measures to help young people get into work. I am very pleased to say that under this government we are creating jobs at three times the rate that Labor was doing in its
last year in office. We are seeing a downward trajectory on unemployment from 6.25 per cent to six per cent. We are seeing growing confidence. We are seeing great excitement about the importance we are placing on small business. Let's not forget one of the most important employers for young people is small business.

In the previous government 519,000 people lost their jobs across the small business sector. In the Geelong region, which I proudly represent, the Corangamite electorate, so many young people get their first start in life in a small business. It was really a disgraceful record. That is why we have put so much effort into turning around the fortunes of small business—the $20,000 instant asset tax write-off, the tax cut, the tax discount for unincorporated small businesses. The poor old Leader of the Opposition forgot two-thirds of small business in his budget reply speech, as we well recall. We have a very strong focus because we know how important small business is in driving our economy and we know how important small business is in employing young people. We are proudly championing our measures for small business as part of our $5.5 billion Jobs and Small Business package under the budget.

I am going to focus tonight on the measure which introduces a four-week waiting period for youth under 25. We are well aware of course that the measure replaces the under-30s measure in the 2014-15 budget. The total cost of the reversal is $1.8 billion. So it is a very significant investment that we are making. But I do want to reflect on this change in policy. It was the right decision. It is very important to point out that there were a number of very important exemptions to that six month wait that was proposed in that budget; nevertheless, I was a strong advocate for a change in that policy and I am delighted that the Social Services Minister and the previous minister were so receptive to my representations on behalf of young people in Corangamite. We are facing some unemployment challenges; there is no doubt about it. But I have to say that we are a region of great opportunity.

Just on the weekend I was talking about the new regional rail link and the fact that it is now quicker to travel from Geelong to Southern Cross Station than it is from many outer suburbs of Melbourne. That presents our region with some great opportunities to move down to Geelong—even if you do need to continue to work in Melbourne—to build a house, to access the great schools, to access the great hospitals, to access the great lifestyle and to raise a family in our great part of the world.

From 1 July 2016, as set out in this budget, young people under 25 who are the most job-ready who apply for youth allowance other or special benefit will serve a four-week waiting period before becoming eligible for a payment. It is important to point out that job-ready means someone who lives in an area with good employment opportunities, who has reasonable language, literacy and numeracy skills and recent work experience. But you would not know that if you listened to members opposite. There are in fact a range of important exemptions. We recognise that some young people do need that assistance straight away. We want to make sure that this measure gives young people the incentive to go out and look for work, not to walk straight from the school gate to Centrelink. We want to avoid that culture. We want to positively drive the incentive for young people to go out and look for their opportunities and we want to support them on the way.

I just want to make it very clear that students will not be subject to the four-week waiting period. And in recognition of the importance of education and training in preventing future unemployment, young people who return to school or who take up full-time vocational
education or university study will be able to seek more suitable payments and will therefore not be subject to the waiting period. Job seekers who have been assessed as having significant barriers to finding a job will also not be required to serve the four-week waiting period. I often talk about the importance of governing with compassion and care. In these exemptions, we are seeing a government that is incredibly mindful that not all young kids get the best start in life. Not all young kids live in a happy home. There are many young people who live in very difficult circumstances and they need our help from day one.

There are a range of other important exemptions to the four-week waiting period. If someone has served a four-week waiting period in the last six months, they will not have to do so again. If someone has a disability or an activity test exemption—so if they are pregnant or in the last six weeks of their pregnancy—they will not have to serve this waiting period. Of course there are a couple of other important exemptions as well. The government will make sure that only youths aged 16 to 25 will have to serve the waiting period. There are some cases where a person under 16 can be on a special benefit.

What we are trying to do is strike the right balance because it is estimated that 6.5 million young people under the age of 25 are living at home with one or two parents. What is important to a government that governs with compassion, governs with care is that there is also a ministerial discretion where the minister has the power to draft new exemptions if they are required. I particularly want to commend the Minister for Social Services for the way that he has responded to this challenge. Let's not forget we have a massive challenge in fixing Labor's mess, fixing the debt and deficit that we inherited, trying to find those savings but in a responsible and fair way.

Boy oh boy, have we seen a more appalling example of unfairness than the Labor Party's decision to oppose an increase in the pension of some $30 a fortnight for the most vulnerable of pensioners? There are members opposite who are also shaking their heads privately. It was a callous decision. It was a decision that shows that the modern Labor Party has utterly lost its way.

In the time remaining, I want to talk about a very important youth employment strategy. What we saw previously, which is why we never saw any inroads into the terrible situation that we do have in some parts of the country with youth unemployment, was Labor tinkering at the edges. What we are delivering in this budget is a $331-million youth employment strategy. This includes a $212 million transition to work program to help disengaged young people aged 15 to 21 years become job ready. This program will commence on 1 January 2016. Eligible young job seekers will receive intensive support from community-based organisations, in many respects doing a far broader job than was done under Youth Connections. This is a far more comprehensive program that looks at every possible need for a young disengaged person wanting to get out of the welfare trap and find that job. I know there is great interest in this program among the many agencies across my electorate of Corangamite who work so hard to help those who most need help. This is a fantastic program. It will be supplemented by $106 million for intensive support to vulnerable young people most at risk of long-term unemployment including migrants, parents and those who have experienced mental illness.

The government has also delivered an $18-million national work experience program for around 6,000 job seekers annually, particularly young people. This, again, is incredibly
important in giving young people opportunity, giving them confidence and in giving employers confidence that they can take someone on and see how someone can blossom and flourish in the role. It gives employers incentives to you hire a young person.

Very importantly, and we saw none of these measures under the previous Labor government, employers now have the option of offering a $6,500 wage subsidy to a young person who is a job seeker. This is an incredibly important measure, again driving that incentive for employers to say, 'I am going to employ someone young.' There is an incentive there. Sometimes there are additional resources required to train someone who is young, who does not have the same experience. It is an incredibly important incentive. Along with the national work experience program, along with the wage subsidy, there is also $14-million early school leaver program to improve educational outcomes. What we are seeing is a very comprehensive set of measures to address youth unemployment in my electorate and across the nation and, simply speaking, these were not the sorts of measures that we saw under the previous government. I have to say it is disappointing that we are not seeing support for the bill. Some of these measures will revolutionise the life of a young person.

I am very proud of what we are also doing locally. For the Geelong Employment Connections Program, we have just added another $1.3 million, which is to help fund the jobs fair. There was $95,000 for the jobs fair over two days, last Friday and Saturday. It was a great success and made sure that every possible job was presented together in a cohesive way bringing together job seekers, agencies and other organisations. That money will be used over the next two years to create job creation programs, grassroots programs. Already there is an example, the 45 plus program. I visited a group who were attending that program just recently and around four to five have now secured full-time work, which is incredibly exciting.

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, a program that has delivered some 750 jobs and is well on the way to delivering close to 1,000 jobs, as we see the last round close and further applications be considered, is an incredibly important fund for our region. All of the $15 million which is allocated as the Commonwealth spend has been provided by our government. There is only $4.5 million from the state, and unfortunately the $7.5 million promised by the state Victorian government has been reneged upon. They are now refusing to place that money into the fund, which frankly is a disgrace which is hurting our region and hurting job seekers.

Our $155 million Growth Fund focused on areas affected by the end of car manufacturing—a very important fund. There is a $30 million Skills and Training Initiative, a $15 million boost to the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program, $20 million in the Automotive Diversification Program and a $60 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Program.

Our industry growth centres are being rolled out. I am working very hard advocating for the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre to come to our region. We have the ABS Centre of Excellence and the NDIA headquarters—very important Commonwealth agencies in our region delivering jobs. P-TECH is a very important initiative in our schools linking industry with a disadvantaged school, and the first one is to be rolled out in Corangamite. So there are many important measures to help young people get into work.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:31): Like the previous speaker, I also rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other
Measures) Bill 2015. But, unlike the member for Corangamite, I do so on the basis of condemning this government for its continued attack on young people. This legislation is about leaving job seekers under 25 years of age with nothing to live on for a month. This is a cruel and insensitive approach, particularly dealing with 54,000 or so young people across the country, and quite frankly has the potential of pushing young people into a cycle of poverty.

Job seekers, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, as you would know from your own area, need support to find a job, not savage attacks that make it harder not only to find work but to survive. I have said on many occasions in this place that giving a person a job is providing someone with a future. Hopefully, there are not many people here who quarrel with that. But giving a young person a job is giving them not only the best start in their lives, going into their young adult lives, but also an opportunity to grow and become a productive member of our community.

Young people in my electorate have many things to be proud of. They grow up in what is obviously one of the most vibrant, colourful and diverse communities, but regrettably, for various reasons, significant pockets of disadvantage beset my electorate. Regrettably, we have areas of extremely high youth unemployment. These are things that we need to address. We need to address them positively, not simply by taking the stick to people in their most vulnerable period, when they are trying to find employment. In south-west Sydney the unemployment rate for young people between 15 and 24 years of age is hovering around 20 per cent. I think the yearly average is approaching about 15 per cent. Overall unemployment rates are forecast to peak at 6½ per cent. However, in south-west Sydney—as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker—the unemployment rate is already at 8½ per cent now.

Brutally cutting the support for young people trying to enter the workforce is not only unfair; it is simply bad for the economy. Unemployment is clearly an issue, but it is an issue that can only be resolved through investment in education and training and the creation of new and sustainable job opportunities. Instead, this government, along with its various state counterparts—and I refer to the New South Wales government in that—has done the exact opposite. They have cut and continue to cut from our schools and our TAFE colleges, along with doing everything to make getting a university education out of the reach of many, certainly in my community. This government is short-sighted in what is needed to devise a long-term strategy to address serious social issues instead of choosing to attack young people at what could be probably the most vulnerable period of their lives.

It does not matter whether it is one month or six months; we will not be supporting measures which push young people into poverty and hardship. One month is too long for a job seeker to live on nothing. Not only are they going to be denied funds to survive; they will also be denied funds to support gaining the skills they need for employment and even the very basics of getting transport to employment. This is just retrograde legislation.

The opportunity for young people to gain skills which are transferable into employment is high on the agenda in electorates like mine. As I said, we do have a very high level of youth unemployment. We have a vested interest in seeing that those skills that people acquire are not only readily transferable into employment but, from an employee's perspective, gateways into job opportunities. We do not want young people left with nothing to live on, with little or no support as they are attempting to enter the workforce.
This bill, in which Minister Morrison and Tony Abbott are pressing ahead with changes, also comes at a time when they are doing the same with respect to the Newstart allowance. They are pushing job seekers between the ages of 22 and 24 from Newstart onto the youth allowance. That means a cut of at least $48 a week for very young, vulnerable people. That is equivalent to almost $2½ thousand a year. This government is pushing people into poverty. This legislation represents the abandonment of young people by a government clearly out of touch with the needs of young Australians.

This government is willing to attack income support for young people, pushing many into a cycle of poverty, crisis and homelessness. That comes at the same time that this government has also cut funds to homelessness services. It is pretty heartless. You cannot have it both ways. You are either going to provide assistance for young people to get jobs but, on the other hand, where it is difficult you do not attack services for the homeless as well. In a very condescending way, the Treasurer gave advice to young people and to homeless people in Sydney. Only a week or two back, he made it very clear to people. No doubt you will recall his advice, given gratuitously and publicly—‘You should get yourself a good job, a well-paid job.’ It is all very well if you have the skills to compete for a good and well-paid job, but we are talking about people who are trying to get any job, and this is the way they treat them. So much for the cavalier advice from the Treasurer, who is not exactly skinflint himself, who was trying to indicate to people that it is pretty simple, that you just get a better paid job.

In this place we should be concentrating on our efforts in ensuring nobody is left behind, particularly the most vulnerable. Where does it leave those who are struggling to find work, who are left without any material support? I am sure this government realises it, but if they do not let me tell them. It leaves them on the street. In my community—and this goes for many on this side as well as on the government side—not every young person has the support of a caring and loving home to go back to. How are some of the already strained community service providers out there going to handle the influx of young people seeking shelter and basic necessities, particularly when their funds have also been cut?

Parliament has already rejected this attack on vulnerable young people once, albeit in an even more extreme form, but this policy should now be scrapped completely. It reflects the gross unfairness at the heart of the budget. It is clear that Tony Abbott and Minister Morrison have basically learnt nothing from last year's budget. Given the level of youth unemployment, it is vital that this parliament plays a role in encouraging young people to continue with their education and in turn encouraging our local businesses to reward these efforts. You do not do that through starvation.

The lack of education and training and therefore adequate skills in the youth labour force is the main reason there are few employment opportunities in this group. I commend some of the local employers in my community who are doing their part to ensure that young people receive not only adequate training and assistance but also that they are able to avail themselves of emerging opportunities. These employers show compassion and forbearance but most of all they show they are prepared to back young people.

The Mounties Club in my electorate is a very large club and a very large employer. When I sat down with their CEO, he was able to tell me that 35 per cent of their staff is under 25 years of age. This is an example of an employer going truly above and beyond what would be expected in order to address youth unemployment at a local level. The Mounties has also
worked very closely with the local high schools and education providers such as TAFE to provide work experience opportunities, traineeships and apprenticeships to students. The Mounties Club is also the principal sponsor of the Street University in Liverpool, which does many things to assist young people and provides an on-site café, giving young people training to assist them to become job ready.

Another person I would like to mention is Harry Hunt, who has received an Order of Australia. Harry is also the CEO of Comfort Inn Hunts Motel at Liverpool. More importantly for the community he is also the president of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. He has long been part of the battle to keep young people employed. He has identified that this is one of the most important areas that must be tackled in the Fairfield-Liverpool area. We must not allow young people who are deprived of adequate training and support today to become the long-term unemployed of tomorrow. Tackling this issue now is a vital investment in our future, not just in the future of unemployed people. This is about building our community. It is about making decisions that would benefit young people, helping them to become more job ready and to leading them to a successful life where they can support a family and maintain their own home. Unfortunately, this bill represents a heartless attack on young people, blaming them for this government's decisions, which have led to a lack of employment opportunities, punishing them when they are most vulnerable.

I am proud to be part of the Labor Party, the party which stands up for young people in this nation. In our time in government, do not forget we commissioned more than 72 jobs and skills expos. In the limited time I have left, in terms of the last of the jobs expos I hosted in my electorate, we had more than 5,000 young people come through the doors at the Whitlam Leisure Centre where there were more than 1,020 full-time and part-time job opportunities on offer. There were 88 exhibitors at that expo. Those exhibitors, the employers who supported it, took 1,562 resumes from job seekers seeking to gain local employment. More importantly, on the day we held this job expo 370 young job seekers were linked directly with job opportunities, so 370 young people went away from the job expo with employment.

That is an example of getting out and changing lives for the better. That is not using a stick—threatening people with starvation unless they find a job within a month when there is nothing available. This government needs to take a positive approach to helping young people realise their potential, finding appropriate job opportunities for them and in turn supporting our economy and our future.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:46): I commend the member for Fowler for his contribution to this important debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. I am also happy to speak on this bill because, like the member for Fowler, I am happy to stand up for Australia's youth. The Abbott government is not standing up for them by condemning them to a month without support. The Irish band U2 said that you glorify the past when the future dries up—and this Prime Minister personifies that attitude. He is not just conservative and trying to maintain the status quo; he is trying to take us backwards. He is regressive. Under this Prime Minister we see attacks on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, with over $500 million cut from their budget, and on workplaces. The government should be providing opportunities as Australia develops but this Prime Minister is taking us backwards, particularly when it comes to the youth. It is targeting
the most vulnerable in our community and, sadly, young people too often fall into that category.

Nationally youth unemployment is currently around 14 per cent. Sadly, in Queensland youth unemployment is higher than the national average at 14.3 per cent. It is particularly high in a couple of areas. Youth unemployment is a particular problem in Cairns. The Abbott government’s northern Australia policy is going to make it easier for people on backpacker visas and the like to go into those areas where there is high youth unemployment. I am hoping that with your support, Deputy Speaker Ewen Jones, we will be able to nuance that so we do not take jobs away from young North Queenslanders. I am sure you will do that, Deputy Speaker.

In 2014 there were 56,800 long-term unemployed young people aged between 15 and 24 in Australia. That is the context in which we need to see this legislation. This legislation was put forward by an out of touch government that seems to think it is necessary to provide a disincentive so young people will not become disengaged and reliant on government support. The government sees no link between the number of youth out of work and the lack of jobs.

In my electorate of Moreton there are good, eager, hardworking kids looking for an opportunity. They definitely want to work. That is not just my view; there have been surveys undertaken by credible groups, such as Mission Australia, that back that up. They say that the majority of young people want to find a job. So put aside what the right-wing radio shock jocks are saying, the youth of today are the same as youth have always been—a little different from those in their middle age or older. They are a bit different but they are still keen to make their mark.

It is not easy for the young people of today with long-term unemployment issues and there are lots of other barriers to them obtaining a job. As I said, there are not many jobs available. We have unemployment at the moment at six per cent, but the Treasurer’s own budget papers say that unemployment will rise to 6½ per cent. That is what the government is saying in its own budget papers. That will mean it will be harder for young people to grab a job. We know there are not many full-time jobs available. Job security has decreased over time. We have young people lacking experience to get a job. That is an age-old problem. Also employers are often unwilling to hire young people. They can also have transport problems. We see a government proudly committed to not investing in public transport in our cities, which is used most by young people to get to work.

The unemployment figure for young people is significantly higher than for the general population and has been rising since 2008. So the government through this bill wants to put in place measures that are going to make it even harder for youth at a time in their life which is difficult already, when they are just making decisions as an adult with all the challenges that come with that. We do not have the same initiation ceremonies that other communities have. It is a difficult rite of passage. Schoolies is not a rite of passage that sensible tribes would have.

This unfair piece of government legislation will change the eligibility for Newstart. Youth aged between 22 and 24 will now not be eligible for the Newstart allowance if they are unemployed. Those 22- to 24-year-olds who want to work and cannot find employment will now be forced to apply for the youth allowance, an allowance that is designed for students. For an unemployed youth living away from home this change in eligibility for Newstart will
mean that rather than receiving $519.20 each fortnight while they are trying to find work they will now receive only $426.80 per fortnight. That change from $519 down to $426 is a change from $37 a day, which anyone would testify is not a lot of money, to $30 a day. That is to pay for all living expenses—accommodation, food, medication, transport and, heaven forbid, a young person's relaxation time. They will get $30 a day. I think the Treasurer pays more than $30 for his cigars. Thirty dollars a day is phenomenal. That $7 a day change for these youths could be the cost of a bus fare or a train ticket to go to an interview or, if they live in Gippsland, petrol to put in their car to go for a job application.

The government, in its explanatory memorandum to this bill, says:

The key aim of this measure is to provide incentives to young unemployed people to obtain the relevant education and training to increase employability.

One thing the explanatory memorandum does not explain is how these youth are to afford the education and training that the government clearly wants them to get. If Education Minister Christopher Pyne's $100,000 degrees become reality, this will be even harder. He seems determined to change the way equality and opportunity are rolled out in Australia.

Not all youth want or need to be further trained. What they all do need is the support to be able to find a job. That means the ability to 'job hunt'. Admittedly, online gives them some opportunities that they did not have 50 years ago, but the reality is you still need to get in front of an employer, and that requires transport, which costs money—money that youth on the lower youth allowance will not have if they are looking for a good job. As the Treasurer so kindly said to them, if they want to be able to buy a house—particularly in Sydney, where the median house price is about $900,000—they have to get a good job with a good wage.

The other unfair provision this bill will introduce is a waiting period for new claimants of youth allowance who are job seekers, and that will commence in a year's time, on 1 July 2016. The Labor Party fought long and hard last year to stop this government leaving unemployed youth with nothing to live on for six months. I did not hear a chorus of opposition from those opposite at that cruel policy, but now the government, after action from ACOSS, the Labor Party and all concerned people—including grandparents who are concerned about this harsh policy being visited upon their grandchildren—want to leave them with nothing to live on for one month—for 30 days. Whether it is one month or six months, if they have nothing to live on it is going to be extraordinarily difficult for our youth. How does the government expect these youth to feed themselves, pay rent, buy medication and then present themselves to interviews in such a way that they are attractive to a potential employer, particularly if we are talking about young people who are in a strained relationship with their families? You cannot assume that all young people have parents who are willing and able to provide that sort of support. That is an arrogant assumption to make and does not reflect the current Australian Bureau of Statistics data on what families are in Australia. Without parental support, these youth will be living on fresh air for an entire month, or lining up at the soup kitchens. Is that the sort of policy we want in modern Australia?

But the unfairness of this bill does not stop there. To become eligible for the youth allowance, these unemployed youth will have to jump through a further hoop: they will be subject to a 'new rapid activation strategy' called RapidConnect Plus. The government is demanding that they undertake additional job search activities during the four-week period before they receive any income support. At the very time that these youth will have no
income support whatsoever, the government is asking them to undertake more job search activities.

Ms Henderson interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: How would the people of the Geelong area find it if they sent their children out to not only have no money but also have to go out and look for a job, particularly at a time when manufacturing is collapsing under this government? Manufacturing, which was once the lifeblood of the Corangamite and Geelong areas, is now collapsing under this government, because it does not support manufacturing in the long term.

This bill is punitive—cruel and unusual punishment. It will punish youth who cannot find work. Why should these youth be disadvantaged more than any other sector of our society? Why are they not afforded the same basic standard of living that our government will give to every other citizen? This government is forcing our youth into poverty. These measures are unjustified and will cause immense hardship. This government has no plan to increase jobs and no plan to help these youth get a job—just a plan to punish them and undermine any confidence that they may have had.

Labor is committed to ensuring young people find work through support, through training, through work experience and through incentives. Labor wants our youth, who are our future, to succeed. But we also understand that this is difficult in the current job climate and that youth need our support and understanding. Not misplaced value judgments and punishment that have rolled straight out of the right-wing radio shock jocks.

Labor will support education and training for youth. I visited a youth training centre in my electorate of Moreton recently. The Phoenix Development Group at Rocklea offers traineeships in warehousing in a fully functional warehouse with on-site classrooms. The students there obtain a certificate III on completion of the traineeship. The Phoenix Development Group brokers pathways to success for Indigenous Australians and other minority groups, as well as youth disengaging from schooling and the long-term unemployed. They also have a special focus on people that have disabilities. They have training facilities particularly for people that are visually impaired. The Phoenix Development Group's goal is that their students, on completion of their courses, will be empowered individuals and able to live independent of the welfare system. The students I met there a week or so ago were keen to get out into the employment system, meet employers and become independent. That is the recipe for youth success: training, education and support, not the humiliation and punishment that the Abbott government is imposing through this bill.

I should stress, however, that there is one measure in this bill that Labor will not oppose: we will not oppose the ceasing of the low-income supplement. Labor will always be fiscally responsible where measures are fair and socially just. So far Labor has announced support for more than $2 billion in budget savings. The Labor Party calls on the government to split this bill. If the government does not split this bill then Labor will oppose this bill in its entirety.

These measures will not assist youth to get jobs. They may, in fact, prevent them from gaining work. This legislation is unfair and it is cruel. It will not decrease the levels of welfare dependency. Instead it will force our youth into poverty. Labor will stand up for youth and oppose these unfair measures.
Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (19:59): After the budget last year, I went round my electorate and spent a number of weekends conducting door-knocking. I love door-knocking. I conduct community forums and mobile offices. I am now conducting coffee catch-ups, which are hugely popular. There is nothing like door-knocking to get a raw, unedited view of the issues and concerns of your electorate. Last year straight after the budget, I spent a number of weekends door-knocking right across the electorate. The response was quite frightening actually when people opened their doors and I asked them whether they had any issues or concerns they wanted to let me know about. They spent a lot of time and a lot of energy, and quite often there were tears, letting me know what they were concerned about. They were frightened and they were angry.

The budget last year painted what was supposedly a budget emergency where the disadvantaged, low-and middle-income earners, the disabled and those living on pensions were targeted to address the supposed budget emergency. It is quite interesting that the budget emergency seems to have gone this year but the unfairness of last year's budget remains.

As I said, the beauty of door-knocking is that it gives you a raw and unedited view of the issues and concerns of your electorate. And the raw and unedited view was that they are angry and frightened. They were angry about the cuts to the pensions. They were angry about cuts to the DSP. They were angry about the cuts to education. They were angry about the endless broken promises. They felt incredibly betrayed by the Abbott government because the government had said that there would be no changes to pensions, no cuts to education, no cuts to health. Yet, low and behold, what did we get through the budget emergency of last year? We got cuts to pensions, cuts to the disability support pension, cuts to education, cuts to health and broken promise after broken promise. A lot of Canberrans felt incredibly betrayed.

As I said, they were angry but they were also frightened. I remember taking a phone call from my mum shortly after the budget who had just been down to the supermarket. She had run into an old friend of hers who was in tears because she had got the message through last year's dreadfully unfair budget that she was going to have to work until she was 70. She was in the process of sorting out her retirement and was looking forward to retirement. She was very frightened about the fact that she would have to work until she was 70.

In those conversations I had with the people of Canberra—in Tuggeranong, in Weston Creek, in Woden and in the inner south—they were very concerned about cuts to pensions and about the cuts to health and education. I remember door-knocking one woman. She was a little surprised to see me there. Afterwards she came running down the street after us because we had moved up a number of doors. She was in tears and said to me: 'I'm really concerned about how this unfair budget is going to affect my child's education. I'm doing it tough. I'm doing it on my own and I don't think I'll be able to afford for my child to be tertiary educated, despite the fact that I'm working very hard. I'm doing it on my own. I'm a single mum.' She was not prepared to say that to me as I stood at her front door, but she came running down the street after she had a chance to collect her thoughts and express those views, as I said, in tears.

As I said, a number of things came up in those discussions but the surprise for me and where the most anger was felt was in the cuts to youth allowance. Canberrans were shocked that a government could do that to its young people, that it could propose such a punitive measure on its young people; it is young people who are doing it tough. They said to me: 'This could happen to my kid. This could happen to my grandchild. This could happen to the
young person up the street. This could happen to my neighbour's young son or your daughter. This could happen to any of us. How could a government do this to its own people?"

We are a nation that prides itself on social democracy, that prides itself on establishing policies, principles and ideologies framed around the enlightenment. We are a nation that was at the vanguard of the social democratic movement throughout the world. Yet we are making cuts to these young people, just casting them aside, cutting them adrift really. They felt angry and they felt betrayed. As one constituent said to me at a mobile office just last weekend: 'How are these people meant to live? What are they meant to live on? Are they meant to live on air?'

So I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015 and join my Labor colleagues in standing against this terrible legislation, this terrible policy. I am doing so to protect young people across Australia and in my electorate of Canberra. Since this government came to office, we have seen an unprecedented attack on young people. This legislation continues those attacks and that is why Labor strongly oppose it.

This legislation will leave job seekers under 25 with nothing to live on for one month. This measure revises last year's horrendous budget measure that required young people under 30 to actively seek work for six months prior to receiving income support payments. But whether for one month or six, Labor will never support measures that leave young people with nothing to live off. As this woman said to me at my mobile office at Weston Creek just recently, 'What do you expect them live off? Air?'

This bill also sees the government press ahead with its changes to the eligibility age for Newstart, pushing job seekers between the ages of 22 and 24 onto the lower youth allowance. This legislation is fundamentally unfair and these cruel cuts will impact those Australians, those Canberrans, who are most vulnerable who were targeted in last year's budget. It will hurt those we should be doing everything we can to help. This legislation will see 54,000 young job seekers under 25 forced to live on absolutely nothing for one month. How does the government expect these young people to get by? Where does the government expect them to live? Who will pay for their groceries? Who is going to pay for their bills?

As we know, one month is a very long time with no form of income. The assumption is that these young people will be able to fall on their family and friends for a one-month period; but what about the most vulnerable in our society, who do not have the option of moving back in with mum or dad or whose parents simply cannot afford to support them?

This move in particular has received outright opposition from the Australian and Canberra public—rightly so. People were absolutely horrified by the government's plan to leave young people with nothing to live off for six months and they are still horrified by the one-month period. The chief executive of the Australian Council of Social Service, Dr Cassandra Goldie, says that making young people wait for six months or one month will only cause hardship and homelessness. It risks consigning young people to a vicious cycle of poverty. It must not become law.

This legislation will also push young people under 25 from Newstart onto the lower youth allowance. This is a cut of at least $48 a week or almost $2,500 a year. For those people hifted
from Newstart to youth allowance, this represents an almost 20 per cent cut in support. The Australian Council of Social Service reports that Newstart payments are 35 per cent below the poverty line of $400 per week for a single adult. These young people are already just getting by—many are not getting by—and these cuts will push young people into a cycle of poverty. Now is not the time for the government to turn its back on young Australians, when youth unemployment has soared to 13.5 per cent.

What those opposite fail to understand is that unemployment can happen to anyone. That was the point that those Canberra residents made to me when I was door-knocking last year, straight after the budget. It can happen to anyone. As they said to me, ‘Gai, there but for the grace of God goes my neighbour’s young son, my girlfriend’s young daughter, my granddaughter, my grandson, my son or my daughter.’ This is what this legislation completely overlooks. It can happen to anyone. In a social-democratic nation and in the nation that has mechanisms in place—or it did it in the past—of looking after those who are doing it tough, it is particularly outrageous. As one Canberra resident said to me last year, ‘The budget measures that the government introduced last year in response to the supposed budget emergency cut into our social fabric.’ I agree entirely.

At a time when youth unemployment is around double the national average and at a 10-year high, we should be supporting our youth, not abandoning them in their time of need. The CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kate Carnell, has said that:

…unless the youth unemployment issue is addressed - and it will need to be addressed quite aggressively - that we will end up with a generation of young people on the fringes of the economy.

She is not the only one voicing concerns about this policy. John Falzon, one of my constituents and the CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society, said:

This change is a clear admission of the cruelty of this measure without actually abandoning it.

The National Welfare Rights Network said the one-month wait period:

… will place young people in severe financial hardship, leaving them without food, medicines, money for job search and rent. No income means no income – whether it's for six months or four weeks. There is no place in our social security system for such a harmful approach. The Parliament should reject this plan outright.

Just this morning, I saw the reports and heard on the radio about a study has just been launched again by the Australian Council of Social Service, which found that inequality between the richest and poorest in Australia has grown. Instead of taking steps to address Australia’s growing inequality, the Abbott government is almost doing the exact opposite by continuing its savage attack on low- and middle-income Australians. It is continuing its savage attack on the disadvantaged, it is continuing its savage attack on the disabled and it is continuing its savage attack on those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners. It is bad policies like this one that entrench disadvantage. They entrench disadvantage by cutting people adrift and sending them into a cycle of poverty. This will lead to greater inequality in this country.

Australians do not want to live in a country that abandons young people who have fallen on hard times. That is the very, very strong message I got from the people of Canberra last year particularly, as I knocked on those doors. I got that raw, unedited communication from them and that raw, unedited message from them. They spoke about what this government had planned in so many areas in terms of its cuts to pensions, its cuts to education, its cuts to health, its cuts the ABC, its cuts to SBS and its cut to youth programs like Youth
Connections. Youth Connections was doing a fantastic job in terms of linking up youth at risk it with programs and keeping them in the education systems. Cuts to programs like that are just incomprehensible. It is a program that is helping out young, at-risk kids in terms of keeping them in the education system and then essentially giving them a path to a career and being a productive member of the community. This government gets rid of programs like that. It just beggars belief as to what the thinking was behind that.

Labor will oppose the measure to push young people under 25 from Newstart onto the lower youth allowance, as we have done for the last year. Why are we doing it? Because the measure is wrong. We will oppose the pauses to the indexation changes of income-free areas, because these changes too will hurt the most vulnerable people on income support payments and over time these changes will only hurt these vulnerable people more. We will also oppose the measures in the bill that apply a one-week waiting period to all working age payments. This is nothing but a shameful cut by the government that will leave people on income support with nothing for a week.

We will, however, support the ceasing of the low-income supplement in this bill. My colleague has just mentioned that. We call on the government to split the bill when it gets to the Senate, separating out the low-income supplement measure so that this can be agreed on. If the government is not willing to split the bill, Labor will oppose it in its entirety. The Abbott government, despite all its rhetoric about 'earn or learn' is essentially giving up on these young people. This measure has been rejected by this parliament once already and it should be rejected again.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (20:14): I rise to discuss the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015. This legislation proposes a month-long waiting period for job seekers under the age of 25 to access income support. This is in addition to a one-week waiting period for all working-age payments, excluding the widow allowance. This legislation proposes changes to the amount that people on income support and student payments can earn before their rates are reduced. This legislation revives the plan to increase the age at which Newstart is payable to young people from 22 to 24 years. And it proposes the cessation of the low-income supplement, an annual compensation payment for low-income earners that was part of the carbon price policy. This is despite the Prime Minister's repeated promises before the election to keep the compensation without the carbon tax. With the exception of the removal of the low-income supplement, Labor opposes these measures. We have already fought many of these measures once and we will do so again.

The budget describes the rationale for one-month waiting period as being to:

… set the clear expectation that young people must make every effort to maximise their chances of successfully obtaining work.

But there are a range of reasons why young people are losing their jobs or are unable to work more hours or simply cannot find more work. Current economic conditions have created significant barriers for young people to find work, particularly in regional areas like that which I represent. In some parts of the Hunter region, youth unemployment is a staggeringly high 18.6 per cent. Declining employment in mining and manufacturing is of course having an impact, as is the reduced availability of lower skilled jobs on the market. The decline in apprenticeships has further restricted meaningful work opportunities for young people.
However, young people are actively working, job seeking or getting job ready. Recent labour force data showed more people under the age of 19 years were either in the labour force or in education than ever before. So, despite weak employment growth, participation is increasing and young people are already ‘earning or learning’.

Making ends meet on welfare payments is not easy. We on this side know that, given a chance, most people would choose the satisfaction and remuneration that comes from having a job over the alternative. This is not limited to young people. We also know that not every young person wants, or has the opportunity, to go to university. High-school completion rates in my region are below the state average, and over a quarter of the residents of Charlton have a TAFE qualification. Young people who want to work should be supported, not punished. Likewise, those who want to study or learn a trade should have the opportunity to do so without being penalised if they work at the same time. This legislation will impact on those young people who choose to follow either of these paths.

Forcing young people to endure a month without any income is a sinister idea. Without doubt, it will cause financial, physical and emotional hardship. As Gerard Thomas, from Welfare Rights, put it:

Many people wouldn’t be able to survive four weeks without a pay cheque. Why is it any different for young people?

It is a sad indictment of this government that this policy could be considered better than their first attempt, which sought to impose a six-month waiting period for job seekers under 30 years of age and then provide income support for only half of every year. If this current idea is sinister, then that was diabolical. Neither is demonstrative of good government.

What does a month without income mean for young people? It could see the depletion of modest savings or it could mean going into debt or high-risk financial situations in order to make ends meet. For many, it will mean that mum and dad or others are left to help with living expenses, which for many low-income families will be an incredible burden. For many, it will mean losing a house or a rental property that has been exceptionally difficult to secure in the first place. At worst, though, it will be total desertion, leaving some young people with nowhere to live and no ability to provide for essentials. The underlying principle of this bill and the previous budget proposal is that every young person who is out of work has a family to fall back on and those families have resources to support these young people. I would submit that there are many young people without a family to rely on and there are even more young people who do have a family but a family whose resources are already stretched close enough to breaking point. This bill neither understands nor reflects that societal reality. That is a massive problem with this bill, and that is why the bill should be opposed. Add to the mix the fear and frustration of job seeking and the demoralisation that occurs if you are being knocked back time and again. Add to it the stigmatisation of being unemployed. Securing housing, loans and any future line of credit will be more difficult as a result. You will be labelled a ‘leaner’ by this government that lacks a social conscience and cannot understand that, when we lift the lot of those most vulnerable, we all benefit.

I have spoken about this policy with charities and community groups in my electorate. They tell me there is absolutely no doubt it will drive young people into severe financial hardship and place further pressure on the not-for-profit sector. I have spoken with constituents who call my office or send me emails. They tell me it is not fair or dignified to
expect the families and friends of young people to cover their cost of living whilst they are without income for a month and that it could even lead to more welfare dependency, not less. They fear that, at worst, crime rates will go up. This is a measure condemned by the Australian Council of Social Service, the National Welfare Rights Network, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mission Australia and a range of other community sector groups.

The previous legislation I referred to was rejected by those in the other place and was described by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights as 'incompatible with the right to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living'. And yet still the government is persisting with this new incarnation. A one-month waiting period will still hurt young people when they can least cope with it; it will still engender poverty and vulnerability in the least resilient families; and it is still part of the profoundly ideological agenda of this government. We can only conclude that this kind of aversion to the social safety net is an idea so deeply ingrained in the ethos of the modern Liberal Party that they are either blinded to the harm they will do by denying it to young job seekers or they have absolute disregard for the ramifications if they do.

I acknowledge that this is not a debate about the adequacy of income support levels, but it is worthwhile to note that, three days before this year's budget was delivered, the Councils of Social Service Network released a report on social security payments which showed that almost all recipients of Newstart payments or youth allowance do not consider the payment rate sufficient to meet cost-of-living expenses. More than a third of survey participants were forced to skip dental and medical appointments or forgo treatments because they could not afford to pay for them. Nearly one in five reported missing meals in an effort to make ends meet.

I would hope that both sides of the House agree that the safety net is precisely that—a safety net. It is a means to ensure no-one has to live in poverty. It is the basic right of every Australian. But it is also an investment in the future. It means we support access to education, health care and housing—the necessities which everybody needs to have the chance of generating an income and participating in society. Young people are the next generation of workers, thinkers, leaders. But should this bill become law it will change the way we support young people at a critical time, when they are moving from study to the workforce, when theirs is the first job to go in tough economic conditions, or when their skills and experience do not match the needs of the employment market. We would be deserting them and destroying the safety net we are so rightly proud of.

This bill includes an allocation of around $8.1 million in emergency relief payments, an acknowledgement that people will be forced to seek assistance to make ends meet. So the government cannot argue that these measures will not place young people in financial hardship, because the proof is already in the bill and the government is already anticipating the impact of this bill's measures. What does this say about this Liberal government? As legislators, should it not be incumbent on us to avoid taking action that will knowingly push people into poverty? I have spent time with emergency relief providers in my electorate, some of which receive funding from the federal government. Emergency relief payment provision for the Samaritans in Toronto and Teralba and the Salvation Army in Bonnells Bay, for example, are all supported by the government. There are many more services in my area run by church based charities and community centres who do not receive federal government
funding and who rely on donations from the community to keep going. They are all telling me that demand is increasing and that they are already under pressure. I know that should this bill be successful their ability to meet the needs of the community will be stretched, and I fear it will be to breaking point.

Following the devastating storms in April, many people experienced damage to their properties, loss of electricity and water and, for some, loss of income. For so many people, this was a catalyst for financial hardship. Pensioners, families and low-income earners, for example, who under ordinary circumstances manage to make ends meet, were caught out by the unexpected costs that came along with this event. For some it was losing all the food in their fridges and freezers during the power outage; for others, it was the cost of fuel to run the generator for a few days. Even the simple fact that children could not attend school for days or weeks added to some family budgets. It became evident to me very quickly that emergency relief services were experiencing increased demand for food packages and utilities support in the aftermath of the storm.

These charities do not turn people away. They do whatever it takes to help. Their role in supporting the vulnerable in the community cannot be underestimated. My Hunter Labor colleagues and I made an appeal to the Minister for Social Services for urgent, one-off funding to support the work of these ER providers in the Hunter region. It is with pleasure that I inform the House that the minister's office has informed me that top-up funding of some $62,000 is to be delivered to some existing emergency relief providers. I take this opportunity to thank the minister and his staff for their time and effort in responding to this request. I know this will be welcome news for some of the emergency relief providers in the Hunter region.

I would also like to point to this as an example of the government and the Hunter local members working together towards a shared goal of supporting our communities, as we should be. This place is often a chamber of hyper-bipartisanship, but this was a great example of both sides of politics putting politics aside and uniting for the common good. I would note that the reason we requested this emergency relief funding was the tightened eligibility criteria for this disaster. Prior to the 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires, disaster relief payments were provided to people in affected communities when they had a power outage for over 48 hours. Unfortunately, since then, this eligibility has been restricted quite significantly to require 25 per cent damage to a house in addition to the power outage. This meant that hundreds, if not thousands, of families in my area who would have received disaster relief payments were excluded. This is a massive dent in the budgets of many families in my area—a massive dent that could have been avoided by retaining the previous disaster relief payment guidelines. Nevertheless, I do thank the Minister for Social Services for freeing up $62,000 of additional funding to my emergency relief providers. It is important, and I do appreciate the gesture. It will help many families in my area and many charities and community groups to get back on their feet after this very significant natural disaster.

The government recently released details of the number of claims made, including details of around 450 claims from the 15 local government areas covered by the program, which were flagged for further examination amid allegations of fraud. I condemn fraud in the strongest possible terms, and of course I am perplexed by this narrative. When I met with Centrelink representatives shortly after the payments were announced, one of the first
questions I asked was about the self-assessment method and whether there was a risk of exploitation. I was assured, quite rightly, that there should be no barriers between those affected by natural disasters and the government's ability to support them in a timely way. Logic tells you it is not feasible to withhold a payment of this kind until an assessor has verified every claim. There are physical, geographical, efficiency and compassionate reasons this system is in place, and I accept that. But I find it odd that the government, in particular the member for Paterson, who made several comments to local media, did not mention or defend this process at all.

Again, I cannot stress more firmly that fraudulent behaviour is not to be tolerated, but at a time that called for a compassionate and supportive response, when the limits of almost all Hunter residents had been tested, we got more of the 'rorters and fraudsters' and 'lifters and leaners' rhetoric from this government. And that is very disappointing. It points to the deeper symbolism in this bill, because this bill is symptomatic of a government obsessed with dividing Australia. Whether it is changes to the pension assets test, whether it is the debate around citizenship or whether it is the debate around reforms to the Racial Discrimination Act, this government is intent on dividing the country. They make narrow political assessments that by attacking certain minorities they can cobble together a majority of people to re-elect them at the next federal election. They may be right. I hope they are not. I am proud that Labor is fighting against this divisive approach to politics. Even if they are right, we are a poorer country for such an approach. We are a meaner country for such an approach and ultimately history will judge the Prime Minister, those in his cabinet and those in his government very poorly for taking such an approach.

We saw that in the last few years, when there was cause to reassess the legacy of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom—another example of someone who divided society in order to rule it. In the end, history was not kind to that period of UK history. I urge a note of caution. I urge people to think very carefully before they demonise job seekers, part pensioners, ethnic minorities and other minorities in this country who have no guilt in these matters and who are merely trying to survive in this country and merely trying to advance their families. I urge everyone in this place to take a step back, to take a deep breath and to think very carefully about the demonisation that is symbolised in bills such as this one.

Debate adjourned.

Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015

Assent

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

Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (Powers) Bill 2015
Copyright Amendment (Online Infringement) Bill 2015

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.
COMMITTEES
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones) (20:30): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate acquainting the House of the resignation of Senator Williams from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

BILLS

Excise Tariff Amendment (Ethanol and Biodiesel) Bill 2015

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

Senate's amendment—

(1) Schedule 1, item 4, pages 4 to 5 (table items 2 to 15), omit the table items, substitute:

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Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:31): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016

Report from Federation Chamber

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:32): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016**

**Report from Federation Chamber**

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mrs Andrews** (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:33): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

**Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016**

**Report from Federation Chamber**

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mrs Andrews** (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:33): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2014-2015**

**Report from Federation Chamber**

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mrs Andrews** (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:34): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015

Report from Federation Chamber

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:35): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (20:35): I move:
That order of the day No. 5, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.
Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Centenary of Anzac

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this House:
(1) acknowledge that the 25th of April 2015 marked 100 years since Australian and New Zealand troops landed at Gallipoli;
(2) pay its respects to the 60,000 Australians who fought in the Gallipoli campaign, the nearly 9,000 who died, the 20,000 who were wounded and the thousands more who carried the unseen scars for the rest of their lives;
(3) remember the brave soldiers of Great Britain, France, India and Newfoundland who fought alongside the ANZACS 100 years ago;
(4) note that on the 25th of April, solemn services of remembrance were conducted at Anzac Cove and at Lone Pine in Turkey, attended by some 8,000 Australians, including the widows of Australian veterans;
(5) extend its thanks to the people and the Government of Turkey for their support of the centenary commemorations and their ongoing and faithful care of the Gallipoli battlefields; and
(6) note that on Anzac Day, millions of our fellow Australians gathered to remember the ANZACs and all those who have worn our uniform and serviced in the name of Australia, and that the people of every electorate represented in this Parliament have honoured this milestone, the Centenary of the landings at Gallipoli.
Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (20:36): I cannot think of a date in our calendar year that unites us as a nation more than that of Anzac Day. Each year on 25 April schools and RSL clubs around Australia commemorate our fallen soldiers. And as a federal member of parliament it is deeply humbling to be able to honour Anzac Day with students, teachers and veterans, past and present, within my electorate of Barton. Anzac Day is a day of special significance to the Australian people. It is not a day of celebration but rather a day of remembrance, when we honour the sacrifices our forebears have made for the freedom that we all enjoy today.

The Gallipoli campaign remains one of the most brutal efforts in our military history, one in which our nation paid a heavy price. It was our first major commitment with the allied forces on an international scale, against the Ottoman Empire. For a country that had a mere population of just under five million people, more than 417,000 Australians volunteered to serve in the First World War. By November 1918 more than 61,000 had made the ultimate sacrifice and more than 150,000 had been listed as casualties. The shores of Gallipoli proved to be a place of high fatality for the many volunteers who ventured into the unknown. Young men, fathers, brothers, cousins, uncles and nephews faced terrible circumstances, endured unspeakable hardship and displayed courage and mateship during this time. Yet the worst of times for our soldiers also brought out the best in them. Their values and their commitment to one another and to King and country have come to define us as a nation.

The Anzacs fought at Gallipoli for eight gruelling months, and whilst we cannot ask them what they saw or how they felt, we are all indebted to them forever for the legacy that they have left us. The annual Anzac Day dawn service allows all of us to commemorate those who have lost their lives or their loved ones, and those who fought to protect the values that we all hold dear. Gallipoli was a national calamity—a source of much heartbreak for our meagre population at the time. I note that our regional and rural areas were hit particularly hard by the First World War, with many leaving in droves to serve as soldiers, sailors and airmen. The collective efforts of Australians were not in vain. One hundred years on, we feel enormous gratitude, albeit sadness, when we reflect on the terrible ordeals our forebears faced. But it is undeniable that our national identity and our shared values were fortified in the aftermath.

As a Greek Australian representing the diverse electorate of Barton, the significance of the Gallipoli campaign is felt every year on two occasions, 4 March and 25 April. For the many Greek Australians who are descendants from the island of Lemnos, 4 March is particularly poignant to them. However, the Gallipoli campaign was essential in establishing Australia’s relationship with Greece. The arrival of the all-volunteer Australian Imperial Force at Lemnos on 4 March 1915 helped our Anzacs prepare for the Gallipoli campaign. I had the great honour of representing the Prime Minister at this year’s Lemnos centennial dawn service at Martin Place cenotaph in Sydney, to honour the vital contribution of all the nurses of No. 3 Australian General Hospital and No. 2 Australian Stationary Hospital. Lemnos, in the deep blue Aegean Sea, hosted hospitals and recovery camps, and housed depots for the Gallipoli campaign. Over 50,000 troops passed through Lemnos, where civilians gave allies their donkeys as water carriers, ferried supplies in small boats and operated a canteen on the landing beach. The allied and coordinated efforts of Lemnos and Australia are forever entwined by the events of World War I, and today 148 Australians are buried at Lemnos in one of two Commonwealth war graves. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Lemnos Association of New South Wales for hosting the 100 year commemoration service at Martin
Place in Sydney, in addition to the special commemorative program in honour of the Centenary of Anzac.

I want to make special mention of the coalition’s Anzac Centenary grant, which was put to terrific use in the Barton electorate. The Arncliffe Men’s Shed, as part of the Men's Sheds Association, used the funding to restore an old Arncliffe Methodist Church honour board which contained the names of servicemen from the St George region. This honour board, made from blackwood and maple, was found in a terrible state abandoned in a garage. Through the men's shed’s tireless efforts over 10 months, it was restored to its former glory. None of this would have happened without Keith Boog, an outstanding resident from the Arncliffe Men’s Shed, who has been an integral aspect of the men’s shed’s project and the special honour board restoration project. The board was donated to Rockdale City Council and now proudly hangs in Rockdale Town Hall for the community to see. I also acknowledge the members of the Barton Anzac Centenary grants committee, chaired by Emanuel Comino AM, and led by Major-General Raymond Sharp AO, RFD, ED, along with Warwick Cary ESM, Councillor Rita Kastanias, Councillor Stephen Agius and Mr Jack Passaris OAM, for their contributions in seeing the value in granting $7,000 for this important project.

Regrettably, I could not attend the Anzac Day services at all of the RSLs in my electorate this year. However, I acknowledge the huge effort they all invested in making this year's Anzac Centenary a special one for the community. I thank the organisers and sub-branches of Kingsgrove RSL, Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL, Bexley and Arncliffe RSL, Brighton-le-Sands RSL, Kogarah RSL, Kyeemagh RSL, as well as Rockdale RSL and Ramsgate RSL for the services that they provided. I was delighted to be invited to the Ramsgate RSL club along with my son, John Varvaris, to commemorate the landings at Gallipoli during their dawn service, whilst John played the Last Post. I also note that Ramsgate RSL Club organised a special line-up of events in the lead-up to Saturday's dawn service, including a special photographic exhibition. Thank you to the outgoing president of the sub-branch, John Slender; new president Noel Callaghan, and Frank Crews and the dedicated staff at Ramsgate RSL for hosting the dawn service. I was very proud to attend this as a federal representative for Barton and see the many families there in the early morning as we honoured the Anzac spirit.

I am very proud that school students in Barton and right across Australia are taught the significance of Anzac Day to honour our fallen Anzac soldiers. I witnessed this during my many Anzac Day school visits, where students and teachers organised services to honour those who fought for our nation 100 years ago. Pupils at Clemton Park Public School, St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Kogarah Public School, Rockdale Public School, James Cook Boys High School and Sydney Technical High School displayed a deep sense of respect for our veterans, past and present. Indeed, mateship, hard work and selflessness are all values shared by the teachers and pupils of these schools, and I was honoured to be able to speak to them about the importance of Anzac Day. It is important that each year we pause to remember the deeds of all those who fought over the last 100 years to ensure our freedom. Their spirit has defined our national psyche; it has redefined us as proud Australians with shared values. The 100th anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli allows all of us to re-examine the simple things that are easy to take for granted: the
opportunity to go to school, to go to work, and to live in peace and freedom. It is by the Anzacs' struggle that such things are possible.

Lest we forget.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (20:44): On Anzac Day this year I joined thousands of people in my local community to pay tribute to those who fought and died in service of our nation.

I attended the ceremony conducted at Riverstone RSL, and what an enormous day it was. The returned servicemen of Riverstone, Robin Young and his team put on an amazing morning for everyone, including such great organisation and a community breakfast. One of the official photographers showed me one of the images they had captured as dawn broke over Riverstone, and you could not see the roads in Riverstone for the sheer number of people covering every single vantage point. I do not think there has ever been that many people in the township of Riverstone at any given time.

My husband, Michael Chaaya, ably represented me at the Seven Hills RSL ceremony. I was so proud that a former member of this place, Frank Mossfield, one of my predecessors, himself a national serviceman, represented me at Blacktown RSL.

Together, we marked the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, a day we will never forget; our identity has forever been altered because of the war. The Gallipoli campaign exemplified true Australian values. As Banjo Paterson wrote of Gallipoli: 'Through what you boys have done, our old world differences are dead. We are all Australians now.'

At this point I think it is appropriate to mention another service I was able to attend later on Anzac Day. This was a special multicultural service, conducted at the Wenty Leagues Club. It was supported by Holroyd Council and various community groups, including the very large Tamil population, who I am proud to represent, in the southern end of my electorate.

On that point of what it means to be Australian, I think it is appropriate that I quote from some of the words I shared at that ceremony:

In marking the 100th anniversary of the most sacred battle in our nation's history, it is fitting therefore that we tell the story of all those who refused to allow adversity to diminish their sense of duty or extinguish their drive to make Australia live up to its promise of equality for all its citizens.

When the outbreak of war came, our young nation was stained by exclusionary policies based on race - with the Commonwealth Defence Act of 1909 barring any person not 'substantially of European descent' from enlisting.

And yet, in spite of this, men from an array of ethnic backgrounds and traditions chose to maintain an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation and found a way to enlist.

In Rockhampton, for instance, in April 1915, six men came in unison to the recruiting depot to enlist in the AIF. Two of them were Belarusians, two Ukrainians, one Russian and one Ossetian. They were allocated to the newly formed 26th Battalion and sailed to Gallipoli.

On their voyage, they were integrated with Australians from all walks of life including Chinese Australian Billy Sing, Greek Australian Peter Rados, Charles Lautala, a fisherman of Finnish origin and Indigenous Australian Arthur Homer.

Each one of these men had suffered under the blight of overt and legalised racial discrimination but yet here they were, serving their nation as equals - with just as much patriotism and commitment as anyone else.
In doing so, they poignantly demonstrated that citizenship rests not on a person's race or ethnicity but rather on a firm commitment to the social and moral values which underpin our society.

How relevant that is, as we consider issues of citizenship in our political discourse today.

We remember not only the First World War. We also remember the service of Australian service men and women in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Through the Anzac Centenary grants program in the Greenway community, we were able to acknowledge this legacy. I want to applaud the work of our centenary committee for all the work they did. They were great people. We had diverse representation, including the RSL, some local historical societies, the Nashos and our local councils, to name but a few. And they did all this in their own time and in such an exemplary manner.

In Greenway we were able to partner with local RSL sub-branches, organisations and schools to deliver a couple of these outcomes, including: a plaque and photo board of local women who made a contribution to the war effort; a replica of the Riverstone district First World War honour roll, which went missing a couple of years ago and was formerly a feature at Riverstone railway station; and publishing a book, *Diggers from the Shire of Blacktown 1914-1918*, an excellent book by the Riverstone Historical Society. It complemented the Riverstone and District Historical Society's book *Riverstone and the First World War*. As you go through both of these books, you notice the names of the people who served are in many cases not just one person but multiple people from the same family, and their names today represent not only prominent streets in our local area but even suburbs in our local area. Suburbs were named after these families whose members fell in the Great War.

We also had a participation by the Sikh Bagpipe Drums Band, which came over from Malaysia, and they participated in the Anzac Centenary celebrations across Sydney. As you would be well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker Jones, I have a large Sikh community in my electorate. In fact, the most prominent surname in Blacktown is not Smith or Jones; it is actually Singh. It is so important to recognise that the efforts included many people from subcontinent backgrounds, and that includes Sikh backgrounds.

I want to mention the outstanding contributions by local students, and not just for conducting their own Anzac Day ceremonies at their own schools and participating in ceremonies on Anzac Day itself; they also participated in the Greenway Anzac writing competition, which I organised for primary and secondary students across the electorate. I particularly want to thank the Greenway Anzac writing prize selection panel, which consisted of three local judges: Mr Chris Gammage, Mr Lauder Scott-Rogers and Ms Rosemary Phillis. I want to acknowledge all those who contributed.

In the senior division, years 9 and 10, the winner was Patrick Gleeson from Glenwood High School. In the intermediate division, years 7 and 8, the winner was Liam Lengronne, also from Glenwood High School. In the junior division, years 5 and 6, the winner was Jessica Couzins from St John's Primary School, Riverstone; runner-up Kate McInerney from Vardys Road Public School; highly commended, Olivia Coram from Barnier Public School. And I congratulate all the finalists: Mackenzie Goodrum, Ryan Sinclair, Kaitlyn Tavoletti and Cameron Chalmers from Rouse Hill Anglican College; Saxon Peter from St John's Primary School, Riverstone; Isabelle Jackson from Metella Road Public School; and Olivia Sienna Campos from Barnier Road Public School.
It was great to see the enthusiasm with which these young people chose to participate. It was also great to see the attendance of their families and teachers at the special ceremony that I held at Seven Hills Plaza. I want to place on record my thanks to the management of Seven Hills Plaza Shopping Centre for hosting us that day and also to the member for Blaxland who came along as a special guest speaker.

He has not only walked the Kokoda Track but also most recently went to Gallipoli. We had him share his thoughts. We had shoppers coming throughout the centre while it was going on and just about every person stopped and was engaged in exactly what the member for Blaxland had to say, so I am very grateful to him for being the special guest speaker.

The courage and immense sacrifice of those who had laid down their lives in defence of our nation must always be remembered. I thank the Greenway community for coming together in such large numbers and with such enthusiasm and respect to honour this sacrifice. Lest we forget.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (20:52): Just before Anzac Day this year, I received a message from a woman in my electorate who had found an old book of quotes in her garage. Her grandfather had carried this book in his pocket throughout his service in the First World War. And while he had made many notes in the book, there must have been one quote that stood out for him amongst the rest because he had branded this with a big star. The quote says:

Their valour gave them a united death, History has given them a united fame, Posterity, a united monument.

I do not know who or what battle these words refer to, but they may as well have been written to describe our Anzacs and the sacrifice they made 100 years ago.

War was declared on 4 August 1914. Within weeks, more than 1,500 men from Queensland and New South Wales had enlisted. There was no social media back then. Not many people travelled long distances for work or holidays like we do today, and so joining the army gave young Australians the promise of adventure. They became the 9th Battalion and the 2nd Light Horse. They formed up at Enoggera and men of the 9th were amongst the first to shore on Anzac Cove on the morning of 25 April 1915.

When the First World War began, most areas in my electorate of Petrie, like the Redcliffe Peninsula and Deception Bay, were just tiny seaside settlements, and the region immediately inland was devoted to farming. But even these tiny settlements were touched by war. Men enlisted from Burpengary, the Redcliffe Peninsula and several other North Brisbane suburbs. One in five Australians who enlisted at that time would perish in Gallipoli, Belgium, France and parts of the Middle East. Throughout Australia and my electorate of Petrie, there are many people whose family histories have been shaken by the First World War and the Anzac's ill-fated landing at Gallipoli. On too many family trees, branches were cut short.

In my own family we had my great grandfather, John Patrick Sexton, who joined the AIF in Bendigo and was assigned to the 38th Infantry Battalion. John Sexton did his training at Epsom race course in Bendigo and was deployed to France 20 June 1916 at just 21 years of age. He set sail from Melbourne and arrived in Plymouth in Western Australia on 10 August 1916. From there, he and his battalion began the slow journey to Europe. My great grandfather fought in the bloody battles of Ypres and Passchendaele in Belgium. During his
service, he was partially gassed and suffered greatly from the resulting injuries although he was one of the lucky ones. He passed away at the age of 65.

Their valour gave them a united death. History has given them a united fame. Posterity, a united monument.

In the speeches by my fellow colleagues, we have heard so much about the Anzac’s valour. We have heard about the famed Anzac spirit. And I am proud to say that the freedom we enjoy today, the freedom that will be treasured in posterity, the freedom that is testimony of the Anzac spirit has been enshrined in numerous projects and memorials throughout my electorate.

On the Mousetrap Theatre stage in Redcliffe, locals told the story of the First World War through the songs of the period in the play, ’It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’. I would like to congratulate Director Sandra Hines, Councillor James Houghton who acted in the play, as well as the Mousetrap board, the actors who performed and the volunteers at the theatre. Along Anzac Avenue, through Mango Hill to the Redcliffe Peninsula, Moreton Bay Libraries are filming a documentary of the avenue’s construction. The project will also see the creation of a website with information about the returned servicemen who were involved in the construction.

A plan for the heritage-listed Anzac Avenue was drafted back in 1921 by Thomas Rothwell, a successful Brisbane businessman and then president of the RACQ. Around 50 returned servicemen were employed to construct the road. The opening of the route brought many tourists and settlers to the Redcliffe Peninsula and surrounds, playing a large part in the evolution of Moreton Bay from an inaccessible location to the thriving area north of Brisbane that it is now. Thank you to Moreton Bay Libraries historian Pat Gee, and Kelly Ashford from the Pine Rivers Library for your hard work in getting this project on its feet.

On the Deception Bay foreshore, the Deception Bay RSL Sub-Branch is building a beautiful memorial to commemorate the service of the Anzacs. Prime Minister Tony Abbott recently came up to Deception Bay along with me and we announced this project would proceed. I would like to acknowledge the work of Deception Bay RSL Sub-Branch President Peter Jones, as well as Councillor Peter Flannery and his staff, and, of course, Eddie Budgen, the author of the grant application. On the Redcliffe foreshore, at Anzac Place, the Redcliffe RSL Sub-Branch installed a commemorative plinth and dedicated the memorial at this year’s Anzac Day service. I should mention Redcliffe RSL Vice President, John Martin, for his hard work in putting the grant application together.

At Clontarf Beach State School, a commemorative garden was planted outside the school hall, inspired by the nearby Ted Smout Memorial Bridge, which was named in honour of one of Australia’s last surviving World War I veterans. I would like to recognise the school’s groundsmen, Rick Hayden and Jason Lorde, who built and planted the garden. At the Redcliffe Museum, new display cabinets have been installed to make sure residents and visitors are able to view historic, local artefacts from the First World War. Congratulations to the Moreton Bay Regional Council for getting behind this project.

In Mango Hill and surrounds we saw re-enactments and entertainment at the Mango Hill Anzac Centenary Festival, which was held in the afternoon on Anzac Day this year. Well done to the Mango Hill Progress Association President, Laurence Christie, and his team of volunteers for organizing such a memorable afternoon. I would also like to acknowledge Pine
Rivers RSL Deputy President, Ms Judith Kranen OAM, and the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee Vice President, Mr Darryl Neild OAM, for their tremendous support of the festival.

All of these projects were funded by the Australian government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. I would like to thank the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Senator Michael Ronaldson, and all the facilitators of the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program for making these projects possible.

The Centenary of Anzac commemorates what is greatest in the human spirit, what is noblest in our character, and acknowledges that the worst of times can bring out the best in us. Let us never forget those who gave so much.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The SPEAKER** (21:00): It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Disability Services**

**Ms O’NEIL** (Hotham) (21:00): I was very lucky recently at one of our Hotham seniors morning teas to meet a women by the name of Derryn. She introduced herself to me very briefly and handed me a note about her daughter Robyn, letting me know that I could read it when I had time. I know what it means when a mother has taken the time to write down concerns she has about her child. It means that there is a young person is in need. So I remembered Derryn, and at the first opportunity I took the time to read that note and understand what is happening in the life of her daughter.

Madam Speaker, we often think of ourselves in Australia as the lucky country, but as members of parliament you and I regularly meet with people who are not living up to their full potential and are not getting the support that they need from others. Robyn, the woman about whom this note was written, had some experiences recently that really made me reflect on what a long way we have to go to help some Australians get the opportunities they deserve.

Robyn is a very energetic young woman. She is artistically talented, and she is ready and willing to contribute to the community in any way she can. She is 32 years old, just a little bit younger than me, and she was born with Down syndrome. Robyn was born with a disability, but she is an articulate and capable young woman, and in her 30s she should really be at the beginning of the peak of her working life.

In 2011, with the support of a disability employment service, Robyn began supported employment at a McDonald's restaurant in Melbourne's CBD. She loved the work she was doing. She was working three days a week, having a great time being part of a team, but after 18 months, with what appears to be very little warning, she was made redundant. She was provided another employment opportunity at a Hungry Jacks but soon after was made redundant again.

The story that I heard there was really about a young woman who was being passed from provider to provider and who has had her arrangements chopped and changed. I think it is a story of a family who are very frustrated that their daughter wants to make a contribution but
is not being given the support that she needs to do that. In Derryn's own words, 'We have done everything in our power to ensure that she lives a worthwhile life in the wider community.' And Robyn does live a really worthwhile life. She lives alone. She cares for herself and, like any person her age or my age, she has hobbies, she has interests, and she has dreams.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, almost half of all working-age people in Australia with a disability today are not in the labour force. That means they are not looking for work, and they are also not employed. There are many other statistics that I could furnish, but what is really concerning is that, when we look at how Australia ranks compared to other OECD countries, we see that we are performing about 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment participation for people with a disability. I think that 21st out of 29 is a pretty disturbing figure, and anyone in this House would be moved to think that we need to do something differently. In addition, we know that almost half of those in Australia with a disability are living at or below the poverty line.

I definitely do not want to politicise this issue, because I think it is an area where both sides of the House have at least spoken about their commitment. But I do want to say that I think that the rhetoric that we have had with some of the welfare debates we have had recently in this House about 'cracking down' and 'welfare cheats' and these sorts of things really gets the situation wrong for many people. I know that there are a lot of people out there in Australia, just like Robyn, who have a disability, but they really want to work. They just need the right support. Robyn's story was a really good reminder for me that we have a long way to go before employers, agencies and governments around this nation really understand what good, effective support looks like and how we can provide it.

All of us in this House know that employment participation is not just about money, and it is not just about having a job; it is a critical way that Australians engage in everyday life. It is about having independence, having the opportunity to socialise and having the belief and the knowledge that you are making a real contribution to the community that you live in. Labor believe that one of the best ways that we can help people feel this way is to help people with disability to find and keep work. That is one reason why we created the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is something that I am incredibly proud of. We know that the NDIS will take us some way to helping people with disability be the ones in control. They will help determine what support they need, and they will have the resources that they can marshal to make it happen. But it cannot come fast enough. Already people like Robyn have waited many years.

I applaud people like Robyn Doherty. She is not afraid to give things a go, and she has so much more to offer. I want to thank her for raising this matter with me. I want to encourage the family to keep in touch, and I offer any support I can provide to Robyn in her future endeavours.

**Aged Care**

**Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (21:05):** Aged care is a vital issue in regional Australia and probably in the metropolitan towns of Australia but particularly in rural areas. I know because I recently experienced the problem once again in some of the country areas that I visited last week. I was given a sharp reminder from the people of Mundubbera in the North Burnett shire that nothing has changed since I last visited two to three years ago. The issue is that there are
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not enough beds in Mundubbera or in fact in the nearby towns—towns like Gayndah and Mundubbera, Eidsvold and Biggenden, Theodore and Taroom, and I could go on with many other rural country towns that face the same situation.

There are not enough beds under roofs to cater for the people who have lived their lives in these country towns and want to live in these country towns, close to their families and close to their friends. They do not want to be separated from their husbands or their wives, whatever the case may be. But this is in fact what is happening in these towns. There are simply not enough beds to go around. Whilst they live in regional aged-care surrounds, back on the coast there are beds available at places in Maryborough and Bundaberg, but this does not extend to the regional areas. Because people look at the overall situation, we cannot get any beds in these small towns.

The Mundubbera Health Centre is a multipurpose facility, one of the first to be built in Queensland. It caters for acute care as well as initial trial for aged care. It has been a highly successful partnership between the state and the federal governments on this account. As a result, more were built including in the town of Bickerton, but they have now been outgrown by the number of people wanting these facilities. As we know, we are all living longer and growing older. This is adding to the problem. There is a rapidly ageing population in the area of North Burnett. The Mundubbera Health Centre is currently operating at maximum capacity. In fact, they are at overcapacity. There are only 15 places at Mundubbera. Acute beds are being used to house residents who need urgent care. This leaves only three beds for sick patients who come in for normal hospital care and the waiting list for nursing care is growing longer.

I have heard stories from people who are frustrated by the situation, people who have parents reaching the age where they must have aged care, people who have lived there lives in the towns, people who have built legacies in those towns, people who have even worked in the aged care facility to find now that there is no space for them in the facility they have worked in for 30 to 40 years. In one case, a man in Mundubbera who actually built the facility is denied a place in that hospital because of the overcapacity.

I am bringing this issue to the attention of the chamber because I know that this is a situation the government takes very seriously. Again there is great pressure on the budget but this is one area which does need attention. New aged-care approval rounds open in August this year. I have encouraged the Mundubbera Health Centre to submit an application. The federal government can supply homecare packages but we need the state government to put infrastructure in the confines of the hospital to make the whole thing work together. It cannot be just the state government and it cannot be just the federal government; it needs both parties to work together. They have to invest more money in rural and regional centres to make the lives of the people who have worked very hard over the years, to give them a decent retirement in a place that suits them.

Parkes, Sir Henry

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (21:10): Americans revere founding fathers. Yet in Australia, as a younger and possibly more modest nation, we often seem less likely to trumpet their achievements or even to know their names. Sir Henry Parkes' achievement is all around us. Rightly regarded as the 'Father of Federation', this 27 May marked 200 years since his birth. Moving to Australia from the UK, Parkes would go on to become NSW Premier. An
autodidact from a working class family, he would also become one of the most articulate and powerful advocates for a federated Australia, noting the crimson thread of citizenship which ran through our nation. Parkes served as NSW Premier on five separate occasions. In that office, he implemented sweeping political and social reforms including the landmark Public Schools Act and the expansion of free trade policies. Jane Reynolds’ *Foundation 1901* seeks to expand the knowledge of Henry Parkes.

For Parkes, reforming New South Wales was not enough. He imagined one Australian nation at a time when we were only six disparate colonies. His Tenterfield address was Australia's answer to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Relatively brief and passionately eloquent, Parkes said the time had arisen 'for the creation on this Australian continent of an Australian government and an Australian parliament'. Drawing a direct parallel to the American experience, he declared, 'Surely what the Americans did by war, the Australians can bring about in peace.' Yet a peacetime struggle for a united nation proved no less protracted or problematic.

Parkes worked to bring about the federation from as early as 1867 and died in 1896, five years before its completion. Although he was never able to see the final product, we see it today as his legacy. And we are reminded in his work of constitutional reform of Jefferson's injunction that a people should revisit its constitutional groundings once a generation. During his long career of public service, Parkes gave voice to the great Australian spirit of egalitarianism, championing women's suffrage, pioneering mental health care and establishing public education.

Labor's Gonski reforms inspired a mass movement from the Australian community, too, recognising that Australia is at its best when it has an education system that supports all students. People in our community and in our classrooms realise, as Henry Parkes did, that the promise of Australia is unfulfilled if a child who grows up in poverty is destined to stay in poverty. We need schools who prepare all children for the opportunities merited by their talents and abilities.

In my electorate, the Gonski reforms delivered literacy and numeracy coaches at Giralang Primary School, an introductory English centre at Palmerston District Primary School and more resources particularly for the schools which most needed them. I acknowledge in the ACT passionate Gonski champions Glenn Fowler, Peter Malone, Cathy Smith, Bill Book, Sue Amundsen, Sascha Colley, Mike Fitzgerald, Penny Gilmour, Phillip Rasmus, Roger Amey, Piers Douglas, Stuart Gilmore, Ingrid Bean, Jo Larkin, Roseanne Byrne, Murray Chisholm, Peter Curtis, Nina Leuning, David Stone, Shane Gorman, Janet Harris, Lana Read, Vivienne Pearce and Jane Tullis.

Teaching disadvantaged students is among the most important jobs in Australia. It was in Parkes' age and it is today, but it is an immensely challenging job. We need to ensure that those great teachers get the supports they need. Education to change more lives. Great education policy is not only the best equity policy we have; it is one of the best productivity boosting policies. Perhaps Henry Parkes' greatest contribution to egalitarianism on this continent was that federal system. Federation was a bulwark against inequality, a guarantor of egalitarianism. Federalism divides power, but it also shares resources and recognises that at times when parts of the continent are doing it tough, parts of the continent that are doing better can step in to lend a helping hand.
Now is the time when it is apt for Australia to consider our federal structures, to review our tax and constitutional arrangements. Now, 200 years after his birth, Parkes's spirit of egalitarianism, his belief in a robust federation and his belief that the constitutional conversation must be ongoing should guide us still.

Crews, Reverend William David, AM

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (21:15): The best thing about growing up as a publican was the fact that every day you got to meet some amazing people. In a lot of ways that is my favourite part of being a federal MP. You can give or take Canberra—and we are coming to the end of a long sitting session—

Dr Leigh: Easy on my home town.

Mr LAUNDY: You are the local member. You get to go home every weekend in sitting weeks and in non-sitting weeks and you get to knock around with some amazing people. True, if you do not get on with them as a publican you can tell them to go away but as a politician you have to be politically correct—and I almost was politically incorrect there, Madam Speaker.

A couple of weeks ago I met a bloke who I have no doubt will be a mate of mine for the rest of my life. He is an amazing character. His story began in 1986 in my local area when he was ordained the pastor of the Ashfield Uniting Church parish. He is Reverend Bill Crews. Madam Speaker, as you come from Sydney you might have occasionally turned the dial to 2GB and heard John Singleton at 11.30 each morning announcing that the Loaves and Fishes at the Ashfield Uniting Church is open for the day.

The story for Bill began there in 1986. It started simply with him opening his church to the homeless and every now and then—and it started on a Monday night—giving them a bite to eat. From all good things great things grow, and this is no exception. After three years of Bill doing this in an ad hoc fashion, in 1989, with the help of John Singleton—in Singo style, after winning a group 1 race at Randwick one day he donated the winner's cheque to Bill Crews—they kicked off their amazing escapades that continue to this day. Having met the man and heard his vision I do not know where this will end. That was the most exciting part of meeting him a couple of weeks ago.

Twenty-five years later that facility offers two meals a day seven days a week. The numbers are staggering. It is sad but refreshing to see someone enter this space in such a humble way to provide a much needed service in our local community. Bill and his crew at Exodus at Ashfield are serving 1,000 meals a day 365 days a year. That keeps increasing with time. In 2009, knowing there was a need for his service outside of the area, he purchased his first food van. He is now every night offering the same service for two hours to local homeless people in the Woolloomooloo area. The donations Bill and his team have attracted to build this facility to cater for the needs of those less fortunate in our area are mind-blowing.

The exciting thing is that Bill is not done. That day when we tossed around some ideas of things we could do in other areas of my electorate, particularly in the asylum seeker and refugee space, Bill was champing at the bit to come and have a look. I have put in a request for Minister Scott Morrison to come and have a look as well.

You cannot come away with anything other than awe at the humility of this man who has devoted himself not only to God but to his local community in a way that so aptly reflects
what Jesus told us in the Bible. I grew up in a religious family and my two all-time favourite Bible passages are in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus tells us whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers you do to me and in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus tells us again that he wants doers not talkers. Those two verses are no better displayed than by this amazing man and the team he has put around him. Bill knocks around with, houses and feeds the least of our brothers seven days a week 365 days a year. They are his brothers, they are my brothers and they are our brothers. He does not just talk about it; he gets out there and does it.

As you can see, Bill has made an impact on me. He will be a mate for the rest of my life. He is an inspiring character. I hope that I can help him in the time I have in this place. I hope to do more and more after I leave here as well.

Middle East

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (21:20): Last year I travelled to the United Nations in New York to serve on a bipartisan team, alongside DFAT officials, to represent Australia at the United Nations General Assembly. There were 288 resolutions passed at the General Assembly about a range of issues—international cooperation, areas of conflict and human rights concerns. Seventeen of those resolutions related to Israel and/or Palestine. I do understand the concerns expressed by both Israel and the United States about the level of focus upon Israel in this forum; however, this is not surprising. It was at the first convening of the United Nations in 1946 that the partition plan for two states, Israel and Palestine, was first proposed and responsibility for the resolution of the ensuing conflict was clearly with the United Nations. However, nearly 70 years later there is only one sovereign state, which was declared unilaterally, and the other state is under military occupation.

Israel is a modern democratic nation and therefore should be held accountable to these standards, but it has ignored resolutions at both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council. It could be argued that in comparison to some other countries that have ignored UN Security Council resolutions, Israel has faced relatively few consequences.

Since the election of the Abbott government there has been a marked shift in Australia’s voting in the General Assembly. For example, a resolution regarding Israeli settlements, noting their illegality and calling on Israel to stop building settlements, was supported by 157 countries, over 80 per cent of the world. Australia was not amongst them. Under the Labor government this resolution was supported. Another resolution, recognising that Israel has no right to assume sovereignty over Jerusalem, again supported by the vast majority of the world, was not supported by Australia. Again, Labor supported this resolution. This is quite bizarre given consistent DFAT testimony, including in Senate estimates earlier this month, where the department’s senior legal adviser, Dr French, stated:

Without going into any details of the legal advice provided to the government with respect to this question, it is clear that historical facts exist that the territories were occupied in the 1967 war and have continued to be occupied.

In the context of these votes, it is hard to understand how Australia supported a resolution reaffirming ‘the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to their independent State of Palestine’ and calling on states to see that right realised, given Australia seems to be doing little to support the establishment of an independent state of Palestine. It is also hard to understand that Australia supported a resolution recognising the rights of the Palestine refugees displaced in 1967 to return, because again this government is
doing nothing to assist this to happen. It is good that Australia supported resolutions regarding the UN body that supports Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, though we have just decreased its funding by $1 million in this year's budget. However, Palestinians need more than a bandaid response; they need to see their political rights realised. It is not only in the General Assembly that we have not supported Palestine. Last year Australia completed our term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. One of our last acts on the Security Council was to vote down a resolution calling for an end date to the occupation of Palestine.

I am pleased to be part of the Labor Party, which is unequivocal: East Jerusalem, alongside the West Bank and Gaza, is indeed occupied and the settlements are illegal and Israel must withdraw from them. It is clear from comments from a majority of the current Israeli cabinet that there is no commitment to advancing the two-state solution. Rather than any commitment to withdraw from the settlements, Israeli cabinet ministers express their determination to continue to grow the settlements. I understand and respect Israel's right to security in its own borders, and I fully support it. However, alongside this we must also recognise that Palestine also has a right to security in its own borders.

It is clear that if we do support a two-state solution, which every Australian political party professes to, then we must seek new solutions. The yearly resolutions at the United Nations have not brought a resolution to the conflict. Over 20 years of talks between Israel and Palestine have not brought a resolution to the conflict. Australia must join with other countries to look for new strategies to advance a just solution. Australia can, and should, join with 135 other countries to recognise the state of Palestine. Australia was one of the first countries to recognise Israel, and rightly so. It would be sad if we were one of the last to recognise Palestine. Australia can, and should, support moves in the UN Security Council to call for an end to the occupation of Palestine. Australia can, and should, use its close alliance with Israel to call on it to recognise the right of Palestinians to live in freedom—not in another decade or seven, but now.

I acknowledge that the issues involved are complex. I also acknowledge that the actions of elements of the Palestinian community have been a serious impediment to pursuing a just and secure peace. However, there needs to be a renewal of the peace process and real movement from those in the international community who support a two-state solution.

Northern Australia

Ms PRICE (Durack) (21:25): I am very pleased to speak tonight on the northern Australia white paper, Our North, our future. The white paper is one of the Abbott-led coalition's 2013 election promises. The paper will be northern Australia's blueprint and will unlock the potential of one of Australia's best assets. Madam Speaker, you know as well as I do that for too long governments have talked about developing the North, but this is the first major step in northern Australia reaching its full potential. Two great regions of my electorate of Durack, the Kimberley and the Pilbara, will both reap the rewards of this paper. As I represent the whole of the north-west, this is music to my ears.

There are about one million people living in northern Australia, and of those, according to the latest census, there are 177,000 living in Durack. The white paper commits an extra $1.2 billion in funding for the development of a range of infrastructure projects across the North of Australia to improve the lives and the livelihoods of Australians living in this fantastic part of the world. This includes the upgrades of the Great Northern Highway, the Tanami Road and
the Outback Way, three major roads which are important to the people of Durack. The paper identified great potential for water in the North in areas like the Kimberley and the Pilbara, also in Durack. It unveiled over $13 million for tourism in the North, which will go a long way to showing people from around the world just how beautiful the Kimberley, the Pilbara and even the Gascoyne are—and I know Madam Speaker is well aware of that, because she has seen it with her own eyes.

It is time to unlock the water potential in Australia's North. Our government will create a new National Water Infrastructure Development Fund which will fast-track investment in water infrastructure. The Abbott government will immediately commission water resource assessments to take place in areas like the West Kimberley. This opportunity will allow Aboriginal leaders and traditional owners and other private investors an opportunity to negotiate pathways to lift agricultural productivity in the north-west. Funds will be set aside to determine the best locations for water infrastructure in the region. The paper notes that about 60,000 hectares could be developed for irrigated agriculture utilising overland flow and groundwater in the region. There is also a commitment of $5 million to carry out a feasibility study on Ord stage 3, and the people in Kununurra and Darwin say, 'Hooray for that!'

The Abbott government wants northern Australia to be a dynamic part of the tropical region, and we want businesses in the North to have the opportunity to target the emerging Asian middle class, numbering 600 million today but climbing rapidly. This middle class presents Australia with a booming market for its niche and high-end markets, and the signing of the free trade agreement with China will help to facilitate these opportunities. The middle class can also help to boost tourism opportunities in the north-west, an opportunity I am sure Durack will grasp with both hands.

The white paper acknowledges the importance of tourism to the North's economic prosperity, and funds will be available to support tourist operators in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and, I expect, also the Gascoyne. We will also introduce 10-year tourism visas for visitors from China and India and a more streamlined application process to entice these adventure-thirsty tourists.

Madam Speaker, you will know as well as anyone here that the process for establishing native title is a costly and lengthy process. There are some native title cases that have been running for longer than the Mabo case itself, and these long-running court battles have proved restrictive and detrimental to development. Our government will prioritise native title claims and will contribute over $20 million to support native title bodies to realise their potential and negotiate more effectively with business groups.

I have spent the past 18 months working as a member of the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia, taking evidence on how we can help the North reach its full potential and, more recently, helping to finalise the white paper. I firmly believe that the whole of Australia will benefit from the development of the North, especially as we will develop new industries and progress with existing industries and therefore more employment opportunities, particularly for young Australians who are willing to move to the North.

I would like to acknowledge the many before me who have championed the development of the North—people like Senator Alan Eggleston—and I give them my pledge that I will work hard for the people of Durack to ensure we do not let down the North, and particularly the north-west.
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER: It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Champion: to move:

That this House notes that:

(1) Australian Hearing Awareness Week runs from 23 to 29 August 2015;
(2) Australia has world class hearing services including those which have been delivered through Australian Hearing since it was established to assist returning Diggers in 1947;
(3) hearing loss currently affects one in six Australians and is predicted to affect one in four Australians by 2050; and
(4) events will be held all around the country to raise awareness of hearing issues including the Australian Hearing Hub Open House which will be held at Macquarie University on 22 August 2015 in the lead up to the Australian Hearing Awareness Week.

Mr Champion: to move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the recent media reports and the Fair Work Ombudsman (Ombudsman) finding about the abuse of employees, including Working Holiday visa holders (subclass 417) and Temporary Work (Skilled) visa holders (subclass 457) by Baiada Poultry Pty Limited (Baiada);
(b) complaints against Baiada included that employees were being underpaid, forced to work extremely long hours and required to pay high rents for overcrowded and unsafe employee accommodation;
(c) Baiada and its labour-hire contractors failed to work with the Ombudsman during the inquiry into its employment practices, including:
(i) refusing permission for Fair Work Inspectors working on this inquiry to access the factory floor at its worksites;
(ii) failing to provide the inquiry with any 'significant or meaningful' documentation on the nature and terms of its labour contract arrangements; and
(iii) producing inadequate, inaccurate and/or fabricated records to inspectors;
(d) the findings of the Ombudsman are damning of the governance and employment practices of Baiada; and
(e) that these reports and the employment practices of Baiada have caused significant community concern which must be addressed; and
(2) calls on the management of Baiada to immediately address the findings of the Ombudsman and bring its employment practices up to community expectations.

Mrs Prentice: to move:

That this House:

(1) Acknowledges that the MV YWAM PNG was commissioned by Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, the Hon. Peter O'Neill MP, on 21 April 2015;
(2) Notes that the ship has been tasked with providing health care and medical training to remote coastal villages in Western Province and Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea;
(3) Understands that the new ship will allow Youth with a Mission Medical Ships Australia (YWAM MSA) to reach more villages and to deliver more timely treatment in a more appropriate clinical setting;
(4) Recognises the tireless efforts of YWAM MSA to raise awareness of the need for funds to support the work of the ship and its crew of volunteers; and
(5) Notes that the Australian Government has contributed funding of $2 million over four years towards this worthy project.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Apprenticeships

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:30): I want to report to the House on a very important matter that has been raised in the media over the weekend. It is something I think is an issue that at a national level we need to engage with far more seriously. Over the weekend there have been a number of reports of comments by the New South Wales Minister for Skills, Mr John Barilaro, about the impact of decreasing numbers of apprentices. He was obviously talking about the New South Wales situation, but it is something that I am conscious of being at a national level an issue that has been raised, particularly with the most recent figures for apprenticeship numbers indicating that there has been a drop of about 20 per cent in commencement and about 20 per cent in completions.

Many of us across this House are very conscious of the impacts of high youth unemployment, and one of the most significant and effective pathways for young people into a job is through the apprenticeship system, so it is important that we sustain and indeed improve the apprenticeship system and the capacity for young people to take up an apprenticeship as a way of getting into the full-time workforce.

The Financial Review article said:

Mr Barilaro said that higher wages for apprentices and trainees, and more student support in vocational education, was necessary because the demographic profile of students had changed.

He was outlining the fact that many young people undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships now do so post secondary school, so they are quite often 18 or 19, not like the old model where they might have been 15 or 16. The impacts of wages and support have a serious effect on their capacities. He is absolutely right about that concern. Indeed, with the member for Lalor I visited some apprentices in Werribee, and only a couple of Fridays ago I attended the hairdressing national conference for RTOs, TAFE and industry about apprenticeships. Every place I go and speak to people like this, they are raising this concern.

The Abbott government's record is contributing to the problem. There was $1 billion of cuts to apprenticeships in the 2014-15 budget and, directly to the issue that Mr Barilaro raises about apprenticeship financial support, they have abandoned the tools for your trade payments, which helped them with the costs of their training, and only offered them a debt in return: the trade support loans, which the minister in detailed discussion of the budget last week confirmed that only around 24,000 apprentices had taken up out of several hundred thousand who are actually in apprenticeship training. They need to get better at supporting apprentices in this nation. (Time expired)

Monash Freeway

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (10:33): There are two key arterials which residents from my electorate use: the eastern and the Monash. Everybody knows our commitment to building the East West Link to take pressure off the Eastern Freeway and provide an alternative across the city, but today I would like to discuss the Monash Freeway. As Sir Rod Eddington outlined in his report in 2008, this is the most
important road in Melbourne and is the key east-west arterial, catering for volumes of between 130,000 and 200,000 vehicles per day. But this road is already very congested and is likely to get further congested in the years ahead.

Consider some of the evidence. At the moment, traffic only travels between 20 kilometres per hour and 60 kilometres per hour in the morning peak. People know the Monash as the 'Monash Car Park' at certain times of the morning and in the evening when traffic going to and from work literally becomes a standstill. With a growing population, particularly in the south-east of Melbourne, this problem is only due to get worse unless we do something about it. Indeed, it is forecast that there will be a 42 per cent increase in vehicle numbers on the Monash by 2031 and an incredible 53 per cent increase in heavy vehicle numbers over that same period of time.

Residents of Melbourne will know that the Monash has only recently had a major upgrade of over $1 billion, which was done between 2007 and 2010. But after five or six years, the benefits have almost disappeared. The upgrade itself was only ever forecast to result in a modest period of respite for 10 to 15 years, but Melbourne's population has grown far quicker than was forecast at the time, so we are nearly hitting peak capacity already. What I think we need to do is two things. Firstly, we need to start immediately planning for a further major upgrade of the Monash Freeway—that is urgent. In the meantime, what we should be doing is improving the management of the Monash Freeway as well. According to Booz Allen Hamilton, in its report that was commissioned for the Council of Australian Governments, traffic management systems can increase the capacity of unmanaged freeway routes by up to 25 per cent. Now the Monash is being managed all the way up from the city to Warrigal Road. It should be managed further as a matter of priority. If we did this, it would take some immediate pressure off the Monash while we are planning and finding funding for a further major upgrade.

Bunting, Mrs Margaret

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:36): The area I represent has a wealth of spirit, generosity and character—wealth valued beyond the material and evidenced in the many you are blessed to meet and work with daily. Margaret Bunting was such an extraordinary person. To those closest to her she was a wife, mother, grandmother, sister and dear friend.

Born in South Wales on 25 January 1948 to James and Letitia Cody, she was the second child, with older brother Anthony and younger brother Bryan. When she was 15, Margaret's family migrated to Australia, and Margaret would later tell how she was dragged screaming from the valley away from friends and the life she knew. In Australia, the story of her new life opened up when she met her one great love: her husband, Warren. It would be hard to find a couple who complemented each other better, with a bond that seemed to strengthen as the years progressed. Humour cemented the relationship from the start. One of her husband's fondest courtship memories emerged from travelling through South Australia with Margaret's family—a great trip until they ran out of petrol on the Hay Plains. As the only Aussie, Warren was given the job of hitchhiking, and he secured a ride with newlyweds from Queensland. On getting the fuel, his return trip was with a truckie. Warren was impressed with all the gears the driver negotiated, and he asked the driver, 'Have you hit top gear yet?'. The truckie replied, 'I just did.' Warren exclaimed, 'That's great, but stop—there's the car.' After Warren's heroics,
wedding permission was granted. Tregear became home where they raised family and grew with the local community that valued them so much.

Twenty-five years ago, Margaret was diagnosed with breast cancer, which developed to lung cancer five years ago. One lung was removed, but a persistent cancer returned three years later. Despite this, Margaret did what she did best—helping others battling cancer. A prolific fundraiser, she helped generate over $150,000 via work with Daffodil Day, Pink Ribbon Day, Relay for Life and Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. One Pink Ribbon Day, she roped me into buying business socks with pink toes and matching pink heels. 'They'll look great in meetings,' she laughed. I remembered those words while leaning back on a chair during one such meeting as I crossed my legs and saw the pink heel creep above my shoes—my face going red, not pink.

I welcome Margaret's husband, Warren, and her children Brad, Letitia, Gavin and Jennifer Whiteman. Unfortunately her eldest son, Barry, cannot be here due to work. I welcome her daughters-in-law and son-in-law Linda Bunting, Norma Bunting and Brian Whiteman. I welcome Margaret's brother Bryan and his wife, Kim, and her grandchildren Emily, Brandon, Georgina, Jackson, Constance, Jessica, Laura, Nicholas, Alexis and Mackenzie. Three grandchildren send their best—Joel, Monique and Cooper.

Sadly, we farewelled Margaret on April 7, and today I wanted to record some appreciation. In bringing together my thoughts about Margaret, I suddenly remembered the words of the inimitable US poet Maya Angelou. They speak to me today when recalling the amazing Margaret:

I've learned that people will forget what you have said, people forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Thank you for the way you made all of us feel, Margaret Bunting.

**Superannuation**

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:39): I rise today to speak about an issue that is causing great concern and financial uncertainty among older residents in the electorate of Ryan. There are more than 25,000 residents in my electorate aged 60 or older. These people have spent decades working hard, paying taxes and contributing to Australian society. Even now, many are still working or, if not, contributing to the community through volunteer and unpaid work. They do not expect a handout from government, but what they do expect is that the government sets the policy framework that provides some financial certainty for them in retirement. Older Australians have limited ability to adjust to arbitrary changes to the taxation environment. They have made plans to maximise their superannuation income and to enjoy a certain lifestyle based on the existing policy environment. Any increase in tax on superannuation income is akin to retrospective legislation and it is something that no sensible government should pursue.

Increasing tax on superannuation is exactly what Labor intends to do. Labor's so-called Fairer Super package is in actual fact one of the least fair tax hikes imaginable. It is unfair because, by taxing superannuation earnings above $75,000 per annum, Labor is retrospectively pulling the rug out from under older Australians who have saved for retirement on the understanding that their super income would be tax exempt. And it is unfair because it amounts to double taxation of superannuation, given that Labor wants to tax super...
income as well as super contributions. The coalition government respects older Australians who have worked hard to fund their own retirement. That is why, unlike Labor, the coalition government will not introduce any new taxes on superannuation.

It is not just self-funded retirees who will lose under Labor. Showing what can only be described as exceptionally poor judgement, last week the Leader of the Opposition indicated that Labor would oppose bills that will boost the incomes of part pensioners with limited superannuation incomes by $30 a fortnight. We were then witness to the extraordinary scenario of the Greens party showing more financial responsibility than Labor in coming to agreement with the coalition to support the bills. When the Labor Party has sunk so low as to be less trusted than the Greens to protect the retirement incomes of older Australians of limited means, it speaks volumes about the direction that the Labor Party is going in.

The shadow Treasurer said at the National Press Club that he welcomes an election on superannuation. Well, so do I. I say 'bring it on', because the coalition will ensure that every Australian who goes into the polling booths to vote at the next election will do so in the knowledge that a vote for Labor is a vote for higher taxes and lower retirement incomes. Only the coalition government can be trusted to ensure that there are no new taxes on superannuation income.

Asylum Seekers

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (10:42): In so many ways the debate on refugees in this country has been very politicised, very confrontational and born of conflict, and I think that is a great pity. On Saturday, I went down to the John Harvey Gallery, at the Salisbury council, to witness a celebration of the Bhutanese refugee resettlement day. It was a celebration of the successful resettlement around the world of the 100,000th Bhutanese individual. Bhutan has seen 130,000 people being displaced, and from 2007 to the present day the UNHCR has successfully resettled 100,000 of those people.

It was great to go down to the Salisbury council to hear Kamal Dahal, the Chair of the Bhutanese Australian Association of South Australia, along with the council and the council staff, help conduct a really wonderful celebration of their journey from Bhutan to Salisbury and to the northern suburbs more generally. We heard Laxmi Dahal talk about that journey, about the refugee camps and about the consequences of 100,000 people being displaced from subsistence farming to camps where the houses were made of dried bamboo. Laxmi spoke about the terrible fires that went through some of those camps and the dangers that were present, with the lack of drinking water and the like.

From the trials of those camps, it was great to hear about the progression to Salisbury and to the northern suburbs more generally. It is wonderful to see that many Bhutanese are now buying their own homes in the local suburbs, which is part of the Australian dream. I think it is a testament to their character that, when the Sampson Flat bushfires went through my electorate, they were amongst the first communities to offer their help and assistance. They are true Australians in every sense of the word and they are a real asset to the country. At a time when there is so much confrontation around the refugee debate we should take the time to celebrate the significant achievement of the UNHCR, because it shows how resettlement can be done. The United States took 60,000 refugees from Bhutan; we took 5000. If we had taken 5000 more or 10,000 more we would have been a stronger nation and a better nation. We would have helped many of these poor people in what has been a time of trial. So we
should consider this very successful resettlement program when we look to our resettlement programs more generally.

Hughes Electorate: Macedonian Community

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:45): I rise to support the many hardworking constituents of my community from the Macedonian community in south-west Sydney. Some would know them as having migrated from what was regrettably named the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or the equally regrettable acronym FYROM. The days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are long behind us, especially with the Balkan nations having long ago gained independence. Sadly one of those now free and independent nations, which its people know as the Republic of Macedonia, is still being referred to by reference to the long-defunct Yugoslavia. We all need to move forward and formally recognise the Republic of Macedonia by giving the republic its proper constitutional name rather than using the inappropriate and disrespectful acronym FYROM. I strongly believe that the name by which a country is known both nationally and internationally should be solely decided by the people of that country. Such a decision is so fundamental to the identity of a country and its people that a country's name should reflect the will of its people: those who inhabit that country. It is not for other nations to impose their will upon an independent country. My constituents are calling for us to finally recognise the Republic of Macedonia by its proper constitutional name. Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. How much longer must it carry the name Yugoslavia? Surely the Republic of Macedonia can use whatever name its people choose. The Republic of Macedonia is a sovereign independent nation and deserves all the respect and recognition that goes with that sovereignty. Many countries have recognised common sense and practical realities and refer to the Republic of Macedonia, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia, China and India, just to name a few.

I would like to mention some people and organisations in my electorate who have been fostering friendly bilateral relations between Australia and Macedonia. Liverpool council's Peter Ristevski, through his leadership of our Macedonian community, has changed the way Liverpool City Council refers to his country. Instead of calling the country the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liverpool City Council now refers to the Republic of Macedonia. Liverpool is the only government body in Australia which does not use the acronym FYROM. Furthermore Councillor Peter Ristevski, together with the Australian-Macedonian Chamber of Commerce, led an Australian trade delegation recently to Macedonia. One of the companies in the delegation, Global Road Technology, is a global road manufacturer based in Queensland that is looking to do business in Macedonia. It is tendering for multimillion dollar contracts in Macedonia against companies from the USA and China. Both of these countries recognise the Republic of Macedonia. We need to take every opportunity to promote trade between our two countries. Also noted is the tireless work of Ambassador Vele Trpevski on behalf of my constituents from the Republic of Macedonia. He is doing a great job to promote trade between Australia and Macedonia and it was an honour to recently meet him.

Shortland Electorate: Dental Services

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (10:48): I received a letter from Dianne, who lives in the Shortland electorate on the Central Coast. She raised an issue of great concern.
She drew my attention to the Central Coast's six-month waiting period to be assessed for dental treatment and that there is no urgent list. The vouchers that were once given out have run out. She talked about the problems her husband is having with chewing and swallowing because of his poor dentures.

He is losing weight and he has health issues. He has had a stroke and has heart problems, which are contributing to his swallowing issues. He has stents, diabetes, kidney disease and shingles. He needs some new teeth as a matter of urgency. Dianne has private health insurance, although she is a pensioner. New dentures for her 80-year-old husband will cost $2,200, and she will only receive an $800 rebate. Dental Services on the Central Coast have advised her that he would be eligible for an $1,800 voucher, but unfortunately, they are not available. With a six-month wait for assessment and no urgent list, it is a very difficult situation. With funding drying up, it really makes the life of people like Dianne and her husband very difficult. So I decided to investigate a little.

Surprise, surprise, cuts by the Abbott government have come to my attention. The so-called funding for public dental health under the national partnership agreement is actually a $45 million reduction in funds that were promised last year, and the proposed $200 million will now cover both the Child Dental Benefits Schedule and funding for dental services. That certainly is not good enough. The future funding beyond 2015-16 is now not guaranteed. An estimated 400,000 people are on waiting lists around the country. I thought I would have a look at the number of people on waiting lists on the Central Coast and in the Hunter. On the Central Coast there are 1,116 and in the Hunter 6,202 adults on the waiting list.

It is not good enough. Dental health is as important as any aspect of health. I call on the government to reinstate the funding and look after people with dental health problems.

Forde Electorate: Roads

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:52): It is with great pleasure I rise today to speak about the Fix the M1 task force. This task force is a joined imitative between the Beenleigh-Yatala and Logan chambers of commerce, community groups and representatives from all levels of government. Fix the M1 is not about politics; it is about the community working together with politicians from all sides and levels of government to reach a common goal. It is about talking with a united voice, which will turn words into actions. That is what the Fix the M1 task force aims to achieve.

The M1 highway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast is Queensland's busiest stretch of road. It is already at operational capacity, and we are at a point where urgent action is needed. The bottleneck between the Logan Motorway and the Gateway Motorway not only causes frustration for thousands of commuters on a daily basis but is having an adverse effect on the business community.

One example is Loganholme based business, True Blue Glass. Owner Bill Leavey, who has 16 vehicles set up as mobile workshops, says that it is at a point where he sees gridlock from Loganholme to the Gateway Motorway almost daily. A 10-minute trip for his glaziers to the Gateway Motorway can often take up to an hour, and the situation often worsens in the afternoon, with southbound traffic gridlocked from as early as 2.30 pm and lasting for up to four hours. Mr Leavey says that, over the past three years, the problem has only gotten worse. The congestion leaves his glaziers averaging two hours overtime per day and completing only
four or five jobs. This is imposing enormous financial pressure on Mr Leavey’s business and creates a stressful situation for his team, who often spend as many hours behind the wheel as they do actually working. Mr Leavey estimates that the losses incurred as a result of the M1 congestion could cost his business as much as $9,000 per week, a significant cost for any business to deal with.

I would like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Warren Truss, for being open to listening to our concerns and for being available to speak to about funding options for this now long-overdue upgrade for this section of road. But our community also needs the support of other levels of government. I am sure that, with my fellow federal and state MPs and Logan city councillors, who are all affected by the M1 congestion, we will all stand together and work to find the solution. The voices of many can make a difference. I hope to see many local businesses, residents, community groups and government representatives add their names to the list of supporters of the Fix the M1 petition. It is only by working together that we can create the infrastructure that will meet the needs of a growing population and a growing region.

**Pensions and Benefits**

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (10:55): The Prime Minister and the Greens political party have made an agreement on age pensioner couples who own their own home and have less than $45,000 in their annual super losing their entire part pension of $11,400 a year. In my electorate of Melbourne Ports, 2,790 part pensioners will be affected by this unseemly arrangement between the government and the Greens political party, which will see this new round of cuts throw 90,000 older Australians off the pension entirely and cut pensions for more than 330,000 people who are in what I would describe as low-income pensioner households. As I said, an estimated 330,000 pensioners will lose their part pensions by 2017. Within 10 years, half of all retirees will be affected. Some single pensioners will lose as much as $8,000; couples might lose as much as $14,000. There will be 236,000 pensioners an average of $130 a fortnight worse off—that is $3,380 per year. A further 91,000 pensioners will lose their pensions altogether. This will leave them, on average, $190 a fortnight or $4,940 a year worse off.

The government and the Greens political party claim that this is just and fair. I can assure them that every voter so affected in Melbourne Ports and in electorates throughout the country will get to know about this. The Greens political party thought that the government had, in return, agreed to extend a tax white paper submission process by six weeks so that people could make submissions on reforming the retirement income system, including superannuation taxes. But the Australian Financial Review reports that the government, from Prime Minister Tony Abbott down, emphatically ruled out touching super this term or next. Greens leader Di Natale conceded there would be no tax changes to superannuation unless the Liberal Party dumped Tony Abbott as Prime Minister or lost the next election. He said the review would at least provide a blueprint for a future government or Prime Minister to adopt, and he accused Labor of selling out pensioners and supporting people on high superannuation. Of course I think that this is a completely dud deal. They have had some commitment to a pathetic review in which the government has already ruled out any changes to the tax treatment of high-income superannuants. The shadow minister for families, Jenny Macklin, has clearly identified that.
Domestic Violence

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:58): There is a sign on the Central Coast Highway at Erina that sends a very clear message to drivers heading towards Gosford every morning. It says, 'Police say no to domestic violence and so should you.' Today I would like to do the same. I say no to domestic violence and echo the message coming from my community on the Central Coast that it is fine to have an important public conversation about this devastating issue. Last week was Domestic Violence Awareness Week on the Central Coast. One of the major events, held yesterday, was Walk the Talk in Gosford. Almost 300 people joined together to walk from Brian McGowan Bridge down to the sailing club in what many have described to me as a poignant moment of solidarity in our community. I regret that I was unable to attend, but I do want to place on record my thanks to and appreciation of event organisers including Mandy Coolen from the Star FM104.5 breakfast team; Brisbane Water police superintendent Danny Sullivan; Gosford City Council; and Leanne Livens from Central Coast ADVICE, a group focusing on integrated case-management education. Josie Polar, a student from Lisarow, shared her story from the perspective of being a survivor. Her own family circumstances have been really difficult, but she had the courage to speak out. I am advised that an online petition has already attracted 100,000 signatures. Joshua Townsend, a student from St Edward's Catholic College in East Gosford, also spoke out last night. He made a strong point that we just cannot turn away from this issue because it is too hard. Teenagers like Josie and Joshua too often may feel that they do not have a voice. But yesterday they joined 300 other people to make a stand on this issue because they know that in doing so they represent the voices of many others, and they too are getting up to make a stand against domestic violence.

When yesterday's marchers reached Gosford Sailing Club, a ceremony was held to commemorate the victims who have died at the hands of their partner across Australia in 2015. Superintendent Danny Sullivan told me that there was a candle lit for every one of the 45 reported victims this year. These candles were to give a voice to the now voiceless women. Yesterday the candles lit up the dusk at Gosford on winter solstice, the darkest day of the year. This is surely a symbol that there is hope that we can change and that every day can be brighter from this point. It is not easy. Superintendent Sullivan also said to me that, on average, every two hours police will have to attend a domestic violence incident in New South Wales.

I am pleased to say that the coalition government has made this issue a national priority. The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to implement in 2015 a national domestic violence order scheme and national perpetrator standards, and to address technology-facilitated abuse. The Prime Minister's advisory panel, which includes Australian of the Year Rosie Batty, will immediately begin advising COAG on practical ways to address violence, as well as a $30 million national campaign. I commend these initiatives to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Henderson): In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.
BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016
Consideration in Detail
Infrastructure and Regional Development Portfolio

Proposed expenditure—$1,529,107,000—agreed to.

Health Portfolio

Proposed expenditure, $7,603,427,000

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:02): I refer to the May budget decision to continue to pursue the increase in the PBS co-payment of $5 for general patients and 80c for concessional patients despite the fact that this measure, in the minister's own words, 'has no prospect of passing the Senate'. Given that the measure has, according to the minister, 'no prospect of passing the Senate', why was it included in the budget? Is the government hoping that it will be able to do a deal with the Greens or the Independents to pass the measure, or was it included simply to make the deficit look slightly less bad than it would otherwise be?

I also refer to the minister's statement in her press conference on 21 May that she was abandoning the proposed increase in the PBS co-payment because it had no prospect of passing the Senate. And I refer to her subsequent statement later that night retracting this and declaring that the co-payment remained until alternative savings could be found. Given these contradictory statements, both of which were subsequently repeated by the Assistant Minister for Health in Senate estimates, can the minister now clear up the confusion and state categorically for the benefit of the parliament and the public at large whether the co-payment remains government policy?

I also refer to evidence at Senate estimates from the minister's department confirming that the department is exploring further savings in the Health portfolio which can be used to offset the removal of the increase in the PBS co-payment from the budget. Can the minister inform the parliament which areas of her portfolio will now be looked at for these savings? Can she confirm whether these savings include further cuts to public hospital funding? Can she confirm whether these savings include further cuts to the health flexible funds?

Can the minister confirm whether these savings include further cuts to preventative health programs, which have already received devastating cuts in the previous budget? Can the minister confirm whether these savings include further cuts to Indigenous health programs? Can the minister confirm whether these savings include further extension of the freeze on the Medicare rebate? Can the minister confirm whether these savings include further cuts to mental health programs? Can the minister confirm whether these savings include further cuts to child dental benefits or adult dental health schemes?

I refer to the government's decision to freeze the Medicare rebate for general practice for four years. This is now, by our count, the fourth version of this attack on general practice since the budget last year, starting with the $7 GP tax, replaced by the $5 GP tax—which was a cut to non-concessional patients—and a $20 cut for short consultations. Can the minister explain what the effect of this will be on gap payments in bulk-billing? Is this not just another version of the GP tax, but through the back door? Is this an attempt to get GPs to implement a policy that the parliament was unwilling to accept? I note that the Medical Journal of
Australia has modelled the effect of this freeze on GP fees and estimated that by the time the freeze ends it will result in an increased gap payment or new up-front fee of $8.43 for existing non-concessional patients who are being bulk-billed. Has the minister asked for any modelling on the effect of the freeze on gap payments or bulk-billing? Does the department or the minister dispute the figures and, if so, what increase does the department or the minister forecast?

I note that no consideration has been given to the effect of the GP tax on patients with chronic diseases, many of whom have already had difficulty in seeing their GP because of high out-of-pocket costs. So I ask the minister whether she can confirm the evidence provided by officials from her department that no modelling has been done on the effect this tax will have on emergency departments. I note that the New South Wales government has conducted similar modelling. Has the minister seen that modelling? Can the minister confirm that that modelling is accurate as to the effect that the GP tax would have on emergency departments? When the Prime Minister announced that he was replacing the original version of the GP tax he said that the government would make further changes to this policy without the support of the medical profession. (Time expired)

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:07): I thank the member for Throsby for his detailed list of questions, and I will answer as many as I can. Obviously, those that are not directly responded to in the next four minutes will be referred on notice. I disagree with the premise on which the member for Throsby is basing most of his remarks.

I will start with hospital funding. Hospital funding to the states from the Commonwealth is going to grow significantly over the next four years and in total by well over 20 per cent. The important focus for me when it comes to the next health and hospitals agreement is working with the states and territories to make sure that the agreement is in the interests of patients. This is not about the political football that gets kicked around this place. This is about a deal that is in the interests of patients. To suggest that these are cuts is entirely wrong. There is no role for the Commonwealth, as a funder of services, to continue an activity based funding model the drivers of which the Commonwealth has no control over. It does not make sense.

We saw the previous government under Prime Minister Rudd, in a desperate deal to get the states to sign up to the takeover of hospitals, add money layer upon layer. The most ridiculous example of this was designed on a national partnership around performance, which would have been good if there had been proper measures of that performance in place, but there were not. It was effectively like a company saying to its shareholders, 'We'll pay your directors on performance but, by the way, if they don't perform they'll get these guarantees anyway.' So when we came into government we took away those guarantees, because they were simply icing on the cake for which state governments had to do not very much at all. We have taken a step back and said, 'Rather than have this argument'—because we appreciate that we are here for the patients—'let us work on a strong agreement.' But to suggest that the Commonwealth has cut funding to the states for hospitals is absolute nonsense.

Likewise the member for Throsby talked about dental benefits. I know, as a person who is interested in preventative health, that dental is a key area. We have just extended the national partnership with the states for 12 months, while we undertake the discussions that I have just mentioned about overall health and hospital funding, for $155 million. We have also extended access for children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. That is really important,
because dentists will tell you that if you can get somebody's teeth right by the time they are 18 there is much less work for them later in life.

The member for Throsby talked about measures in the budget and statements that I have made. I want to make it very clear that the measures we have in the budget are our fiscal responsibility. There was no confusion between my remarks on subsequent occasions. I simply said that, while I work hard with the crossbench every day and appreciate their input, I am not going to put measures into the Senate that they have already told me they will not pass. And we know we are not going to get any cooperation from Labor so, while we may have those conversations, we usually do not get very far. So I have said that, because of the debt and deficit left to us by the previous government, our determination to be fiscally responsible means that where one measure comes off the table another measure goes on. That will be the subject of a very productive consultation that I will have.

The measure the member refers is about the PBS—the cost of medicines. We have just concluded a significant agreement across the supplier chain of medicines, recognising very much patient affordability when it comes to purchasing often multiple scripts and recognising that it is vital that we drive the uptake of generic medicines—that affordability matters. The bill that is in the Senate this week is very much about that. We need to keep medicines affordable on a day-to-day basis because we also know that coming through the system are life-saving drugs the real cost of which is hundreds of thousands of dollars to the government. We will put them on the PBS and we will maintain our responsible approach. While I keep consumers and the costs they pay for their health front and centre, I also maintain the responsibility that I have to the budget and the national accounts as a whole. We will come up with a very strong policy.

The member has mentioned something that he calls a GP tax but I never have. Yes, my department has done modelling—and, by the way, it is nowhere near what is being claimed by the opposition in terms of increase. There is a pause on rebates—a pause that I have said I will lift at the earliest possible opportunity while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (11:12): The personally controlled electronic health record was announced in the 2010 budget. Since then over $1 billion has been spent on this record. More than a million people have registered for the electronic health record. I ask the minister what the Commonwealth has received for that $1 billion in investment for the personally controlled electronic health record? Can the minister inform the House of the findings of the review panel which Stephen Hambleton was part of? Can the minister outline the measures announced in the budget to improve the personally controlled electronic health record system? What benefits can a properly functioning e-health system in Australia provide?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:13): I thank the member for Boothby, who is a medical doctor. His contribution to health policy in the parliament is much valued by all of us. The government committed in the budget $485 million over four years to reboot the personally controlled electronic health record to clean up another the disastrous messes left to us by Labor. This is a significant investment: $485 million over four years to get this right. I am talking about a Labor failure nowhere writ larger than the e-health record. This is an exciting, meaningful microeconomic reform that will make a difference not just to people's health but also to the economy more broadly and allow us the innovation in delivering health that we know is coming down the track over the next 10 to 15 years. What
we inherited was, yes, an electronic health record, but fewer than 10 per cent of Australians had signed up to it. People who listening to this broadcast might think, 'Wow, do I have an electronic health record?'. Yes, you have a unique identifier number, but unless you activate that and your health record gets attached to it then the facility that it provides is not working for you or for the health system generally.

What we have said we will do is move to an opt-out system whereby everyone by default is signed up to an e-health record. We are going to call it My Health Record, underscoring the fact that it is about the individual—their ownership of the health record and the need for them to have their say over what is on it and what is not. This goes to people's privacy concerns and it also goes to who gets access to the health record and on what occasions. We are moving to two significant opt-out trials. We are not sure where they might be but I note the member for Boothby's interest. We are going to make sure that it is working well in two significant regions of Australia before we launch what will be the national My Health Record, under which everyone will have a health record and their information will be on it. We know that we will have support on all sides of the House because this was Labor's idea; they just did not do it very well.

Consider somebody who turns up in the emergency department of the local hospital a bit disoriented and not sure what is wrong them, with their Medicare card but nothing else. That card can link to their e-health record and the admitting doctors can find out what their condition is, what life-saving treatments are required and what their entire health experience has been. How important is that? Even for a person who, like any of us, might go into hospital and come out, we know that the transition from primary care back into step-down community care and back to your GP just does not work well. How many times has somebody gone to their GP surgery on Monday morning to say, 'I was in in hospital over the weekend', expecting their GP to know all about it and in fact the GP does not, because the communication is clunky and does not work well?

I was surprise to find in my research on e-health that there is a major hospital in one of our major cities that is all paper based. Nothing whatsoever is done on computer. Come on: we need to move health into the modern world. But I was delighted to visit a new regional hospital—and I am not going to name where any of these facilities are—where a nurse who comes in and sees the patient in bed can pull out a computer from the wall and write the observations there and review which medicines the doctor has prescribed—and the pharmacist has an input as well. It is clean, coordinated, sensible and, when you consider that it will then feed into the wider e-health record for the patient as a whole wherever they travel and through whatever aspect of the health system across Australia, it is really exciting. I thank the member for Boothby and make the point that it has been estimated that this fully functioning e-health system, while improving health outcomes for patients, could save taxpayers $2.5 billion a year within a decade by reducing inefficiencies and could certainly save state governments an additional $1.6 billion annually.

Mr Stephen Jones (Throsby) (11:18): In my previous questions I asked about PBS bills. I have not had an answer to those questions, so I ask the minister again. I refer to the fact that last week the government had legislation in the House subsequent to the conclusion of the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement and associated arrangements. As a part of that agreement, I think it can be fairly said, we will be paying pharmaceutical companies less for
many drugs that are listed on the PBS. But at the same time we have a bill in the Senate which proposes to increase co-payments for PBS-listed medicines: $5 for general patients and 80c for concessional patients. Minister, isn’t it true that, if both bills pass, patients will be paying more for their medicine?

**Ms LEY** (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:19): I actually have answered the question by saying that I stand beside every saving in the budget because of the responsibility of the task that we have set ourselves due to the inherited deficit from Labor. I have said that if a measure is on the table and needs to be removed because I understand that it will not pass, then it will be replaced by an exactly equivalent saving. I am not sure what part of that the member for Throsby did not understand, but I do note in his previous remarks, talking about inconsistency of statements, that there was actually a manoeuvre by Labor to doctor the transcript of what I have said on two different occasions. The member for Throsby, being one step removed from the process as an assistant shadow minister, might not be aware of this, so I am going to give him the benefit of doubt. There is no inconsistency in my remarks, but there is a transcript doctored by Labor suggesting that my comments about one measure going off and one measure coming on only took place after an imaginary conversation with other members of the government late at night. In fact, I said from the word go that whatever savings we have signed up for in our budget will be delivered, and, more than that, they will be delivered from the health portfolio if they are in the health portfolio. If one saving comes off, another saving comes on.

The member for Throsby talked about the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement, and I am pleased he has brought that up. That is legislation in front of the Senate today. He has quite appropriately noted that it is about cheaper medicines for consumers. I look forward to Labor’s support and I thank them for their conversation around what is a very significant piece of legislation, particularly for community pharmacy, over the next five years. We are focused every step of the way on affordability for patients and on the cost of medicines, so I can reassure the member for Throsby, as I can all of the members of the opposition, that we will take not only a fiscally responsible approach but also a patient focused approach looking at affordability and patient safety. I look forward to having further discussions with the opposition as various measures pass through the Senate.

**Mrs GRIGGS** (Solomon) (11:22): As the minister may know, long before I was elected to any public office I was advocating for an appropriate full service hospital for the Palmerston area. One of my proudest moments was when Prime Minister Abbott, along with former Minister for Health Peter Dutton, stood alongside me and Chief Minister Adam Giles on the new, bigger Palmerston hospital site and confirmed a coalition government would provide $110 million towards the Palmerston hospital.

Minister, as you are aware, the Country Liberals raised the idea of a hospital for the Palmerston area in 1999, and the very next year they delivered a 24-hour clinic, which Labor promptly closed when they came into government. Labor held office for 11 years in the Northern Territory and six years federally, and during that time the only progress made towards a complete Palmerston hospital was a fenced off bush site. Labor intended—

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

**Mrs GRIGGS:** You might want to listen to this, member for Wakefield: Labor intended to build a 60-bed hospital with no room for expansion. I will repeat that for you, member for
Wakefield, because you were not listening: Labor intended to build a 60-bed hospital with no room for expansion. The Abbott and the Giles governments are focused on the delivery of a world-class 116-bed hospital on a 45-acre site, so there is plenty of room for expansion.

Mr Champion interjecting—

Mrs GRIGGS: There is a big difference between a 60-bed hospital and a 116-bed hospital.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Henderson): I would ask the member for Wakefield to extend a courtesy to the member for Solomon and refrain from speaking.

Mrs GRIGGS: The member for Wakefield keeps interjecting, and, as I have said, all Labor delivered was a fenced off bush site. As I said, there is a big difference between a 60-bed hospital and a 116-bed hospital—a point that has been wasted on those opposite. Minister, there has been a lot of scaremongering and deliberate misinformation from those on the other side about this very important project, which is important not only for the people of Palmerston but also for Darwin people as well as people of the greater Darwin area.

Minister, I have three questions. First, can you please confirm for the sake of those on the other side that progress on the Palmerston Regional Hospital is on track and that the facility will admit its first patients in mid-2018? I understand that the building will be completed in 2017 and it will take approximately 12 months to fit out the hospital, which I understand is a standard procedure.

Second, my Northern Territory colleague Minister for Health John Elferink and I have stated on a number of occasions that the Palmerston hospital is fully funded. Despite this, Senator Peris has suggested that funding is in jeopardy and that there is a $50 million shortfall. For the benefit of those who either did not hear or chose to ignore, would you please inform the House of the funding status of the Palmerston Regional Hospital?

Third: Minister, is it fair to say that you, your department and I are keeping a close eye on this project and that we are satisfied that the project is meeting the agreed time frames?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:26): It is terrific to take a question from the member for Solomon, who has been on the case with the Palmerston Regional Hospital ever since she was elected. She, as a member for Darwin, is very committed and understanding of the need for Darwin to grow and therefore the need for the infrastructure to be suitable for a growing city, a vibrant city, a city focused on Asia even more after our Australian white paper on the north. It needs the hospital that looks after the Palmerston community to be an appropriate size. I thank the member for Solomon. I visited Darwin with her on many occasions and look forward to inspecting more of this particular hospital and this particular significant piece of infrastructure.

Yes, we are strongly committed to the delivery of this important new hospital. It is a $150 million project of which $110 million is being provided by the Commonwealth. We are working very closely with the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families to make sure that there is timely delivery. I have absolute confidence in the Minister for Health, John Elferink, whom the member for Solomon mentioned. We have had two or three meetings, and the Palmerston hospital is very much something we are all watching with close interest as it develops. The Northern Territory is responsible for delivery of the project, as is perfectly
normal. The Commonwealth is funding the $110 million out of $150 million, but the project delivery is the responsibility of the Northern Territory government. We know that the government is very focused on getting this hospital built so it can service the needs of this growing community. We have set clear construction milestones as we would be expected to do, and those construction milestones will trigger the release of this very significant amount of Commonwealth funds.

I again thank the member for Solomon for her serious interest in all of the facilities in her electorate, whether they be for children, students, the community generally, the disadvantaged or, in this particular case, the hospital system.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (11:28): I wanted to ask the minister about the termination of the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Scheme and in particular the streamlining of nine existing health workforce scholarship programs into a single health workforce scholarship program and the adjustment of the various obligations of a return of service from four to six years to a single year of return of service obligation. My first question would be: was the streamlining of these nine existing health workforce scholarships done to hide the cuts to this area—some $72 million over the forward estimates in rural workforce scholarships? Has there been any modelling done on doctor and allied health professional numbers in rural and remote settings as a result of these changes? Is the minister confident that this will lead to more rather than fewer doctors and health professionals in the bush?

Some technical questions: under many of these programs, if a graduate doctor wanted to avoid their return of service—say, a six-year return of service—they are obligated to, in effect, buy it out and pay for the cost of their degree. Obviously, if you are reducing a return to service from six years to one year, that has an effect on a person or an individual who wanted to buy their way out of this return of service obligation and the amount that they might pay. I would be interested to know if the recipients of these scholarships will be able to buy their way out of their return of service obligations? If so, how much will they be paying back? How can, effectively, reducing someone's return of service obligation from six years to one year mean more doctors in the bush?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:30): Thank you to the member for Wakefield for his question. I am delighted that he has an interest in the rural workforce, something that I know you and I share. It is vital that we get right the pipeline of doctors, allied health professionals and nurses to our rural areas. It is important that where we fund scholarships—and we invest significantly in these areas—those scholarships work for the individuals who avail themselves of that opportunity, the government and also the rural community. I will make some general comments about this measure of streamlining our health workforce.

What I want to say to the member for Wakefield is that we are redesigning and streamlining. The actual detail of every single scholarship in every circumstance is not something that I am going to announce today, because I undertake consultations and—particularly in this area—my assistant minister, Senator Nash, undertakes consultations to make sure we get this right. In future, most scholarship recipients will be required to agree to complete a one-year return of service in a regional, rural or remote area of Australia. I appreciate the member for Wakefield's point about a longer-term return of service, but our experience is that this has not worked particularly effectively in the past. What I would
always say to junior doctors, interns and registrars about the opportunity to work in rural Australia is: ‘We do not want to hold a stick to your head, we want to encourage you. We want you to see after your experience of, for example, a rural generalist practice that this contains an exciting opportunity for you in your professional life.’ We know that there are ways that we can encourage doctors in those early years to appreciate and see what rural practice can bring them. While there will be a reduction in the funds available for scholarships under our new health workforce scholarship program, our scholarships will be much better targeted to priority areas. There will be no fewer scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under the new program. We are creating a more flexible, equitable and efficient scholarship system for the health workforce with an obligation for its recipients to give back something appropriate.

The new scholarships scheme will provide more flexibility and better targeting of scholarships to meet priority areas such as rural and remote locations and health workforce profession and skills shortages. The majority of health students are able to complete their studies without a scholarship, so the vital thing for us is to make sure this is targeted. When I have talked to some professionals, they have acknowledged that the challenge of getting the allied health and nursing workforce out to rural and regional Australia is not really about a scholarship. The appropriate measures are in place to make the studies for nursing and allied health quite affordable. The issue is about that very big move. If you have not grown up or experienced life in the bush, it is about that move from city to country. The incentives that we can put in place are valuable, but they are not the whole picture. We know that we have to be responsible with our spend in rural scholarships and we are going to do that. I look forward to a better targeted system that does not have so much back office or administration funding and makes sure that it works in partnership with our other measures to get the rural health workforce right.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (11:34): I would just like to welcome the minister to the chamber. As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Health, it is appreciated when I get the opportunity not only to meet with you on a regular basis but to give you some questions on consideration in detail.

The minister visited my electorate in March this year, and I just heard the minister, in her previous answer, talking about the consultation process that she takes with all the legislation and changes that she is making to the health system. She took a consultative process with meeting with doctors in my electorate in March this year at my electoral office. That was a great example of the process of consultation that the minister is taking with the industry, and during that time we spoke about the medical school at Curtin University. It is great to see that the health minister and the prime minister have come on board and announced the Curtin medical school, which will be based in Midland in the electorate where the prime minister came over and announced it not so long ago. I appreciate and thank the minister for her support in that particular area, knowing that it flew in the face of AMA recommendations, but we have some great people from the industry like Fiona Stanley, who supported the Curtin medical school based in Midland. As Curtin University is based in my electorate in Swan, it is great that they were able to get that funding.

To move on to another part of your portfolio, which is sport—as the minister knows, I have a deep interest in sport—it is great that you were able to attend the PGA awards night that
night in March as well. They were very pleased. The feedback I got from them was that they were very happy with your understanding of their sport, particularly during a speech that you made, and they understood that you got their sport, which is great. I think I also mentioned to you about the funding that they are looking for—a $10 million grant for their centre in Melbourne—which they will continue to apply for through the Regional Infrastructure Program and which I am sure that you will be happy to support.

As chair of the health committee during the last parliament—a couple of years ago—we did an inquiry into obesity. As the minister would know, obesity is a big issue in Australia. In particular, the 2011-12 Australian Bureau of Statistics' health survey revealed that in that financial year five million Australians aged 18 and over were overweight or obese. This accounts for almost two in three Australian adults. Of even greater concern, though, was the fact that this survey also revealed that one in four or 25 per cent of Australian children were also overweight or obese at this time, and these numbers are only increasing.

During that inquiry we heard from many people within the industry about ways to reduce obesity in Australia. One of the things that came out of that particular inquiry was that—Madam Deputy Speaker Prentice, you might be interested to know—a lot of it was to do with basically what goes in and what goes out, and effort is helpful in reducing obesity. Having athletic or physical activity in schools is vitally important to reduce the amount of obesity in our nation.

One of the other things that the minister might not be aware of is that I consider my electorate of Swan to be one of the most sporting oriented electorates in Australia. The reasons for that are that we have two horse racetracks in my electorate, the greyhounds and the new stadium—which we visited and had a look at—coming in Perth in my electorate. We also have the Perth Football Club; Curtin University, which has many sporting facilities; and quite a few schools which have great sport playing fields that are utilised during the weekends and most times during the week.

Encouraging children to participate in sport is not only good for their health and wellbeing; it is a great way to encourage social interaction and competition. As someone who spent five years coaching junior football, it is vital that I see participation not only by the children but by the coaches and parents, and also all the things that enable them to participate in sport and reduce obesity within the nation.

Minister, could you outline the progress and the implementation of the Sporting Schools program, in which the Abbott government will provide approximately $40 million in 2015-16 to increase the health and activity levels of primary school children through sport across this nation?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:39): I thank the member for Swan for his question about an important area, children's physical activity, and also for his chairmanship of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and the inquiries he is doing that really do feed into our policy area. On the question of health, physical activity and Sporting Schools, this program starts in terms three and four of this year. Registrations are open for interest until 26 June. Any primary school, club or coach in a community can register their interest. Importantly, this is about $100 million of federal government investment over 18 months and will really make a difference to children's
activity. It is a strong statement by this government that we believe in getting children off the
couch and in the role that exercise plays in happier, healthier lives.

I note that members of the opposition are here and I also note that they funded a
predecessor to this, the Active After-school Communities program—something that was
introduced by the Howard government and was a very strong program—but committed no
funding past the end of 2014. This, effectively, is the only funding either side of parliament is
putting up that really says, ‘We want to make a difference.’ I challenge and invite the Labor
Party to let us know what they think of our Sporting Schools program and how they believe
they should provide something equivalent and useful.

This is a program where every school can choose the sport that they want the children to
participate in. The member for Swan mentioned golf. Golf is one of the sports but so are
NRL, basketball, netball, AFL, athletics and so on. Pretty much everything that a school
would choose to do as a sport can be picked up through Sporting Schools. The key—I think
exciting—part of this program is that you do not have to do it after school or before school, so
parents do not have to factor that in. You will know that your school will choose the ideal
time. It might be before school or after school, but it also can be during school. The flexibility
that schools have to deliver this program in their communities how, and dedicated to which
sport, it suits them is going to be one of the great secrets of its success. All the evidence tells
us that children who develop healthy habits early in life are more likely to retain them as they
get older. We want primary school kids to enjoy sport, to learn skills, not just do drills, and to
take that love of sport with them for life.

From the schools to the club environment this initiative will help create healthy links
between children, schools and clubs so that our kids actually do develop healthy habits and
can continue to engage in sport throughout their lives. We know that, while children are often
active young, in their adolescent years sport often drops away, particularly as the stress of
study takes over. Then they might move to go to university and, in their late teens and early
twenties, find themselves in a completely different environment. To have the ability to
connect with their sport of choice in the club of that particular community in a way that is
meaningful, because of their history in the sport from their childhood, really does have an
impact on their social and emotional development and most importantly on their fitness.

No-one is able not to participate in this program. I would encourage every primary school
to consider what sport or sports they would like to be involved in, to have a look at the
website sportingschools.gov.au and to find out how they can participate in their community. I
am delighted that 70 per cent of all of the funds that we are allocating for this program—and
that is $100 million over 18 months—will go in grants directly to schools.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:44): On 2 June, immediately after the budget, I
received a letter from a constituent of mine, Ms Crystal Egens. She writes:
Both myself and my brother suffer from a genetic condition known as PKU. It is a condition that we
have had all our lives and it's not curable. Since 2001, we have been receiving a payment of a grant of
$256 per month under the Inborn Error of Metabolism Programme, which helps people with genetic
disorders including, but not limited to, PKU. This grant from the government is to help us to get toward
purchasing the low protein foods that our diet relies on to keep our protein levels low. These low
protein foods are only available through a limited number of suppliers, some of which are located
overseas, at a price which can be up to and even more than five times the normal price for equivalent foods found in your supermarket. I have enclosed a copy of the price list—and I have a copy of that price list, which I am able to table for the benefit of the parliament today.

Companies which set out the approximate cost of each item note that most of these items are usually purchased in bulk.

The recent budget has announced that they plan to cease paying the grant connection January 1 2016, and our last payment will be received in December this year. The reasoning for this is the misguided view that for people with conditions like ours, there are now more products available, the costs have gone down and they have subsidised a range of new medications.

She goes on to say that these claims are not true. She points out the difficulties with managing the condition and the severe complications and side effects of not managing the diet properly, including ‘mental retardation, especially with younger children whose brains are still developing, seizures, tremors or jerky hand and leg movements, hyperactivity, stunted growth, eczema and renal failure’, and she says, ‘So, as you can see, maintaining our diet is crucial for our wellbeing and development.’

She points out that there are only 904 recipients of this grant Australia-wide and points out:

The savings made, which I estimate to be at around $3 million per annum are far outweighed by the cost to the health system of people not having access to these foods and lapsing into any of the side effects or conditions if they are unable to manage their health conditions properly.

Minister, in light of this representation I have had and hundreds of other representations that have been received by members of this House from around the country, and in light of the fact that the grant is worth about $3,000 a year, the savings to the budget is going to be around $3 million a year.

I implore the government through you, Minister, to do the right thing by my constituents and to reconsider this cut and to consider the benefits to the government of this $3 million expenditure out of a budget that we have heard is well in excess of $9 billion. It is a very small expenditure overall, and the benefits to these individuals are enormous. The costs to the health system will be extraordinary if we get this wrong, so I implore the government through you, Minister, to reconsider this issue. I ask you now: is the government willing to reconsider and reverse the decision to cut funding to the Inborn Error of Metabolism Program?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Henderson): Does the member wish to table a document?

Mr STEPHEN JONES: Yes.

Leave granted.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:48): I am pleased to take this question from the member for Throsby, and I note that he refers to a condition called an inborn error of metabolism and that measures in the recent budget addressed the support that the government gives to those who are affected.

My office recently met with the Metabolic Dietary Disorders Association here in Parliament House, and we have kept in touch with the association since. I note that many of my colleagues on this side of the House have called me about this. You were among them, Madam Deputy Speaker, representing your electorate of Corangamite, as was the member for
Swan, who we have just heard from. We have had telephone conversations, and from memory I believe I have had similar approaches from the members for Petrie, Boothby, Barker, Fisher and Macquarie.

I have taken these approaches very seriously, and one of the things that I have always tried to do as Minister for Health is to understand what the experience of an individual family or patient is. In having the conversations that I have had with our colleagues, I am aware that this is a very difficult condition. It difficult to live with. It is difficult for families and it is challenging for parents.

I have asked my department to provide me with some advice about how we might approach supporting those with this condition, without stepping away from what is on the record now in a formal sense in the budget. It is often children who are affected by this condition, but of course it continues into adulthood. I look forward to having more to say on this subject in the near future.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (11:50): Minister, for many people chickenpox is a childhood disease. While it is very worrying for the parents at the time, most of us forget that we ever had it. Many in the community are unaware that the virus for chickenpox sits dormant in our nervous system for the rest of our lives—that is, unless we experience an event where our immune system is not as efficient as normal or just because we are aging and our immune system is not working as well as it did in our younger years.

There are many people in Gilmore who have had the misfortune to have this happen to them or to have a friend who has suffered. The virus does not come back as another bout of chickenpox; it comes back as shingles. Shingles is an infection of a nerve area caused by the varicella-zoster virus. The way we experience the re-emergence of the virus is pain and a rash along a band of skin following a nerve pathway. I read that the usual symptoms often go within two to four weeks. This certainly happened the first time I experienced shingles. The pain can sometimes stay after the rash has gone; this happens more often for people over the age of 50. Sometimes when you know what is happening, there is an antiviral medication that can be prescribed, but unless you really know what you are in for with shingles, you may miss the early signs, and then it is simply too late. This antiviral can reduce the effects if given in time, but many of our mature citizens are a tough lot and tend to dismiss pain or other symptoms thinking, 'They will go away if I am patient,' and they take a couple of painkillers and carry on.

Shingles is not such an easy disease to deal with. Shingles is sometimes called herpes zoster. About one in five people have shingles at some time in their life. It can occur at any age but usually occurs in people over 50. It is not common to have shingles more than once, but about one person in 50 has shingles two or more times in their life. I guess it is nice to know that I am a rare person; I have in fact had shingles three times—the last time following the nerve pathways in my face, where my doctor thought my eye might have been at risk. I have the greatest sympathy for anyone who has suffered from shingles and have worked hard to lobby for the vaccine to be part of the action taken by this government to address the problem of shingles. In many cases, an episode of shingles occurs for no apparent reason. Sometimes a period of stress or illness seems to trigger it. For many, the death of a loved one or the diagnosis of cancer leads to an outbreak of shingles, more than doubling their grief or
their ability to deal with the need for chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Shingles really is a nasty, mean disease.

The virus usually affects one nerve only on one side of the body. The symptoms occur in the area of skin that the nerve supplies. Occasionally, two or three nerves next to each other are affected. The most commonly involved nerves are those supplying the skin on the chest or tummy; the upper face, including the eye, is also a common site. The pain is a localised band of pain. It can be anywhere on your body, depending on the nerve that is affected. The pain can range from mild to severe. It may feel constant and dull, burning or gnawing. In addition or instead, you may have sharp and stabbing pains that come and go. In fact, when I had shingles on my face I could barely lift my head off the pillow. The shingles rash typically appears two to three days after the pain begins. Red blotches appear that quickly develop into itchy blisters. The rash looks like chickenpox but only appears on the band of skin supplied by the affected nerve. The blisters then dry up, form scabs and gradually fade away. But I have known some poor patients to be suffering it for months.

Most people do not have any complications; however, there are many where the results are quite damaging to the quality of their life. Postherpetic neuralgia is the most common complication. It is where the nerve pain, neuralgia of shingles, persists after the rash has gone. This is uncommon for those aged under 50; however, one in four people with shingles over the age of 60 have pain that lasts for more than a month.

The older you are the more likely it is that it will occur, and sometimes the nerve control in the muscle is affected. The pain from shingles is unbelievable and for anybody who ever suffers from it, my heart absolutely goes out to them. Minister, given the problems that do arise from people contracting shingles, can you outline the measures in the budget to support people in my electorate, and also across Australia, who may suffer from this debilitating and horrible disease?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:55): I am pleased to take such a personal question from the member for Gilmore. We often forget as we talk about lifesaving drugs and new cancer treatments that there are conditions that have been around for a long time which are incredibly difficult, challenging and painful, particularly as you age. I can remember talking to Australians with shingles and thinking, 'Oh well, that's probably not such a big deal', but in fact it is. I think the member for Gilmore has explained, in a very good way, how important it is that governments focus not just on the interventions that do arise from people contracting shingles, can you outline the measures in the budget to support people in my electorate, and also across Australia, who may suffer from this debilitating and horrible disease?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:55): I am pleased to take such a personal question from the member for Gilmore. We often forget as we talk about lifesaving drugs and new cancer treatments that there are conditions that have been around for a long time which are incredibly difficult, challenging and painful, particularly as you age. I can remember talking to Australians with shingles and thinking, 'Oh well, that's probably not such a big deal', but in fact it is. I think the member for Gilmore has explained, in a very good way, how important it is that governments focus not just on the interventions that do arise from people contracting shingles, can you outline the measures in the budget to support people in my electorate, and also across Australia, who may suffer from this debilitating and horrible disease?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (11:55): I am pleased to take such a personal question from the member for Gilmore. We often forget as we talk about lifesaving drugs and new cancer treatments that there are conditions that have been around for a long time which are incredibly difficult, challenging and painful, particularly as you age. I can remember talking to Australians with shingles and thinking, 'Oh well, that's probably not such a big deal', but in fact it is. I think the member for Gilmore has explained, in a very good way, how important it is that governments focus not just on the interventions that do arise from people contracting shingles, can you outline the measures in the budget to support people in my electorate, and also across Australia, who may suffer from this debilitating and horrible disease?

We have funded the listing of Zostavax on the National Immunisation Program in the budget we are talking about today. Zostavax is used for the prevention of herpes zoster, also known as shingles, and will be available for 70-year-olds, with an initial catch-up program for 71 to 79 year-olds. Approximately 240,000 people will be eligible for this vaccine every year and approximately 1.4 million will be eligible through the catch-up program. Without government subsidy through the National Immunisation Program this vaccine would cost consumers over $200 a dose, and we know that our older Australians are highly likely to struggle with that. As the member for Gilmore said, they would be very brave souls and say, 'Well, I can cope with whatever comes my way. No, I am going buy something for the grandchildren and not spend $200 on my own vaccination.' This listing will cost us, the
government—that is, the taxpayer—over $100 million in the first four years. It is a fantastic investment in the health of our older Australians.

Additionally, an adult vaccination register will be created to capture adult vaccination data, to keep track of vaccinations, to have a better understanding of what vaccinations are needed and to enable recalls for booster shots when required. This listing, as we know, is part of a broader package that includes $1.3 billion worth of new medicines, including listings for breast cancer, melanoma and blindness. This is a really genuine and serious approach by us to invest in the lifesaving drugs of the future, and those listings that were in the recent budget are just a slice of what we are doing over the next 12 months to two years.

Can I thank the member for Gilmore and say that I do not think I had been health minister for very long when she approached me particularly, with a note in her hand from her constituents—not talking about herself but talking about her constituents—explaining how it was really important that we get Zostavax listed on the National Immunisation Program. I thank her for her advocacy.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:58): I refer to the government's intention to establish a Medical Research Future Fund, and the repeated delays in establishing this fund.

The government promised the fund would be established by January 2015, which would have required legislation by November 2014. But they only introduced legislation in May 2015 and then tried to rush this through the parliament to meet the revised target date of August 2015. The Senate has now decided that this bill requires proper scrutiny—quite properly in our view—ensuring that the legislation will now not come before the Senate until after the 1 August reporting date.

Minister, why did the government take over 12 months from the first date of announcing this fund to bring legislation before the House? Was this due to the fact that officials from the minister's department at Senate estimates confirmed that they only became aware of the government's intention to establish the fund several weeks before it was announced? I also refer to evidence provided at Senate estimates, that Australia's Chief Scientist and the National Health and Medical Research Council were not consulted on the fund or its establishment. Will they now be consulted at all times before distributions are made from the fund?

I also refer to the fact that, while the bill which established the MRFF was before the House, the government was amending its own bill even before it had been voted on to include:

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board is established to determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities. The Health Minister takes the Priorities into account in making decisions about the financial assistance that is provided from the Medical Research Future Fund Special Account.

Minister, why was such a reference only included after the bill had been tabled before the parliament and only after the Labor members of parliament had pointed out that the bill made no reference to the promised advisory board?

I further refer to the fact that when Labor raised in parliament the omission of any reference to the role for the health minister in the Medical Research Future Fund the minister ridiculed this, insisting a bill to promote medical research was a finance bill, not a health bill.
Can the minister therefore explain why the government has now amended its own bill to insert 40 references to the health minister? The amendments to the bill refer to the government taking into account the recommendations of the Medical Research Advisory Board but do not require the government to actually follow these recommendations. Ultimately, it appears that the funding from the MRFF is still determined by the finance minister, which opens up the prospect of grants being made not on research grounds but on political grounds. Can the minister guarantee that at all times grants will be distributed based on expert advice to promote medical research and not on political grounds? Given that the MRFF will not now commence until sometime after its already delayed 1 August revised date, can the minister give assurances that the budgeted distribution will still be delivered in full this financial year? Finally, can the minister confirm that the MRFF will not impact on existing medical research funding and give a guarantee that the MRFF funding will add to and not in any way replace existing budgeted funding for medical research?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (12:02): This is just a disgraceful attempt by Labor to besmirch what is and should be a bipartisan initiative around medical research. I know that you have to pick your fights, member for Throsby, but why you would pick this one I do not know. Your record on medical research—I should not say 'your' because I do not know that you were intimately involved—you may not know that Labor's record on medical research is appalling. I think the most appalling act of all was in 2011, when you took $400 million out of the budget for medical research, and when there was of course an outcry from the sector you sheepishly put it back. There was another tricky accounting exercise of, from memory, $110 million designed to starve the sector of funds and make out that you cared when in fact you did not.

To ask me, as the Minister for Health, about the Medical Research Future Fund, I am delighted. Trying to characterise my comments about Finance legislation is pretty ridiculous because there are many pieces of legislation and initiatives in this place that go across portfolio. This fund is being set up and established by finance—and Treasury, by extension—so of course it is a piece of finance legislation. The operation of it all will involve the health portfolio because it will be around initiatives for medical research.

Labor can play games with this bill as it passes through the House and Labor can hold it up, but what Labor is doing is giving a clear signal to the medical research sector that the investment we propose in this bill, which has never been initiated anywhere else in the world and which will change the landscape for medical research in this country permanently, is something about which you want to go 'Ho-hum, we're not sure if we like it,' or, more to the point, 'Let's see if we can pick some holes in it and play politics with it.' What would have been much better would have been if Labor had stood up and said: 'We support this bill. There may be assurances that we seek'—and they, by the way, are assurances we could always give and we always would have given. Labor's comments about the advisory board and the Chief Scientist are ones that are quite sensible, but you did not have to make them political. You did not have to introduce them into the parliament and then hold up the passage of this bill as a result.

Of course the disbursement of funds will be in accordance with our research priorities. The meetings the Prime Minister is chairing—which include the Chief Scientist and include the education portfolio, the health portfolio and the industry portfolio—that I have attended are
designed to set our national research priorities. As a government we will have those research priorities in place, and I expect that they will be relatively bipartisan, especially if the Chief Scientist is involved. It makes perfect sense that a sensibly constituted, industry supported advisory group would advise the Medical Research Future Fund, once it is established, about how it should disburse the funds. Let us remember that we have a goal—it is a challenging goal, but I know we will get there—of $20 billion in the corpus of the fund by 2020. This budget has announced that there will be $400 million over the next four years in disbursements from the Medical Research Future Fund. That is in addition to the funding that we provide for medical research through the National Health and Medical Research Council, which is about $800 million a year. This is separate from that. It is a separate process. It will have an advisory board but it will link to Australia's research priorities. How this could possibly be coming as any surprise to the Labor Party has been a mystery to me. The only signal that Labor are making on medical research is that they want to play politics with it; they do not care about it—and, when you glance back at their record and you see these dodgy manoeuvres from the past, you realise that they actually do not care.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (12:06): The issue of immunisation is what I rise to speak about. As we all probably remember from our earliest science teachings, the amazing Louis Pasteur not only pasteurised milk and beer so that it did not spoil but also invented the rabies vaccine. He went onto introduce vaccines for fowl cholera and also for anthrax, which were scourges at the time. In fact, if you got bitten by a dog—as is still the case in some countries where they do not have regular vaccination—a very painful death would ensue. That man changed the course of medical history by introducing vaccines.

In Australia we have a wonderful vaccination program, but I am concerned that amongst certain sections of the community the idea is afoot that vaccinations are somehow bad for people and that all you need to do is eat your fruit and veggies and be strong and you will prevent yourself and your children from getting serious infectious diseases. In my years of clinical practice, and there were 33 of them, two were spent working full time as a paediatric trainee specialist. In my experience morbidity and mortality in little Australians suffering from the humble measles illness was a rarity, whereas these days it seems to be happening ever more frequently as people are not vaccinating their children, because of this popular misconception that vaccination is dangerous to your health. We all know that the ill-informed reports that vaccination causes autism have been totally discredited and debunked as myth. Yet that is a popular conception in many areas of the country. In some areas of the North Coast and in inner-city Sydney there is this idea that vaccinations are bad.

Measles is a wicked illness. The child gets really quite sick. With things like rubella, chickenpox and all the childhood illnesses, a proportion of people get long-term sequelae. Vaccination is so important. Not only is measles coming back because vaccination rates are dropping but also other illnesses like whooping cough are coming back with a vengeance because the prospect of herd immunity is vanishing in some communities. Some vaccinations give 100 per cent cover and some give less cover, but as a community you get an added benefit that if enough people are vaccinated the disease does not have a portal, or an area to break out—the so-called herd immunity effect. If you get more than 90 to 95 per cent of your herd vaccinated, the disease—whatever you are vaccinating them for—will die out, because there are not enough avenues for it to break out.
That is what has happened in humans. You only have to see what we have achieved around the world with the smallpox vaccination. We do not vaccinate people for smallpox any more, because worldwide vaccination has eradicated it. It had no avenue to erupt. Same with polio—we have virtually eradicated polio around the world. This vaccination across mass populations is really important. If we are to prevent childhood illnesses and the serious neurological or respiratory consequences of things like whooping cough, which little children actually die from because they cough themselves to death they are impaired so much, and the chronic illness this causes amongst adults—adults are even getting it—then vaccination rates will need to rise. It is vitally important.

What I would like to know from the minister is: what are the current immunisation rates across Australia, are these rates are high enough and what are we, in the government, doing in this budget to improve immunisation rates across Australia? This is something that everyone wants to know. They want to know that their children, and their preventable illnesses, are covered by our immunisation processes.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (12:11): I am pleased to take a question from the member for Lyne, whose 30-odd years in clinical practice have proved a valuable source of advice to me in the development of health policy. The member for Lyne was involved in my early consultations on how we might approach reviewing and reshaping the MBS, and I thank him for that.

The coalition has a strong track record when it comes to improving immunisation rates. The Howard government increased immunisation rates from around 50 per cent in the 1990s to around 90 per cent today. While immunisation rates in Australia are considered to be high at just over 90 per cent, this is still short of the 95 per cent needed to ensure herd immunity for highly contagious diseases like measles—a point very well made by the member for Lyne.

We should never rest on our laurels when it comes to our immunisation rates, and any minister who sees them hovering a little bit below 95 per cent should do all they can to run the necessary education campaigns to encourage Australians to vaccinate their children, because in recent times we have seen a rise in conscientious objectors and complacency. While we measure national rates, and that is obviously important, we also know that there are pockets—perhaps some quite close to the member for Lyne's electorate—where quite large numbers of individuals choose not to vaccinate their children. That is nearly always because of conscientious objection, and that conscientious objection comes from a very uninformed place.

The approach that we have taken has been a very determined one. We also know that, because of the number of vaccinations that children now have—starting from birth and going into their school years, before you might pick up adult boosters—it is really important to keep track of these. We are going to add to the national register; we are going to improve it and make sure that these vaccinations are included. I certainly know, as does the member for Lyne based on the communities that he is in touch with, that sometimes it is not conscientious objection that is the reason you do not have your children vaccinated. It is because in the chaos of your everyday life it is very hard to keep track of the number of children you may be responsible for and the number of vaccinations they all need to have. I certainly understand that is why the availability of a national register that can be interrogated by doctors is important.
We are also providing a program that gives incentive payments to doctors to round up those recalcitrants, bring them in and get them vaccinated. Parents are really giving me a positive response, saying: 'We appreciate that help. We don't mind a call from our local clinic saying, "We understand that your child is due for an 18-month booster, and we haven't seen them".' These things are really important, and they add to the general picture. I was privileged, but also very sad, to meet the parents of two babies who died from whooping cough. That, to me, was the strongest possible feedback from parents who, while suffering a terrible loss in their own lives, were determined that they would be part of a campaign that increased vaccination rates.

When I was a child, everyone had whooping cough vaccinations. When my children were children, everyone was vaccinated. It is quite alarming that there is this view that it might not be the best thing to do. While we know that encouragement is always the best approach, I am very supportive of the approach of my colleague the Minister for Social Services, with the 'no jab no pay' policy around not providing family tax benefits to parents who have not vaccinated their children, because in this area a stick as well as a carrot is needed.

We know that the responsibility does rest on parents, and sometimes when you connect that responsibility with a payment, such as family tax benefit, people's approach might change. It is vital that, as a government, we stay on top of this and keep our vaccination rates as high as possible. Remember that by vaccinating everyone who can be vaccinated, you protect those who cannot. People with autoimmune conditions and the very elderly cannot be vaccinated. By keeping the vaccination level up, we also look after those individuals.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (12:16): On indulgence, I would like to associate all Labor members of parliament with the comments that have been made by the minister in respect to our national vaccination program and the importance of pushing back against some of the less-informed views that sometimes take hold within the community. It is a program which has always attracted bipartisan support.

I would like to ask the minister some questions about the Organ and Tissue Authority. Minister, you would recall that before the 2014 budget the government received a report from the National Commission of Audit which proposed, amongst a range of things, the merger or the closing down of a range of agencies within the Health portfolio. In response to that report, we assume, the government decided in the 2014 budget to merge the Organ and Tissue Authority with the National Blood Authority, a decision which left many within the community bewildered, because any cursory analysis of the two organisations shows that they have very little in common in either an operational sense or their mission. Notwithstanding that, the government decided to push ahead and last year announced that 1 July this year would be the commencement date of the new merged authority.

It is well known to all in this place that, to enable the merging of the authorities to proceed, you will need legislation. I have been closely monitoring the forward notice of legislation, and I note that there is no legislation in this sitting of parliament which would enable this merger to proceed, which means that the 1 July starting date of the new merged authority cannot occur. My question to the minister is this: do the minister and the government intend to continue with the merger of the National Blood Authority and the Organ and Tissue Authority? If so, when can the parliament expect to receive legislation to give effect to this?
I would also like to ask the minister a question regarding the recently announced inquiry into the Organ and Tissue Authority. All members of the place would be mindful of the extraordinary on-air resignation of the chair of the advisory board to that authority, Mr David Koch, who complained that he was not advised of the intention of the minister to conduct such an inquiry. He was surprised because it came in the immediate aftermath of an existing inquiry that had just reported, the National Audit Office inquiry into the Organ and Tissue Authority—a report which has been received by the government but, to my knowledge, has not yet been acted upon.

We are also concerned about the lack of consultation with any of the stakeholders. Can the minister advise who, within the clinical community, was advised ahead of making the decision to conduct an inquiry?

Indeed, were any of the jurisdictional bodies consulted ahead of the minister’s decision to conduct the inquiry? Was anybody? We know the chair of the board was not consulted. Were any of the advisory board members consulted ahead of the decision to conduct this inquiry? We know that the Organ and Tissue Authority fulfils a vital role. We know that since its establishment we have seen a steady increase in donation rates throughout the country and that is a good thing. We have seen them come down in the last 12 months, and that is a matter of deep concern. We need the Organ and Tissue Authority to be able to focus on its main game without the distractions of the inquiry and the proposed merger. So I ask the minister if she can answer these questions: is the merger going ahead, why was the inquiry conducted and who was consulted?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (12:20): Anybody interested in the very vital issue of organ donation listening to the Labor Party’s spokesperson might be a little bit bewildered, because the conversation is all about the merger of authorities or organisations and the review of another organisation and who was or was not told about it, when the real premise of the member’s question might have been: how can we better work together to increase the rates of organ donation in Australia?

I know that the opposition cares about this and I am not going to suggest that they do not. I do not want to focus on when two authorities may combine or how they may combine. Those matters belong to the legislative progress through the parliament. I know it is sometimes frustrating when you are in opposition, because you do not know what legislation is coming up and you wait and see what is introduced on either a Wednesday or a Thursday morning. I have been there, so I understand it. I would simply say to the opposition spokesperson: please do not get stressed. We are focused on these authorities and the good job that they do and the best ways of performing their important roles.

The other thing that the member for Throsby talked about was an inquiry into the Organ and Tissue Authority and that is certainly not my understanding. There are no suggestions that any aspersions are being cast on that authority. The inquiry and the review is into organ donation in Australia generally and how we might better improve our rates. The conversations that we would all have, as interested members in this policy area, are around how we make sure that the connections we need to have between hospitals, donors and organisations work, particularly when living organs need to be transported across the country.

This is a complicated logistical exercise as well as being a complicated emotional exercise for the families and the people involved. I would love to see donation rates increase and I
intend, through the work that I will be doing in this space with the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash, to make sure that we put in place measures that increase our rates of organ donation. Any actions that you might see the Liberal and National parties in government taking are all designed to further that end. That is what this is about. That is what this organisation does, and no-one can rest on their laurels with the rates at the levels that they are in Australia today.

I spoke previously about the eHealth record, and may I say that that is also a valuable piece in this puzzle in making the connections between where donors are, where organs are and where hospitals are involved and then moving through that complex logistical pathway. The eHealth record is a perfect piece of reform that we are moving ahead with that will allow that.

If we could just imagine that somebody has thought about this, has had the discussion with their family and has made it very clear, they can make that statement and it can be part of their eHealth record—their own eHealth record because it is about the individual. Then it is very clear, which will help with those difficult conversations and those difficult decisions that families make at a time when they never should have to make those decisions, at one of the most distressing and challenging times of their lives. It is a very difficult question to answer for health professionals in the hospital system. I know the member for Throsby made a very bipartisan remark about immunisation and I am sure he would share the bipartisan approach with organ donation. He did mention members having been consulted about an inquiry and I have just come back to finish on that point. This is not about pointing the finger at individuals or members of a process; this is about reviewing the rates of organ donation in Australia, with the strong purpose of lifting them.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (12:25): I was uncertain whether the member for Canning was rising to ask a question of the minister or just finding a more advantageous seat in the chamber. I return to the question of the Organ and Tissue Authority. I agree with the comments that have been made by the minister about the importance of us doing everything within our power to lift the rates of organ and tissue donation within this country.

We have seen significant improvements through the establishment of the authority and the driving of a national strategy. If you talk to clinicians in the field, if you talk to any of the jurisdictional bodies, if you talk to any of the stakeholder groups, they will all acknowledge that we have gone ahead in leaps and bounds, but there are always things we can do to improve. There is no disagreement on any of those issues that the minister has responded to, but the issue on which we are seeking clarification and a direct response from the minister on is: does the government intend to continue with the proposal to merge the Organ and Tissue Authority with the National Blood Authority?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (12:26): The member for Throsby has clearly run out of questions because he is repeating the previous one and I am going to give him a very short answer. The government has, as part of its program, the intention to merge the two authorities. The government continues to take advice, to seek advice and to consult—something that is unfamiliar to members of the Labor Party, but something that is very much a part of our modus operandus. I again come back to my previous comments to the member for Throsby. I know how distressing it is when you do not feel that you know exactly what is going on, but that might be an area that he just has to get used to.
Proposed expenditure agreed to.
Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES
Standing Committee on Procedure
Report

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (12:28): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Procedure, I present the committee's report entitled Role of the Federation Chamber: Celebrating 20 years of operation, together with the minutes of proceedings. I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to table what I understand is the first committee report to be presented here in the Federation Chamber today and I acknowledge the presence of my deputy chair, the member for Melbourne Ports. Fittingly, it is a report celebrating the 20th anniversary of the operations of this very place. The Federation Chamber was established in 1994, on suggestion of the Procedure Committee, as a venue to debate noncontroversial legislation in order to relieve legislative pressure on the House.

Over the last two decades, the Federation Chamber has met its original purpose of providing a parallel legislative stream and has evolved in its role in ways that enhance the operations of the House. It also gives members valuable opportunities to speak on matters of importance for their electorates. Significantly, it allows ministers, including parliamentary secretaries, an opportunity to speak on constituency issues that they are not otherwise afforded in the House.

The report finds that the establishment of the Federation Chamber has been an unqualified success for House of Representatives. It provides the House with an average of 165 additional debating hours each year, without having to extend the hours of the main chamber. Indeed, it has been such a success that Westminster, the venerable institution we look to for much of our procedure, has adopted the innovation. However, the report notes the decline in business before the Federation Chamber during the life of this 44th Parliament. It calls on committees to make better use of the opportunity to have the reports debated here in the Federation Chamber in a timely manner.

When the leader of the House proposed the changes to the standing orders at the start of the 44th Parliament, he stated that the changes were designed to give the Federation Chamber more status, ensuring that sufficient business is referred regularly and is an important part of enhancing this chamber. Recognising the inherent flexibility in the order of business for the Federation Chamber, the report also calls for an extension of time to be allowed for grievance debates and constituency statements so that, when there is no government business to debate, this time can be used for this important opportunity for members to debate issues of importance to their electorates.

The Federation Chamber embodies some of the best work that the House does, being largely consensus work. Unfortunately, its work and its role is not well-known beyond this place, and the report recommends that the Federation Chamber be better promoted on the parliament's website and to visitors to Parliament House. The committee also recommended that further changes be made to this venue to enhance its image and distinguish it from the committee rooms.
I note the lead that the Deputy Speaker, the member for Maranoa, has already taken in this regard, and the committee strongly supports him in his efforts to enhance this important chamber.

Finally, the report acknowledges the workload management of the Federation Chamber and adds to those whips responsible for managing its operations, and recommends that additional resources be given to these officers to support this work. In its 21 years, the Federation Chamber has evolved to meet the needs of the House and its members. The committee is confident that it will continue to evolve and be an important part of the House in the future. I wish to thank the Committee Secretary Catherine Cornish, Justin Baker and all committee staff that are present here today. I commend the report to the Federation Chamber and the House.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 12:33 to 12:47

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (12:47): I join the member for Canning in celebrating 21 years of the operation of the Federation Chamber, or 'fed chamber' as it is fondly referred to by members and staff. The fed chamber was established in 1994 as a product of this procedures committee. The 1993 procedures committee met to discuss ways to improve the efficiency, and indeed the quality, of debate in the Australian parliament. Paragraph 12 of its report at the time said:

During the first decade of Federation—

the House sat for—

about 25 hours per Act. In 1992 this figure...was just over 2 hours—

per act.

The imposition from 1986 of Senate deadlines through the receipt of bills from the House also added time pressure.

The Federation Chamber as it was called, the Main Committee, was established because of a commitment to democracy. This 1993 report made clear there was not enough time to debate bills and amendments were not being moved—much less debated.

The Main Committee, now Federation Chamber, allowed more productive use of parliamentary hours. It allows for continual reforms and improvements and a testing ground for new procedures as the report notes. For instance, the new procedures include the introduction of constituency statements and subsequently allowing petitions to be tabled during them. More importantly, the Federation Chamber allows, and indeed was primarily designed, for the debate of non-controversial legislation. Both of these additions are a great improvement, particularly for the role of private members. It is a much more intimate setting, which fosters a sense of consensus that it is supposed to engender.

Due to the displays on offer in the other chamber, many Australians forget that much legislation has passed successfully through these halls without acrimony. In this chamber we allow the proper discussion of bills so that members can put on record their concerns or support for these bills without necessarily having to vote on them—we send it downstairs when that is necessary.
The worthiness of the Federation Chamber was quickly recognised. Within six months of its commencing operation Kim Beazley, the then member for Brand and Leader of the House, who is today Australia’s outstanding ambassador to the US, said:

The effect of the Main Committee on the decency of procedures in the House has really been quite manifold.

The report being tabled today celebrates the success of the Federation Chamber over the past 21 years and looks ahead to determine future improvements that could be made. The report notes that the committee heard a number of concerns that the chamber has fewer bills referred to it than previous parliaments—that is, a concern that the Federation Chamber is being under-utilised by the government. The Leader of the House or the Chief Government Whip may make programming declarations to refer bills to the Federation Chamber. This was a useful amendment to standing orders. Throughout 2014, however, there was a substantial drop in the number of bills referred to the Federation Chamber. Concurrently there has been an increase in the number of bills subjected to time restrictions, usually through a suspension of standing orders. That was the very problem that the Federation Chamber was designed to solve. I urge the current government to reverse this slide. While the government might point to a lack of consensus on some bills—which, of course, is what the Federation Chamber requires for bills to pass—the report notes in paragraph 3.8:

The Committee notes the possibilities offered by the blocks of government business time available in the Federation Chamber. These provide opportunities for large numbers of Members to contribute to debates on bills and, if used fully, would minimise the need for debate to be curtailed in the House.

The report also notes the decline in the number of committee reports debated in the Federation Chamber, despite a comparable number of reports with previous parliaments. The report goes on to make seven other recommendations—some about the operation of the Federation Chamber and others about its physicality or support services. I support and commend these suggestions of the committee.

Finally, while there may be few elected members left in these halls who took part in the debate that established the Federation Chamber, I salute their wisdom, including the wisdom of the former speaker Mr Peter Slipper. One of his major changes was, I understand, to change the unknown Main Committee—people did not know where it was or what it was—to the more appropriate Federation Chamber. I salute their wisdom as well as the wisdom of their contemporary colleagues who have since left this place in establishing this very worthwhile chamber. It has improved the workings of Australian democracy and it has been imitated around the world. Imitation, as we know, is the best form of flattery, and I think that the wisdom of the kinds of democratic procedures we have established by having these parallel chambers of parliament has been seen in this parliament and all around the world.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Regional Businesses and Industries**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (12:52): I move:

(1) notes that:
(a) by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development's own statistics, two thirds of Australia's export earnings come from regional industries such as agriculture, tourism, retail, services and manufacturing;

(b) Australian regional businesses and industries are highly exposed to global market forces;

(c) whether exporting or not, businesses and consumers alike are influenced and are in turn influencing regional Australia's future competitive advantage; and

(d) the future of manufacturing and industry in this country requires extensive skills development, training and employee development in key sectors such as farming, food production, engineering and value-adding; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) prioritise investment in regional infrastructure that supports growth in rural and regional industries and manufacturing businesses, such as:

(i) improving telecommunications access for rural and regional Australians;

(ii) improving passenger rail and freight rail timetables and services; and

(iii) simplifying compliance for interstate businesses by reducing cross-border anomalies; and

(b) provide additional capacity for the regions to design their strategic vision to meet future industry, manufacturing and regional development demands in Australia.

Manufacturing, farming and food production are of major importance to Australia's regional economy. Agriculture in the Hume Murray region, which includes my electorate of Indi, contributes $2.3 billion to the economy. Indi is home to approximately 600 manufacturing businesses that generate turnover of almost $200 million. In 2014, manufacturing and industrial businesses were the major source of employment in Albury-Wodonga. This equates to 20 per cent of employment, and the industry sector accounts for 60 per cent of all business activity. Manufacturing is fundamental to regional Australia. On 29 May this year, Victorian Senator Madigan, Wodonga Institute of TAFE and Wodonga city council hosted the Australian Manufacturing and Farming Program—AMFP—in Wodonga. It was labelled 'Albury Wodonga—Position Perfect', signifying the region's location as a national hub. More than 150 regional businesses representatives attended, and they stressed the need for government to develop a big-picture plan to advance Australian manufacturing industries.

At the forum I heard how farmers, manufacturers and industry are now, more than ever, experiencing the impacts of a global marketplace. The regional business community told me they are concerned about the unintended consequences of trade deals, food labelling and foreign investment, as well as the adverse impact that occurs to their businesses when the goalposts continue to change. They said to me, 'We need consistency of legislation', and they want government to support Australian businesses through procurement. We know that future industries will require skilled personnel and a specialist approach to meet market needs. This requires government investment in education training and professional development for the next generation of farmers, engineers, business entrepreneurs, teachers and marketers, all of whom have the ideas and innovation to add value to our production. Rural and regional Australian businesses need to be listened to. They need to be involved in decisions and have their input acknowledged and advice considered in all aspects of planning. An example of government listening and acting positively occurred last week. Biofuel manufacturer, Andrew White, from ARFuels in Barnawartha, Indi, contacted me with concerns about the excise on domestically produced biofuel and fuel ethanol as proposed in the 2014-15 budget. Mr White,
together with Gavin Hughes, CEO of Biofuels Association of Australia, came to Canberra and lobbied effectively. To the government and opposition's credit an agreement was reached on legislation that will benefit the whole industry. This type of cooperation brings confidence to the sector and has secured the future of a regional manufacturer and continues the momentum in the growth of biofuels. It works when we work together.

Indi abounds in manufacturing, with clever manufacturers applying cutting-edge science and entrepreneurial skills. Businesses such as Mars Petcare Australia, employs more than 500 people in manufacturing and corporate functions, with an additional 500 jobs created and more than $130 million spent annually with suppliers, Mars Petcare continues to grow and invest in regional Australia. Wilson Transformers in Wodonga produces high quality electricity transformers and employs about 70 people in its Wodonga factory. With a commitment to expertise, technology and safety, and an emphasis on training and education, they have a real competitive edge in the marketplace. Another example is Lucas Mills, in my local community of Wooragee, which employs 35 staff and exports portable timber mills all over the world. These are classic regional manufacturers and they need to be supported.

We know that the government has a commitment to infrastructure. Today I call for a national plan for significant infrastructure to connect rural and regional areas and to prioritise investment in nationally significant infrastructure to support growth in rural and regional manufacturing industries, such as high-speed, reliable internet, high-speed rail, a review of legislation affecting agriculture and manufacturing and cross-border anomalies, and capacity to enable regions to be part of the long-term planning for their future. I am very proud to represent regional Australia and in doing so I am committed to working with my parliamentary colleagues to develop the vision of a strong and prosperous rural and regional Australia alive with opportunities for all. I am very pleased to seek support for this motion.

Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there a seconder for the motion?

Ms Henderson: Yes, I second the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the member wish to speak to the motion?

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:58): I do indeed. It is my great pleasure to speak on this motion. As the member for Indi knows, the best friend of regional Australia is the coalition government. That is why we are rolling out a $100 million mobile phone black spots program with announcements due very shortly, and it has been a great pleasure for me to advocate for further funding. Of course, this is an area where Labor failed to put one single cent. We know how important mobile phone communication is in regional Australia. That is why we are delivering $1 billion over five years under our National Stronger Regions Fund.

That is why we are rolling out the NBN. In my electorate, the preconstruction work for Torquay and Jan Juc has just begun—fantastic news! Forty thousand premises in Corangamite are on the rollout and, as I say, we are again giving priority to areas that need it the most. That is why we are delivering three free trade agreements—the agreement with China, of course, was signed just last week. The modelling from the Centre for International Economics shows that by 2035 the FTA will lead to 178,000 new jobs, an extraordinary boost for our GDP and for our exports. I say, shame on the CFMEU for running the scare campaign as they have done and are doing in a number of electorates, including mine in Corangamite. They need to focus more on remedying their unlawful and illegal behaviour.
We are investing very heavily in the jobs for the future. Our Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund has already delivered some 750 new jobs. That is why I am also pushing for an industry growth centre in advanced manufacturing. I am going to be looking forward to speaking more about this in a moment.

Ms HENDERSON: As I was saying, I am delighted that our government is working so hard to invest in the jobs of the future and in infrastructure, and I reference the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund. This is a $29.5 million fund, but it should be a $37 million fund. The Victorian government has refused to hand over $7.5 million that it committed to this fund unconditionally. There is $15 million from the Commonwealth, all of which has been spent by our government, and $5 million from each of Alcoa and Ford, but the Victorian government has so far only committed $4.5 million. It promised $7.5 million. The member for Geelong, Christine Couzens, even made that statement a few weeks ago at an event which I was attending.

The industry minister, Minister D'Ambrosio, has written to the member for Western Victoria, Simon Ramsay, confirming that the government will not put this money into the fund. It is an absolute disgrace. This commitment was unconditional. This is damaging jobs and is an attempt to sabotage the fund. The minister writes, ‘The Victorian government has decided to go it alone and assume administrative responsibility for the fund once existing funding has been fully allocated.’ This is a disgrace. The minister does not understand that this is a jointly run fund where agreements have to be reached amongst the various contributors to the fund. Shame on the Victorian government for breaching this commitment and hurting Geelong jobs and Geelong workers.

Similarly I also note that the Victorian Labor government continues to fail to make any contribution to an incentive package for the Land 400 $10 billion defence contract. We are working very hard to attract a big slice of that project and I am very hopeful that part of that project, from at least one of the bidders, will be partly based in Geelong. The member for Corio has made some false statements in relation to Land 400. It is fully funded, it is on track and the request for tender is underway. In fact $117 million appears on page 158 of the Defence portfolio budget statement. That is the allocation. It is an absolute disgrace that Labor in Victoria and the Labor MPs in Geelong are doing nothing to drive the incentives package that we need. South Australia has delivered $100 million in incentives. The Victorian government is sitting on its hands, as it has done with the East West Link. It has destroyed 7,000 jobs. It has also completely thrown away the opportunities on Bay West, another complete and utter broken promise. And we now see the Victorian government sabotaging the GRIFF, which is so important for local jobs, and sabotaging our chances of attracting important work under the Land 400 defence project. (Time expired)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:17): I congratulate the member for Indi on her motion before this parliament. The standard of representation of Indi has increased substantially since the last federal election.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 13:17 to 13:32
Mr ALBANESE: When it comes to regional infrastructure, this government has failed dismally. The National Broadband Network is absolutely critical at overcoming the tyranny of distance that Australia has been disadvantaged by. That is why the rollout of the NBN fibre-to-the-premises was so important and at the core of overcoming regional disadvantage. If businesses can set up in Tamworth, in Bendigo and in Toowoomba and have the same access to international markets as companies based in the CBDs of Sydney and Melbourne, then the other advantages in regional Australia will kick in to grow jobs and to grow those regional economies.

Just yesterday, on Sunday, the Regional Rail Link began for commuters in Victoria. If you want an example of nation-building infrastructure empowering regional communities, this is it. It is of great benefit to Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong as well as commuters in Melbourne. It has created 15,000 jobs. It will add 54,000 to the capacity of the Victorian rail network. It is the first new rail line in Victoria for passengers in 80 years. In our 2013-14 budget, Labor invested $1.6 billion in rail. Compare that with what the Abbott government is doing: by 2017-18 it will reduce rail spending by 80 per cent.

If you look at roads, the investment in the Pacific Highway has continued to decline under the Abbott government. In Labor's last year in office, we committed $1 billion as part of our $7.6 billion commitment. In last year's budget, the government committed to spend $672 million in the coming 2015-16 financial year, but the budget papers show a cut on their own figures of $129 million for that year. With the Bruce Highway in Queensland, successive coalition governments at the state and federal level have cut funding rather than invested. The Howard government, over 12 years, spent only $1.3 billion. If you compare that with the former Labor government, we invested $5.7 billion over half the time. That is why this budget's disappointing cut of $93 million, based on their own figures for the Bruce Highway and what was promised last year in 2015-16, is so disappointing.

Similarly, for the inland rail project, we had already invested $600 million to upgrade parts of the existing track that will be a part of this project and we allocated a further $300 million in the 2013 budget. Not a single dollar, indeed, not a cent, has been added to that vital project. Importantly, projects like the Murray Basin Rail Project, which would standardise the rail line from Mildura to Victoria's major ports, has received $200 million from the Victorian government in funding, but nothing from the Nationals or from the coalition. If you look at the investment that we put into the ARTC it was so important over our period in government. What is this government's response? They want to privatise and flog off the network, which will mean the freight rail in regional, rural and agricultural communities in particular simply will not receive the investment. High-speed rail has a future not only for travel between our capital cities but is also particularly important for regional centres such as Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Grafton, Newcastle and Shepparton. And yet, under this government, they have shelved the high-speed rail authority that was planned to make sure that this route, and this future nation-building project, was turned into a reality.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (13:36): I rise to speak to the private member's business motion put forward by Ms McGowan, the member for Indi. It relates to the difficulties faced by regional Australia, and calls for government to provide assistance. I would go as far as to say that I acknowledge her statement regarding the importance of regional businesses and industry and the turbulent global market. There are very few businesses that are not global
anymore, particularly in agriculture and mining. In fact, everything we do in regional Australia is influenced hugely by the global market.

Ms McGowan has called upon the government to prioritise investment in regional infrastructure and provide additional capacity to fulfill what is obviously an immediate but also long-term vision. I do not doubt her sincerity in that, not for one second. However, unlike the previous speaker, the shadow minister for infrastructure, I do not believe it has happened until recently in current politics. Taking my own electorate into account for a while, Calare is one of the powerhouses of Australia: it is where mining, energy production, agriculture, manufacturing, forestry and transport, not to mention tourism—or ‘visitorism’, as I sometimes call it—occur. All of those things are a very big deal to us, and all of them are very affected by global affairs.

Could I just talk for a minute talk about the NBN? Prior to our government coming to power, Calare was not even on the horizon. It was not mentioned in the future of the NBN. We now have over 20 fixed wireless towers; fibre to the node has actually started in my hometown of Molong, the first part of Calare to have started it. We were not even on the horizon with the previous government. So as far as communications go now, we have definitely stepped up to the mark: we are concentrating on areas of need for the NBN rather than the capital cities and areas with large populations.

The mobile black spot program is another one that is very important for infrastructure, particularly for businesses as well as for safety. The black spot program is the first attempt by a government in eight years to actually put more mobile phones out there. I hope to see Calare listed as one of the recipients in the very near future when that comes out. We were also the people in government previously who made the inland rail—put it on the table—and we are the ones now who will carry through on that. There is already $300 million there to do it. Previous Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson is there, making sure that it is done in a practical way, and hopefully there will be a sod turned on that one sometime this year. I certainly hope so. It is a very big project for eastern Australia, but also for the whole of Australia in effect.

I would say doubling the Roads to Recovery Program and the Black Spot safety program for two years are serious infrastructure issues and ones that we are following through. As someone who chairs Black Spot in New South Wales, I am happy to say we are making sure that it is not the state government that takes advantage of this. It is the local councils, be they in urban or, particularly, in regional New South Wales, and hopefully they save lives and improve those things. The National Stronger Regions Fund in my electorate of Calare is already putting out $8.7 million in parks and to fix a treatment plant and a recycling plant, and CareWest is getting $750,000 to help it develop its care of people with disabilities in the community.

I commend Ms McGowan for bringing it to parliament's attention, but let me say our government is acting on it. Our government is putting infrastructure to the fore.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:41): I want to thank the Federation Chamber for allowing us to continue to discuss this issue this afternoon. This issue, in the motion raised by Ms McGowan about regional businesses and industry, is a critical issue that this House should be talking about.
My electorate of Bendigo, like Ms McGowan's electorate, has proud manufacturing and agricultural sectors, and many jobs in my own electorate are part of both those industries. For example, in my electorate we have Keech Australia, which produces cast irons like a good old-fashioned, traditional foundry. Many people think that foundries are redundant in this country. Well, far from it. They have a workforce 200 strong, and they are continuing to export their product overseas. One of the reasons that this business does so well and can continue to produce equipment for the mining and rail sectors overseas is that attached to their foundry is an innovation centre where they are able to custom design the parts that their customers want. This is how they saw they could help grow their business. They have a high number of people working in their innovation centre. These are those high-skilled jobs we keep talking about.

But, when I am out there at Keech Australia, the one issue that is holding back their innovation centre is the fact that they cannot get fast, reliable internet speed. Bendigo was on the map for the NBN. We were about to get the NBN—that is fibre to the premises, the proposal that was put forward by the last Labor government—and then the coalition got elected, and we were knocked off the map. We have missed out on getting fibre to the premises in our area of Bendigo. Greenfield sites and new housing developments continue to get it, but not our business sector, whether it be the CBD or our manufacturing sites like Keech Australia. We have been put back on the map, but we still have no idea when or what. It is a mess. It is Malcolm Turnbull's mess. That is the only way to describe the NBN proposal for my electorate.

Some people opposite have said, 'That's okay; we're bringing forward black spots.' The trickle of money that is going into black spots will go nowhere near fixing the black spot issues that we have in regional Australia. The minister wrote to me and asked me to put forward the top three black spot issues in my electorate. I could not decide. I could not put forward three because there are multiple black spots issues in our part of the world. Anybody talking to these businesses or these homes knows that strong investment in NBN and fibre to the premises will help alleviate the mobile phone problem. So one area that this government is not investing enough in is the NBN and it is not ensuring our businesses and industry in the regions get connected sooner.

Another area is a rail. The previous speaker on our side, the member for Grayndler, spoke about how great it was to have the Regional Rail Link opened a few weekends ago—an extra 54 passenger services connecting people from Bendigo and Ballarat to the city, freeing up the metro and regional lines to ensure that more people can get to their city appointments or to work on time. But this government has not followed through with that investment. They have not committed, as the member for Grayndler mentioned, to matching the state government's funding for the Murray Basin Rail Project. This project will help get freight to port sooner. This government is not listening to the people of Victoria. It is not listening to the farmers. It is not listening to industry, who want a freight option. This government is silent on that issue. Another area where this government is not doing enough to support regional business and industry is clean energy. I am very proud of the fact that we have a solar power plant in my electorate, in Newbridge. That solar power plant is helping to power, through clean energy, local mushroom farms. A mushroom composting facility will benefit from cheaper electricity generated through clean technology.
These are just some of the areas where this government is failing to get behind regional businesses and industry. I call on the government to take seriously what has been proposed in Ms McGowan's motion. It is only through unlocking the regions that this country will continue to grow.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:47): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this motion by the member for Indi. Australia, through a lack of forward planning, has entered a period of lower than optimal growth. This is characterised by the imbalance between our major urban areas and regional areas, highlighted by the strange anomaly that a country whose greatest asset is land suffers from some of the highest priced real estate in the world, in its major cities. This imbalance has seen our major cities outgrow their infrastructure—compromising their efficiency, productivity and quality of life—while regional areas have suffered decline in their economies, leading to higher levels of unemployment then flight. This imbalance, while producing very high costs of living in major cities, has resulted in comparatively inexpensive housing in regional areas and therefore, while our cities are often priced out of the market, there is now the opportunity for regional areas to take this cheaper cost of living as a significant competitive advantage. There is ample evidence that living costs in our major cities are creating a two-priced economy and therefore exposing an opportunity for competitive advantages for regional areas.

The northern Australia initiative of this government is a magnificent example of big-picture vision—strategically utilising a non-performing asset to provide for the needs of the burgeoning middle class of Asia. This initiative will develop the vast regions of northern Australia to provide, in a timely way, for our strongest trading partners. This is a policy that is considerate of climate change and the need for adaptation, and furthermore is an initiative of pure growth. This project is complemented by evidence-based policies informed by a broad suite of white papers, a record $50 billion investment in infrastructure that will improve connectivity to our regional areas, and investment in small-scale infrastructure projects through the $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund to create job opportunities and enhance liveability in regional communities. Further untapped opportunities lying closer to our urban areas should be explored. As Australia has become increasingly urbanised, the regions have suffered. Our capacity to grow and our potential growth have been and are being constrained by our major cities' ability to accommodate this growth. The cost of retrofitting infrastructure and the acquisition of land or tunnelling are significant factors that constrain growth in our cities. And when growth does occur it occurs at a very high cost. The corridor between Melbourne and Sydney and the surrounding regions of these cities offer strategically positioned regional development opportunities of a scale and duration that can provide optimum sustainable growth, at very low cost, for generations. This is an opportunity that should not be ignored but at the same time requires deep consideration.

Historically, Australia and its cities have not been the beneficiary of any strategic planning whatsoever, resulting in an extraordinary imbalance between our cities and regions, and our cities being congested, expensive and inefficient. It is time to plan our future, for the liberation and full realisation of the potential of our regions, while the retrofitting of infrastructure to facilitate urban renewal and densification is undertaken.

The member for Indi has regularly informed the House of the disparity in wages between her constituents and their city cousins. This is also reflected by a significantly lower
proportion of regional and remote adults completing bachelor qualifications—around 17 per cent compared to over 32 per cent in the city. Simple inputs will produce a simple output, not necessarily an enlightened one. Enabling people to make an informed decision about where it is best to live and where it is best to operate their businesses requires more than just a comparison of wages. Regional areas have, based on a real competitive advantage being realised, a great opportunity to attract business investment and people.

A competitive advantage is determined when wages are placed into an equation with cost of living and quality of life. It is not difficult to develop an index, based on a full suite of factors, to determine which regional area offers the best bottom line for investment and families. These calculations may challenge the Einsteins, but luckily you do not have to be an Einstein to work out that, when you are being paid 80 per cent of what you may be paid in Sydney or Melbourne and when housing values are less than 30 per cent, it is a better result for your bottom line. Only when this is commonly realised will the regions reverse the trend of recent decades and play a vital part in Australia attaining its optimal growth and playing at full strength.

Debate adjourned.

Proceedings suspended from 13:52 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Pizarro, Ms Lorena

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:00): Last week I joined the member for Lalor, Joanne Ryan; the member for Isaacs, Mark Dreyfus; and Senator Conroy from the other place to welcome Lorena Pizarro, a human rights activist from Chile, to Parliament House. Ms Pizarro is from the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Chile, a group established in the 1970s to track down loved ones who were vanished under the Pinochet government. The Pinochet regime was infamous for its suppression of political opponents, dissidents and the working class. During the regime, thousands of people disappeared without trace and hundreds of thousands were forced into exile. Many suspected of complicity with the Pinochet government's persecution of dissidents fled Chile after Pinochet's arrest. One of those is Adriana Rivas, who is accused of aggravated kidnapping of seven people during the regime. She fled Chile while on bail and is now living in Australia. Ms Pizarro is in Australia to raise awareness of an outstanding request issued by the Chilean government for Ms Rivas's extradition to Chile to face charges. So far there has been no movement on this front, and Adriana Rivas remains in Australia without having faced her country's judicial system.

Prosecution in a court of law is an important step towards closure for Chilean society and an essential move towards ending the culture of impunity for human rights violations during the Pinochet dictatorship. Ms Pizarro said, 'The aim of this campaign is that none of these crimes are ever committed again, but in order for this to happen we must have justice. In order to do that we must right the wrongs of the past and make sure the people responsible are held to account.' I stand with Ms Pizarro in her determination to restore dignity towards Chilean society and make sure the tragic crimes of the Pinochet government are never repeated. (Time expired)
International Yoga Day

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (16:01): In December 2014 the United Nations General Assembly declared 21 June as International Yoga Day. The first International Yoga Day was celebrated on Sunday, 21 June 2015. It was a great privilege for me to be at Parramatta Town Hall for the free yoga presentations and with the state member for Parramatta, Geoff Lee, in front of 300 people.

The declaration of International Yoga Day comes after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for it in his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2014, during which he stated:

Yoga is an invaluable gift of India’s ancient tradition. This tradition is 5000 years old. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day.

It was a great privilege to be with the Australian Indian community as chair of the parliamentary Australian Indian community to meet Mr Modi when he travelled here to Australia, informing great relations—the first visit from a Prime Minister in 30 years. It is of course fantastic to see that yoga has a great cultural influence in Australia today. In fact, my wife and every member of her mother’s group does yoga, and yoga, of course, is a 5,000-year-old tradition. There are not many human traditions of any culture that are 5,000 years old, and it is fantastic to see it still carried on today by Australians of Indian descent—the Australian Indian diaspora here in Sydney and Melbourne. I welcome the opportunity to spend some time with the Hindu Council of Australia and International Yoga Day.

Calwell Electorate: Assyrian Community

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:03): Yesterday I had the privilege of attending a very important event in my electorate. The Victorian Assyrian community yesterday opened their new premises on Sharps Road, Tullamarine, in my electorate. The new place of assembly for the Assyrian community has been named the Bet Urmia and it is the finalisation of a two-year project which has cost $250,000, of which $50,000 was a grant from the state government.

The Assyrian community are very proud of the opening of their new premises. The objective of this place of assembly is to provide a space for Assyrians to come together to engage in recreational and learning activities, to provide Assyrian language classes and English language classes, to provide lessons in their very prized Assyrian history and also to provide opportunities for young men and women from the Assyrian community to meet and to obtain a greater understanding of their cultural and linguistic inheritance.

I have a large number of members of the Assyrian community in my electorate. I know how important this house is to them. I would like to thank President George Daniel for the amount of work he has done in bringing this project to fruition. After 32 years of the Victorian Assyrian commission, this is indeed a great opportunity for the community.

Morocco

Dr STONE (Murray) (16:04): About 10 days ago I had the privilege of travelling to the Kingdom of Morocco with three of my colleagues as a guest of the Moroccan government—one of the most stable, multicultural and democratic countries amongst the Arab states.
The purpose of our visit was firstly to further even closer relationships between the Australian and Moroccan parliamentary friendship groups. The Australia group is facilitated by the very hardworking ambassador for Morocco, His Excellency Mohamed Mael-Ainin. We met with our counterparts from the Moroccan parliamentary friendship group in Rabat and learned much from them. We also had very frank and fruitful exchanges with the Moroccan human rights commission and those working with the Western Sahara's development.

The second purpose of our week-long stay was to gain a better firsthand understanding of the Western Sahara communities and the issue of the establishment of a new autonomous region. We flew to the main population centre of the Western Sahara, Laayoune, and there, in glorious weather, became familiar with their industries and burgeoning development: the sardine factories, the desalination plants ensuring potable water, the ports, the phosphate mines and the salt exports. We also became familiar with the significant new investments in social infrastructure: new schools, higher education institutions, libraries, sports facilities, public gardens and transport.

We were disappointed to hear that Western Sahara families and individuals in long-established camps near Tindouf in Algeria remain unable to travel freely or to resettle, including back into their home communities in Morocco. This is an issue that should be resolved. I want to thank the government and the people of Morocco for their great generosity and friendship, as they strive to be an island of peace, tolerance and democracy at a time of great instability and abuse of human rights in their region.

**Health**

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (16:06): I rise to speak about the impact of the Abbott government's changes to the rural and remote area health classifications under the new modified Monash model. Under the changes, the town of Murwillumbah in my electorate of Richmond is now classified as MMM2, which attracts no incentive payments for medical practitioners, yet under the previous classification system Murwillumbah was classed RA2, which is inner-regional, and therefore attracted incentives.

This classification change will make it extremely difficult to attract new GPs to Murwillumbah as there are now no incentive payments for medical practitioners for this region. The fact is that the case load and workload for GPs in Murwillumbah is vastly different from that of many other rural and regional areas, which means that incentives are vitally necessary to attract GPs to this area. Given the significant negative health outcomes for the local community from the new model, I call on the health minister to act urgently to specifically exempt or reclassify Murwillumbah under the new modified Monash model system. I am calling on the health minister to urgently act on that.

I recently met with GPs from the Murwillumbah region, and they expressed concerns about the detrimental impact that this reclassification will have upon the entire area. It will be very difficult to attract GPs to an area with an ageing population and complex health needs. They have significant clinical requirements, and there are also more on-call areas as well. I call on the health minister to reclassify Murwillumbah under the new model. *(Time expired)*
Defence Force

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:08): Last Friday, fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and I had the incredible privilege of flying up to Brisbane from Canberra—but this time on a Hercules C130. It was a most amazing trip because not only did we have a wonderful escort from the services but we did some interesting things along the way. We took off and did some low flying over Lake George, which was very special—I think we probably scared a few herds of animals on the way. We then proceeded to do some airdrops and we flew in formation with another Hercules. It was a very special way to start off Friday.

We landed up in Amberley and had an inspection of the base up there—one squadron had just returned from the Middle East—and we were able to see some of the incredible new facilities. There is quite a lot of expansion happening there, and the Army are also working alongside. They have storage facilities now for their ration packs. In particular, I was very interested to talk to the people running the health facilities, people who are prepared to go out, when needed, on call. We are served so well by our Defence service men and women, and it was a privilege to join them on Friday. I particularly thank Wing Commander Jo Elkington. (Time expired)

Thompson, Mr Harry

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:09): I would like to share with the House a story about Harry Thompson. Harry Thompson is 91 years old, still has a drivers licence, lives at Lake Munmorah in Shortland electorate and is totally engaged with his community. On Monday he goes to the San Remo Community Men’s Shed, on Tuesday he visits sick people and helps them out around the house if he feels they need it, on Wednesday he goes to a men’s pension group, Thursday is bowls and Friday is tai chi. He is a member of the Lake Munmorah Senior Citizens Club and is total engaged with his local community.

Harry is becoming more of a norm than an exception. There are more and more people living to be 90 years of age or more and still enjoying good health. He is a role model for other elderly people. He shows what can be achieved by older people who remain active in their community. I know that when he goes along to the San Remo Community Men’s Shed he engages with everybody there. He works at the men’s shed and then he always enjoys sitting down and having morning tea. Thank you, Harry, for all the great work you do. I know everyone in our community appreciates you.

Sporting Schools

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (16:11): It was absolutely fantastic to attend, representing the Minister for Sport, the Hon. Sussan Ley, the launch of Sporting Schools at Ferncourt Public School on Friday. Sporting Schools is a coalition initiative designed to increase participation in sport by students before, during and after school. This program is the first of its kind being rolled out and nine primary schools in Barton have already registered. I am proud to say that we are partnering with the Football Federation of Australia as one of 12 Sporting School pilots across the nation. It is excellent to have a leading and popular national sport like football as part of the Australian government’s largest participation based program designed to get children healthier and happier through Football Federation Australia’s AIA Vitality MiniRoos Kick-Off initiative.
The Sporting Schools program partners with more than 30 of the country's leading sporting organisations, including the Australian Sports Commission and the FFA, to develop resources and activities for schools to use. The government's $100 million Sporting Schools program is all about getting children into sport to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle. One in every four of our children is overweight or obese and around 77 per cent of children spend their spare time watching television and only half are involved in sport. I urge schools that have not already registered to do so. Funding can only be applied for after registration and this closes on 26 June.

Broadband

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:12): Last week I met with around 100 Canberrans who are extremely frustrated by the delay in the National Broadband Network. I want to thank the shadow minister for communications for attending this community forum on a very cool Canberra evening. It was great of him to get out there in Tuggeranong and meet and listen to more than 100 Canberrans who are very concerned about this issue.

I will read from an email I received from Lauree Stewart and George Pass, who came to the community forum.

We live in Theodore and are appalled by the lack of Internet services to our home. We moved here in November 2013 when we bought our first home, only to discover that we could not access broadband internet over the phone line. Naively, we did not think that this was even possible, especially in Canberra.

Since then we have been using a 3G wireless dongle for our home internet which is very expensive and very unreliable. Depending on the weather and time of day, sometimes it doesn’t work at all.

It makes our cost of living very expensive and we do not have access to a service that much of Canberra does. The inequity is frustrating. We pay our taxes and rates like the rest of Canberra but our service is severely lacking and it's impacting on the way we contribute to society.

In this society I believe every Australian needs to have access to affordable Internet and considering Canberra is the capital of this country the lack of adequate Internet service is even more appalling.

Braddon Electorate: Wynyard Men's Shed

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (16:14): Men's Sheds, as we all know, were created as places of support and fellowship for men of all ages and to create an area where men could learn about important health issues. Men's Sheds, however, have become known as much for their outstanding commitment to their local communities as for being a place for men to support each other. The Wynyard Community Men's Shed, in my electorate in the north-west coast of Tasmania, is one such shed.

In a wonderful demonstration of remembrance, the Wynyard men's shed has restored the overgrown, and in some cases lost, graves of stillborn and newborn babies from the 1920s and 1930s—finally bringing respect and dignity to these young ones. Undertaking this task was not easy. Sadly, many of the graves were unmarked and overgrown with no easy way to identify the children. Working together with the Wynyard Historical Society, and with the support of the Wynyard council, members of the Wynyard men's shed first had to map out the overgrown graves and connect the plot numbers with the names. Like the parents of these young ones, the men's shed was not in a financial position to buy tombstones. Instead, these men decided to use their skills to create wooden crosses and nameplates for each grave. These graves have also been cleaned and flowers have been placed on them. I am a proud member
of the electorate of Braddon when men such as this do something as special as this, and I thank them for their efforts.

**WB Yeats Poetry Prize for Australia**

Ms Collins (Franklin) (16:15): I rise to congratulate one of my constituents, Mr Robert Shanahan, who recently was given a 'highly commended' award in the annual WB Yeats Poetry Prize for Australia. The WB Yeats Poetry Prize was first awarded in Australia in 1996. It was launched by Declan Foley who was born in the town that Yeats calls home—Sligo. It is of course named after William Butler Yeats, the infamous Irish poet. Winners of the Australian WB Yeats prize are announced each year on his birthday. The prize is an opportunity for Australian poets to put their work into the public domain.

In 2014, the judges noted that all of the poems commended had quality and craft with many of the poems showing originality or careful shaping and reflection. In the end, poems that were most original and best sustained were commended. Judges said of *Violence at the Egg* that it was an unusual poem that brushes back and forth between life-giving and life-taking energies and all their broken and ephemeral intensities of pain. To quote a verse:

> Heavy brooded rain. Shells sprinkled. Moonlight specked. Thunder drones across the flight ribboned sky. The Nest warm. Heads hidden beneath the wing. Statue like to the storm. Lightning strikes the eggs Conjoined. Beaks crack the shells. Fledglings are born into nesty love. Rostrum's snapping at night air. Deluge deflected by parental Birds Fervid joy...Night fallen...dancing in feathered love cooing. From the first pangs...our future warbling throats were stuffed.

*(Time expired)*

**Sporting Schools**

Mr Taylor (Hume) (16:17): The government's Sporting Schools initiative is a great new program encouraging primary school children to be more active. I try to fit a lot of sport into my week—usually a daily bike ride, often a run or a swim, and I am grateful that I formed this habit early on. With the digital age upon us about 77 per cent of our kids are now spending their spare time on computers and in front of the TV—only half are involved in sport. The trend does not bode well for the future, because as we know the value of sport is wide-reaching: connecting with the community, developing friendships, learning lifelong skills and getting fit and active.

Sporting Schools is about providing activities before, during and after school hours. It is a great way to encourage children to participate and exercise. Primary schools are encouraged to register on the Sporting Schools website as the first step. Funding applications can then be lodged online for equipment, coaching staff and other resources. I encourage as many Hume primary schools as possible to register for the government's Sporting Schools program. You will need to apply before the close of business on Friday 26 June to benefit from funding opportunities this year. I am delighted to see many of the smaller schools across Hume have already applied, including Grendethorpe, Woodstock, Laggan, Murrumburrah, Caragabal, Binalong, Dalton, Koorawatha, Maimuru, Oakdale and Tallong, as well as others.
Lipoedema Month

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:18): June is Lipoedema month. Lipoedema, many in this place may not know, is a condition which causes fats to be distributed irregularly in parts of the body, particularly around the legs. I recently met with Carla Daly, who was diagnosed with lipoedema at the age of 55. She said to me that there is no cure, that it is a genetic disease and no amount of dieting or exercise can reverse it—although it can help manage the condition.

It is a chronic condition that causes pain and lack of mobility for many sufferers. Carla is quite brave, like many other women in her situation. To help raise awareness of lipoedema, this month Carla took part in a photographic exhibition to raise awareness about the disease. The photographs were unveiled in a special exhibition in Bendigo a few weeks ago. Carla and other sufferers spend their lives trying to dress appropriately and hide their condition, so to take part in the exhibition was both traumatic and empowering. Carla said:

Finally, I had the support from other women who have felt the pain, the shame and the humiliation that I feel nearly every day. They'd lived with it and they understand what it is like.

It is great to have the sisterhood so we can have this open discussion. This month being lipoedema month, it would be great to see more support for sufferers. (Time expired)

Bonner Electorate: Minnippi Parklands

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:20): I rise today to update the House on plans to install closed-circuit TV cameras at Minnippi Parklands in my electorate of Bonner. Minnippi Parklands form an iconic green space in the centre of Bonner that thousands of my constituents access regularly. The park includes a variety of amenities, and many community groups, such as the Tingalpa Model Aero Club, also use the grounds as a meeting place. To ensure the safety and the ongoing popularity of the park, CCTV cameras will be installed on site throughout the park. Queensland police have identified a need for CCTV cameras and have recognised that cameras are an efficient means of criminal deterrence. Construction and maintenance arrangements are now being finalised, with the construction to proceed very soon. I would like to say a big thank you to the Tingalpa Model Aero Club for their assistance, as well as to the Brisbane City Council and, in particular, my good friends Councillor Schrinner and Councillor Murphy for the support that they have provided for me in the rollout of this plan. I commend the construction to the House.

Shortland Electorate: Grandparents

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:21): Today I would like to raise in the House an issue that was put to me very forcefully by a group in my electorate: grandparents raising their grandchildren. These grandparents meet at the Anglican church at Belmont on a regular basis, and also in other churches throughout the Hunter. They all came together on this particular day to talk about the challenges that they face in their daily lives and the fact that organisations like theirs need to be funded.

Recently the federal government has de-funded groups that have provided support to grandparents who care for their grandchildren. I implore the government to look at this again. It is an ever-increasing phenomenon. Many more grandparents are being put in the situation where they have to look after their children's children. They find themselves, at a time when they believed that they were retired and could do all of those other things that they had looked
forward to for a long period of time, having to take on the responsibility of caring for children—quite often children who have a number of problems because they have come from dreadful circumstances. I implore the government to look at this issue and make sure that grandparents get the proper support that they need. *(Time expired)*

**O'Connor Electorate: Albany Community Care Centre**

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (16:23): I rise today to announce a milestone one-off funding agreement reached between the federal government and the Albany Community Care Centre. The centre was initially built by the community for the community, with the respite facility offering emergency and planned respite accommodation for frail aged or younger disabled clients and their carers. I take this opportunity to congratulate manager Colleen Tombleson and chair Tracey Sleeman, who have harnessed a groundswell of support from clients, carers and the Albany community to secure Commonwealth funding for this unique service until June 2018.

Last year the team at the Albany Community Care Centre urged Senator Dean Smith and me to help them navigate an entry into the mainstream National Respite for Carers Program, but there was no opportunity to apply. Together we managed to secure a 12-month contract by appealing to the health minister at the time, the Hon. Peter Dutton. One year later it felt like groundhog day, as the National Respite for Carers Program was incorporated into the new Commonwealth Home Support Program. The Albany community waged a vigorous campaign of support letters, Facebook posts and public petitions to ensure that doors would remain open. Aged care and allied health service providers endorsed it as fulfilling an otherwise unmet need. I thank Minister Fifield and his staff for hearing the plea of the Albany community and facilitating a funding package that secures this vital service for the next three years. I also acknowledge the dedicated staff and volunteers of the respite centre, who never gave up on their charges, formulating a roster to continue to provide their service, come what may.

Finally, I salute the carers themselves for their selfless commitment to their loved ones in an act often under-recognised. *(Time expired)*

**Disability Services**

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (16:24): On Saturday night, with colleagues Craig Kelly and Chris Hayes, I attended the annual fundraising event of the Autism Advisory and Support Service based in Liverpool. I have to say that both of those members have personal family involvement in this issue and that Craig is actually on the committee of the organisation.

I want to commend the service for the way in which they have mobilised, in particular, the Italian community and the broader society around these annual fundraisers. This organisation is grassroots, coming from people who are nonprofessionals. They have managed to create an organisation that is now funded on a very big scale by the state government. Even last week, Grace Fava, the inspiring leader of this group, was called to Silverwater prison for the release of a young person who, because of his very, let's say, concentrated repetitive behaviour was detained without any kind of real interest by the police force in what was happening. She intervened there.
This group runs a 24-hour telephone service to advise people. Usually it is parents who are involved in this—once again, not professionals. They have gained a loss of support from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and other groups for musical enrichment for the kids. I just want to commend their fundraising and their broader efforts.

**Tasmania: Innovation**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (16:26): In March this year I joined the Minister for Industry and Science in announcing grants worth $13 million for Tasmanian projects under the Australian government's Innovation Investment Fund. These grants were matched dollar for dollar by local businesses and I am pleased to report that in my electorate of Bass these grants were estimated to create more than 60 much-needed jobs.

The innovative businesses to win grants included craft beer maker, Little Rivers Brewing Co. in Scottsdale, Kooee Snacks in Legana, Australian Honey Products in Launceston and George Town Seafoods.

As island folk, Tasmanians have no choice but to be innovative and resourceful. So I was delighted to learn recently of the inaugural Innovative Tasmania Awards. These awards aim to recognise the best innovators and innovative organisations in our state, both past and present. The awards are the initiative of Big Picture Tasmania, the Australian Innovation Research Centre at the University of Tasmania and the Breath of Fresh Air Film Festival—or Bofa. Bofa director, Owen Tilbury said, 'The awards recognise the role that innovation plays in improving Tasmania's future,' and I cannot agree more. Nominations are open until 31 July and the winners will be announced at a major function in Launceston on 6 November.

I commend these awards to individuals, businesses and organisations in Tasmania and I congratulate the organisers.

**Canberra Electorate: Radio 1RPH**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:27): On lunchtime on Saturday I had the great pleasure of celebrating the 30th birthday of 1RPH Radio here in Canberra. 1RPH is radio for the print handicapped and it broadcasts not just to Canberra but also to Wagga and Junee.

An estimated 10 per cent of the Canberra region is print handicapped—that is about 30,000 people. So Radio 1RPH provides an invaluable service to that significant proportion of our population. As I said, that is not just to Canberra but also to Wagga and to Junee in the Capital Region.

The lunch was well attended by people who had been involved with the radio station for its last 30 years—volunteers, people who read the newspapers, people who read books and people who just help out on the front desk. It was great to see so many people there. I would like to acknowledge a number of people: Lorraine Lister, Robert Altimore, Ellen Mitchell, Janice Winter, Janelle Caiger, Sandra Purser and Karen Melton. Without them, the day-to-day running of 1RPH would be very challenging.

I would also like to thank everyone who was involved in doing the readings for the community here in Canberra and in the Capital Region. And, most importantly, I would like to wish 1RPH a very happy 30th birthday and all the best for the next 30 years and beyond.
Forrest Electorate: Busselton Regional Airport

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (16:29): I wanted to acknowledge the commitment of the WA state government through their investment in the upgrading and expansion of the Busselton Regional Airport to the tune of $59.7 million.

This has just been announced and it means that interstate visitors will be able to fly directly into our South West region and into the Margaret River region as well. This means that interstate airlines will be part of that and this will combine significantly to increase a wider economic growth throughout the South West region. This will be managed by the City of Busselton, which has done an amazing job, and facilitated through the South West Development Commission. This is a regionally transformative project for tourism and agri-tourism. We have some of the best quality produce from marron to truffles, to wine, to dairy, to beef—you name it. We have wonderful events like CinefestOZ, the Drug Aware Margaret River Pro and the Margaret River Gourmet Escape.

From now on, a whole lot of tourists will be able to just make a decision in time to come directly into my part of the world. I see a great opportunity for freight ahead, and this is a very good investment in the south-west of Western Australia. Over time I also see some benefits of direct links into Asia and some greater opportunities through free trade agreements that we have done at this level.

Franklin Electorate: Dover Cenotaph

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (16:30): It is a privilege to be able to stand up to talk about a recent visit to the south of my electorate, where I was fortunate to go and visit the cenotaph in Dover. The cenotaph has just had recent repairs under the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. The Dover community and the Dover RSL were awarded $6,100 in grants to conduct major repairs to the lettering, statue, plaque and general maintenance of the cenotaph down at Dover. This work was recently undertaken, and I was pleased to be able to go down there to have a look. This year, of course, is the celebration of the Anzac Centenary. Many organisations and communities around my state and the country celebrated it. It was wonderful that the Dover community was able to do this with the cenotaph refurbishment that occurred.

I would like to put on record my congratulations to the local RSL members, the community and David Bentham and Knox Napier from the Esperance RSL Sub-Branch, for their work and dedication in making sure that these repairs were undertaken. When I visited them, they also took the opportunity to point out to me some further repairs and maintenance that are required for the cenotaph, as they should. I am currently trying to assist them to get the funds to undertake those additional works that are required for the Dover cenotaph, and for that community down there that are very passionate about it. We should all continue to honour the sacrifice of the fallen in this way.

Wright Electorate: Faith Lutheran College

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Chief Government Whip) (16:32): Recently in my electorate, I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of the new industrial design building at the Faith Lutheran College in the Lockyer Valley in the township of Laidley.

The Australian government contributed a grant of $465,000 under the Capital Grants program. The state government also contributed matching funding, and the Faith Lutheran
College contributed $1,228,340 towards the project, making the project in excess of $2.1 million. It will accommodate woodwork, metalwork, graphics, the sciences and state-of-art facilities.

For years I have watched this school grow. The constants in that community have been a number of motivated people, and I pay particular attention to, and dedicate this speech to, the principal of the school—none other than Janelle Anderson, who has been at the school since the first student was enrolled. They now have over 620 students, who come from a vast geographical area. I think they have about 12 large school buses, where they provide a service to the community. Janelle Anderson is a tower of strength for that community. There is still more to be done there, and I wish her the very best—with Janelle's enthusiasm, and the cooperation of her board, her executive staff and all the teaching staff—as I do for the success of all their students.

**Same-Sex Relationships**

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (16:33): Last week I stood in this chamber and let the House know that 21 small businesses in my electorate of Bendigo publicly declared their support for marriage equality. They took out a full-page ad in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on Saturday saying, 'It's time, Australia. We support marriage equality.'

Today, I am proud to stand here and say that on Saturday a double-page ad featured in the *Bendigo Advertiser*, with 83 small businesses in Bendigo publicly declaring their support for marriage equality, an ever-increasing number of regional businesses saying, 'I support marriage equality.' These businesses include the Foundry Hotel Complex, Wine Bag, Star Cinema, Honeyeater, World of Tiles Bendigo, Hardcopy Entertainment and Sutherland Property Bendigo—to name just a few.

I am incredibly proud that the small businesses in my electorate are standing up and saying, 'It is time for marriage equality.' They are speaking loudly, calling on their senators in their region to join them. It is a chance for Senator Bridget McKenzie and Senator Michael Ronaldson to hear their calls and to support marriage equality. This is a regional town stepping up to say it is time, and it is about time we saw the government get on board and allow a free vote of their members so that people in regional Australia and all people in Australia can see their dream come true—the dream of marriage equality. It is time.

**Parkes Electorate: Maverick Biosciences**

**Mr COULTON** (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (16:35): I would like to congratulate the Dubbo based company Maverick Biosciences on receipt of a grant from the Minister for Industry and Science under the Australian government's Accelerating Commercialisation program. Maverick Biosciences produce and export biomaterials for manufacturers that are developing percutaneous cardiovascular devices for humans. These percutaneous cardiovascular devices reduce patients’ time in intensive care facilities, therefore reducing hospital costs, and can be implanted into frail patients. Maverick will use this funding to build a clean room in their Mountbatten Drive premises for the manufacturing of these materials. Their aim is to commission a certifiable pilot plant enabling the production of materials in such a manner as to support clients' potential on market approval. The pilot plant will also inform Maverick Biosciences of the requirements of a commercial-scale facility.
Cameron Crowley and his business partners all come from agricultural backgrounds, including strong livestock-raising and slaughtering experience. The company first began work in the area in 1998, when the founders of the company met and aligned around a like belief, knowledge and understanding of business principles and philosophies. They combine a passion for building business, creating opportunities for agriculture and delivering value to clients. Their innovation is outstanding. I would like to wish them all the best and look forward to following them on their journey.

**Bahtabah Local Aboriginal Land Council**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:36): On Friday, 12 June, Bahtabah local Aboriginal Land Council celebrated 30 years. Bahtabah is a role model for every land council. It is very active in the community and it owns quite a bit of land in the area. At the core of all its activity is progressing the cause of its members, working towards ensuring that young Aboriginal people in Shortland and Charlton electorates on the eastern side of Lake Macquarie have access to training and jobs. Mick Green, the CEO, is a fantastic role model for all Aboriginal people. He has been at the forefront of Aboriginal activities within the local area. He works closely in partnership with the local schools, and a number of activities and developments that have taken place were joint ventures. In addition to that, in the beginning of July they will be having a NAIDOC Week day at Pelican Foreshore. All the local organisations and the community will gather together and celebrate NAIDOC Week with the Bahtabah Land Council.

**Vogels, Ms Joan, OAM**

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:38): Whilst I knew Joan Vogels in our community quite well, I had no idea when I joined the Carols by Candlelight choir with Joan some 15 years ago that she had such an involvement in the Guiding movement in Australia. Joan Vogels, Pakenham resident, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, OAM, for her services to youth through the Guiding movement. She joined Guides as a child in 1947, three years before I was born, and was a Brownie and a Girl Guide leader in Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne from 1954 to 1974. But that is not all. Her involvement in the wider community includes being a member of the Probus Club of Pakenham since 1997, a member of the Pakenham East Probus Club and inaugural president since 2006, a Cardinia Shire Australia Day Committee member, a one-time Secretary of the Yakkerboo Festival Committee and a Pakenham Uniting Church elder since 1995.

Joan jokes that she must have had 'yes' tattooed on her forehead. Graciously, she insists that she cannot take full credit for any of her achievements. 'Nobody does anything alone,' she says. 'I am getting this award, but an awful lot of people have been involved with me.' And then she said, 'You get more out than you put in.' Through her service, she has a great circle of friends that she has met. Joan Vogels—singer extraordinaire. But, more importantly, her commitment to young women through the Guiding movement has been something to behold and she should be greatly congratulated. What a marvellous award for Joan Vogels OAM.

**Canberra Electorate: International Yoga Day**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:40): Yesterday, hundreds of Canberrans joined the Indian high commissioner and the Indian community on the lawns of Old Parliament House to salute the sun and to downward dog as part of the International Yoga Day, which was
celebrated and commemorated right throughout the world. This initiative came about a number of years ago as a result of a call from the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to celebrate the 5,000 years of yoga. This is the first year that we have celebrated and commemorated it right throughout the world.

The week before, I celebrated International Yoga Day with the Indian community here in Canberra at the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin at the Hindu temple over in Florey. They had a yoga-thon—a whole day of yoga happening—and I joined them in the morning. I did not partake of yoga, because I am a Pilates girl now—a former yoga devotee but now a Pilates devotee. But it was a wonderful day; it was a wonderful morning. I joined with the ACT member for Ginninderra Dr Chris Bourke to listen to a number of members of the community talk about the benefits of yoga and the stillness that you get from yoga. It was a wonderful morning. I do commemorate and congratulate everyone, particularly Rakesh Malhotra, Anil Gupta, Ramesh Malik, Ashok Jain and Rakesh Jain.

Alcorn, Mr Kenneth John

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (16:41): I would like to pay tribute today to a very sick friend, Kenneth John Alcorn, known very widely around Ballajura and the north-eastern suburbs of Perth as Scottie Alcorn. As secretary of the RSL sub-branch in Ballajura, he is a real identity, a real icon in the local community. He was a tireless worker behind the scenes, orchestrating the development of the Ballajura War Memorial and Peace Park. He was the main organiser of Anzac Day dawn services in Ballajura for many years. He was always distinguished by the way he used to wear the garter blue jacket, being a former member of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Apparently he was in the Q store in those days. Following his discharge, he moved back to Perth. He has also been a strong supporter of the police cadets at Ballajura Community College, where the war memorial is.

Unfortunately, on his way to Anzac Day, he was on one of those cruise ships and ended up having two strokes and has been desperately ill. He spent several weeks in hospital in Istanbul and was medevaced back to Australia. We are greatly concerned about his health. I hope that he can pull through and return to be amongst his mates. Best regards to Scottie. Our thoughts are certainly with him and Molly.

Bendigo Electorate: Kyneton Primary School

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:43): Last Saturday, I had the great privilege of joining Mary-Anne Thomas, the Labor member for Macedon, at the Kyneton Primary School arts show. It was not just an open day for future students to come with their parents to enrol; it was also a chance for the school to celebrate and share their art. We had the great privilege of being shown through the classrooms to view the art by the school captains. It really speaks volumes to the pride that these students had in their art. The school has some limited means to employ an artist as their art teacher, who actually volunteers a lot of his time. He is in the school, performing extra work outside of pay hours.

Kyneton Primary School is a small school. It is in a town of about 6,000. Recently, it was announced that Kyneton Primary School will get a new school to be built by the new Labor government, which will be a wonderful opportunity for the students of the Kyneton community and for the school. This school has had its challenges. It is an old bluestone building. It is one of the oldest schools we have in the country, so the students welcomed the
fact that the new Labor government will help build a new school and, with that, a new art room. So there will be many more art shows into the future. I congratulate the students on a wonderful art show.

**Hindmarsh Electorate: Greek Community**

**Mr WILLIAMS** (Hindmarsh) (16:44): On Wednesday, 22 June the Greek Orthodox community of South Australia held an event to celebrate the work of their care services and recognise the numerous Greek Orthodox volunteer and community groups. The event was well attended by a large number of dignitaries, such as the Consul-General of Greece in Adelaide, Mr Andreas Gouras, and many members of the local Greek community.

Hindmarsh is home to a large Greek community, and it was pleasing to hear groups such as the Greek Pensioners and Aged Union of Thebarton and Suburbs were recognised for their work in the local community. I congratulate Mr Nick Flabouris, Mrs Porta Varkanis and Mr Jim Papanicolous for their great work. Nick and Porta hosted me only a few months ago for fine Greek coffee with the Greek pensioners, and I thank them for that. I am currently working with the Greek Pensioners and Aged Union of Thebarton and Suburbs as they look to raise funds to upgrade their community bus. The bus is used to transport elderly citizens to and from their medical appointments, for example, and so is much needed by the local residents. I look forward to assisting the group to make this dream of theirs a reality.

The event also coincided with the launch of a Let's Go Greek application for iPads and iPhones. It is a great idea to assist Greek-speaking people in the community to communicate with doctors, nurses and social workers. Other service providers will also be able to help in the health and ageing sector. Well done all in the Adelaide Greek community; I commend Mr Bill Gonis and the whole Greek Orthodox community for their work.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** In accordance with standing order 43 the time for members' statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Vietnamese-Australian Community**

**Mr SIMPKINS** (Cowan) (16:46): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that it has been 40 years since the Vietnamese began coming to Australia and their arrival has been defined by:

(a) successful settlement;
(b) positive integration; and
(c) their assistance with the development of the Australian economy through their hard work and dedication;

(2) acknowledges the positive influence in Australia of the Vietnamese-Australian people from:

(a) the Vietnamese Community Association;
(b) the Vietnamese parishes of the Catholic Church;
(c) the Vietnamese Free Buddhist Church;
(d) other religious groups; and
(e) clubs and other service providers; and
(3) commends the Vietnamese-Australian community for its dedication to Australia and determination to provide opportunities and success for Vietnamese-Australian families.

Tonight in the Main Committee room the Vietnamese community of Australia is holding a reception to commemorate 40 years of Vietnamese migration to Australia. From the terrible tragedy of the fall of the Republic of Vietnam on 30 April 1975, a mass refugee escape took place as the brutal and vindictive regime in Hanoi took revenge on their enemies. Re-education camps, outright imprisonment, disappearances and murder were all hallmarks of the threat that made so many Vietnamese refugees flee. More than one million escaped and an estimated 400,000 were lost at sea. That was a continuation of the tragedy with the fall of the democratic dream on 30 April 1975. Refugee camps were established in places like Hong Kong and Malaysia in particular.

It was in April 1976 that Vietnamese refugees first arrived by boat in Darwin. Over five years a total of 2,100 arrived by boat, but the vast majority was resettled out of refugee camps in Asia. To make the point with these numbers: the 1976 census said there were 2,427 Vietnamese in Australia and in the 1981 census the number was up to 41,096; in the 1991 national census, 124,800 people born in Vietnam were resident in Australia and in 2001 there were 154,000; and the 2011 census indicated that 185,000 people born in Vietnam were resident in Australia and 219,000 spoke Vietnamese at home. In Cowan there are more than 5,000 people who are of Vietnamese heritage, and I am pleased to have spoken of their behalf on more than 30 occasions in this parliament. I have been to Vietnam twice; however, given my speeches have been critical of the government in Hanoi, I have not been able to get another visa for the past three years.

In this motion I talk about the successful settlement and positive integration of Vietnamese Australians' and their contribution to the development of the Australian economy. This is, of course, all very true; I see it across every part of the Cowan electorate. In Western Australia, Vietnamese people are wonderful entrepreneurs. They own and create very effective businesses. All of the independent bakeries and the fingernail, manicure and pedicure shops are all Vietnamese owned. In fact, the Summerfield Shopping Centre in Girrawheen, and a lot of the Newpark Shopping Centre, are full of Vietnamese-owned shops. Beyond their very strong retail contribution to business, there are many Vietnamese involved in horticulture in and around Cowan. I will also make mention of the Vietnamese Farmers Association president, Thang Van Le, of Gnangara and acknowledge the wonderful contribution he has made to WA.

During my visits to Vietnam, I could see that Vietnamese people know how to work hard. That same attitude is evident here in Australia. First-generation Vietnamese Australians have established successful family businesses and farms, achieving success through determination to succeed. Now, increasingly, the next generation have been defined by increasing numbers of professionals, and I see more and more doctors, pharmacists and other tertiary educated graduates.

The Vietnamese people have a determined and entrepreneurial spirit that thrives in the free enterprise environment here in Australia. It is a great combination. I also pay tribute to the community and religious leadership of Vietnamese Australians. The President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia is Mr Vo Tri Dung. In Western Australia I thank the President of the Vietnamese Community Dr Nguyen Anh Dung for his outstanding and wise
leadership. His clarity of thought and dedication to the Vietnamese community have seen the creation of the magnificent Vietnamese Boat People Monument of Gratitude in the rightly named Liberty Park in the town of Vincent. I also acknowledge the outstanding leadership of the Vietnamese Buddhist community by the venerable Thích Phước Nhon. He is a great religious leader, and his drive for the Buddhists all the way around Australia is well noted. I also acknowledge the great efforts of Mr Huỳnh Ngọc Hung, President of the Vietnamese Senior Association in WA; Fr Pham Mong Huynh, Vietnamese Catholic Church WA; Mr Nguyễn Văn Thanh, President of the Republic of Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia; Mr Đoan Việt Trung, Secretary of the Protect the Vietnamese Workers Committee; and Dr Nguyễn Đỗ Thanh Phong, spokesperson for Viet Tan.

Five minutes is not long enough to really acknowledge the Vietnamese community in Australia. So many have made such great contributions. But I think it is important to say that they came here under circumstances of great adversity, but from that adversity Australia has greatly benefited by the contribution that they have made. They are great people and great Australians, and I certainly thank them for their efforts for this country both over the last 40 years and in the future, because they have made great contributions and they will continue to do so.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Watts:** I am happy to second the motion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I call the member for Gellibrand.

**Mr Watts (Gellibrand) (16:51):** This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon and the beginning of the mass resettlement of Vietnamese migrants in Australia—a sad day for Vietnam but a happy day for modern Australia. This event saw hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese forced to flee their country in search of refuge. Many made the journey from Vietnam to places like Pulau Bidong, a refugee camp in Malaysia, and then to places like the Midway Hostel in Footscray of my electorate as part of a regional resettlement agreement developed to accommodate this acute humanitarian crisis. They arrived with next to no resources and unable to speak the language in a country that was at best apprehensive about their presence.

The Vietnamese began to arrive in Australia shortly after the abolition of the White Australia policy but with the attitudes and cultural reflexes of this period laying remnant. How things have changed. Today Vietnamese born make up the fifth largest migrant community in Australia and the Vietnamese Australian community is the third largest ethnic group in Australia from a non-English-speaking country. There are now over 200,000 Vietnamese Australian people living in our country. The land on which the Midway Hostel formerly stood in Footscray in my electorate is now governed by a council with a Vietnamese Australian mayor: Maribyrnong City Council's Nam Quach. In just 40 years the Vietnamese Australian community has changed the face of my electorate and made an enormous contribution to the economy, society and government of Melbourne's west.

This motion seeks to congratulate the Vietnamese Australian community for its positive integration. While I agree that modern Australia would be significantly less vibrant without the Vietnamese Australian community, I would, with respect to the generous intent of this motion, phrase it slightly differently. Vietnamese migrants did not simply put on akubra hats
and recite bush poetry when they reached our shores. They have not just integrated with Australian society; they have enriched it and added new dimensions to the Australian identity. We have learnt much from the values revered in the Australian Vietnamese community—values like hard work, the pursuit of excellence and community and familial obligation. New ideas and new ways of doing things in the Vietnamese community have enriched our businesses, our hospitals, our schools, our cuisine, our literature and our culture.

Immigration from Vietnam and the subsequent flourishing of the Vietnamese community in Australia has changed our nation for the better. Vietnamese immigration to Australia fundamentally changed the way that Australia sees itself. It gave us a practical experience of diversity and multiculturalism unlike any we had previously experienced. We are no longer a monocultural society, a colonial outpost with a fear of a yellow peril to our north; we are a multicultural, pluralistic and welcoming society largely free from the kinds of racial intolerance and segregation that immigrants left behind when they came to Australia. The Vietnamese Australian community is a shining example of how multiculturalism makes good countries great.

Earlier this month the Vietnamese community in Australia launched a fundraising campaign in conjunction with Rotary International, Disaster Support Nepal Australia and the Mounties group to raise money for the victims of the earthquake in April. In May, prominent Vietnamese Australian and self-taught singer and songwriter Hong-Anh released an album titled *Boat People Dance*, which focuses on the daily plight of refugees and also raises money for charity. This year, the Vietnamese community in Victoria raised over half a million dollars for the Royal Children’s Hospital Appeal as part of the Good Friday Appeal.

Whenever anyone involved in these philanthropic causes is interviewed or asked to comment on their work it is common to hear them explain that their work is simply giving back to the Australian community or saying thank you. I think we can now all safely say that this is the wrong way around, and that we should be thanking the Vietnamese Australian community for the contribution they have made to Australia over the past 40 years. During a time when many ethnic groups feel anxious about much of the rhetoric surrounding the citizenship debate in this country, remembering the Vietnamese Australian community and their contribution is particularly valuable. Last month, a government backbencher got up in this place and declared that ‘multiculturalism has failed’. Nothing could be further from the truth. I wish that he could have been with me and thousands of my constituents in Melbourne’s west, where we watched fireworks over the Maribyrnong River for the lunar new year at the Quang Minh Temple, or celebrated and ate street food at the annual East Meets West Festival in Footscray in my electorate or stood in solidarity with the Vietnamese Australian community to pay tribute to Malcolm Fraser’s passing.

In 2015, 28 per cent of Australians are born overseas, the highest percentage in 120 years. Over 40 per cent of the people living in my electorate were born in another country and two-thirds of them had a parent born in another country. My electorate would look extraordinarily different without the benefits of multiculturalism. We are a culturally diverse, pluralistic society, and this has not happened by accident. It has been government policy for decades, across governments from both sides of politics. It has happened because we realise the immense advantages that come with multiculturalism. I thank the Vietnamese Australian community for their role in promoting the benefits of multiculturalism, and their prominent
role in Australian society. I, too, could personally thank many friends from the Vietnamese Australian community, but I will not hazard doing that in five minutes because it would take far longer to acknowledge all of them personally.

Debate adjourned.

**Imported Products**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:56): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes with concern the importation to Australia of goods that:

(a) breach Australia's anti-dumping regime; and

(b) do not comply with Australian standards;

(2) further notes the:

(a) injurious effect that the importation of such products has on Australian businesses and Australian jobs;

(b) risk to consumers of using substandard products and goods; and

(c) lack of inspection and compliance enforcement of imported products; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) continue to monitor the anti-dumping regime and effectiveness of recent changes;

(b) strengthen the inspection and compliance enforcement regime for imported goods;

(c) review penalties for importers who breach their Australian legal obligations and if necessary increase the penalties where they are found to be insufficient, to act as a deterrent; and

(d) hold an urgent meeting of the International Trade Remedies Forum to address these and related issues.

For those with regional electorates that still have strong manufacturing in their areas, this motion and what is contained in this motion will not come as any surprise. The motion that is before the House that we are debating talks about the need for a strong anti-dumping regime in this country. It talks about the need to ensure that imports coming into this country comply with Australian standards. It talks about how, by doing this, we will ensure that we are protecting Australian jobs, that we are protecting Australian industry and also ensuring that consumers do not become at risk of what could happen when, for example, substandard building products are used in construction.

When I am out talking to manufacturers of building products in my electorate of Bendigo, when I ask the question, 'What do you most fear, what puts your business, your industry and the jobs of many local people at risk?' without a doubt, the first thing that always comes up is the fear of cheap imports undercutting their quality product. But what they fear most is not just the cheap imports undercutting their product, but that these imports do not meet Australian standards. Their concern is real. Increasingly, we are seeing reports in our media of inferior products not meeting Australian standards entering our market, particularly in the building area. If I can just take a moment to cite a few examples that have appeared recently in the media: last week the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission launched an awareness campaign over the recall of Chinese-made electrical cable that was below standard. They believe it has been installed in an estimated 40,000 homes nationally. Whilst the recall happened last year, it was decided a campaign was necessary due to the low rate of action on
the problem—forty thousand homes at risk because of product that had been brought into this country that did not meet Australian standards.

Another example has received lots of media, particularly in Melbourne and Victoria, because of the fact that it affected over 170 high-rise buildings in the Melbourne Docklands area. In this particular situation, aluminium cladding with a plastic core was used in the construction of many buildings. It is on the outside. There was a fire last year that the MFB themselves said they were scared and worried to go into because of the nature in which the fire took hold. The MFB, through their investigations, found that the fire spread quickly at this establishment, Lacrosse Docklands in La Trobe Street, from floor to floor because of the aluminium cladding and the plastic cladding that was on the outside of these buildings. So we now have a situation where we are not only putting consumers at risk because of the potential fire hazard of these buildings, through the use of this inferior product that is coming into our country, but also we are hearing concerns from the MFB who have to go to these fires when they occur.

In moving this motion, I call on the government to not only continue to monitor this to ensure that we have a strong anti-dumping regime that will help secure and protect the jobs that we have in our manufacturing industries, particularly in our building industries, as I have sought to highlight today, but also strengthen the inspection, compliance and enforcement of the regime for imported goods.

Now is the time for the government to make sure that it gets this regime right, that we have strong compliance with Australian standards and that product from overseas is not being dumped on our markets. If the government is genuine about creating job opportunities under the China free trade agreement or the Korea free trade agreement, we need to ensure that we have our systems in place so that the current situation where we are seeing cheap product being brought in is not exacerbated. We need to ensure that any product coming in is safe and meets Australian standards.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Laurie Ferguson:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (17:02):** I thank the member for Bendigo for her motion. Some of the issues she raises are real issues and we should all listen to them, but there are a few things I will point out. I want to spend most of my time talking about anti-dumping as averse to inferior product. I do not think the two should be confused. We have anti-dumping legislation. Anti-dumping legislation is to stop subsidised product coming into Australia and being sold below the cost of production from where it is sourced. It is not necessarily inferior product at all. The issue of inferior product is another one. Of course, there are laws in place and bodies in place to deal with it now because it is illegal in Australia for retailers to sell products that are not to standard.

If consumers have problems they should be going back to the places where they bought the product and taking them to the line, because that is the quickest way to stop it. If people are hit with the appropriate lawful action then they will cease to supply inferior goods and make sure they get up to scratch. The last thing Australia needs is some kind of wide team of inspectors all around Australia trying to judge the quality of things when they open up the box and putting a rubber stamp on it. That is the kind of red tape that the economy cannot stand.
In fact, if you were going to do it for imported products, you may as well do it for locally produced products as well. We need people to produce the quality product to the demand.

When it comes to anti-dumping, Australia has thrived, not in spite of trade but because of it. Often people say to me that we do not make anything anymore in Australia. What are our children going to? But the lesson of history is that, as economies mature, a lower proportion of the GDP is used in providing essential services—that is, food, shelter and clothing. For subsistence, we do not need much more. As we become wealthier, we like better food and we have nicer houses and more clothes.

Then as we become wealthier again we spend money on entertainment, leisure, pets, cars, restaurants and labour-saving gadgets. More people are doing less productive things, inasmuch as they are providing the services and the luxuries in our life by recycling the primary income that is sourced to the nation by our very successful export industries—to the point where we have fitness classes, we have grooming for our dogs and we pay cafes $4 a cup for coffee when we could well be drinking water. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, and it does not really matter as long as some sectors of the economy are earning enough export income to recirculate through the system that keeps everything else afloat. In Australia's case that means allowing our most efficient industries to get on with the job.

It should be government's role to reduce the impediments, to cut red tape. This government has already reduced red tape in Australia by $2 billion. We will keep working on about $1 billion a year, which is our target, so that businesses can flourish and provide the export income Australia needs to underwrite our lifestyle so that our luxury industries—and I do not mean that in any derogatory sense, as I said earlier—can prosper and provide jobs and we can all live well. Australia excels in a wide range of areas: obviously the resources industry, agriculture, education, tourism and services generally. However, there is still a substantial manufacturing industry in Australia and increasingly it will focus on high-end manufacturing, the things we do very well: high technology and innovation. It is an area where Australia can compete well. In fact in my electorate—at Booleroo Centre, let it be said—I think I have the biggest exporter of Australian farm machinery in Kelly Engineering. Jo and Shane Kelly run a fabulous business. They have exported over 1,000 tillage units to the US and their business is running strongly. It just shows what can be done with a good business plan and a good workforce.

Our industries have demonstrated time and time again that they can compete if they are given a chance and if they have the opportunity to compete on a level playing field. But they will not compete successfully against unfair practices. I was privileged as the chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry to recently table a report on the circumvention of anti-dumping rules, *Circumvention: closing the loopholes*. While there are not a great many significant recommendations in that report it is because things have changed so much in the last little time. I congratulate the previous government for appointing a dedicated Anti-Dumping Commissioner. The Anti-Dumping Commissioner has shown an appetite for reform, and the number of rulings that has come down in recent times is really encouraging our industry.

**Mr Laurrie Ferguson** (Werriwa) (17:07): I congratulate the member for Bendigo on raising this, not just as a nicety but because this is the kind of measure that she is always very active on. I want to speak firstly about my experience with Viridian, a plate glass
manufacturer which no longer exists. It was part of CSR. I am not saying for a moment that its collapse was in any manner crucially related to anti-dumping. But its experience with the system in this country drives home that it is certainly not world's best practice. After it was found to have suffered from dumping but not as a material cause of the price situation it faced, the company said that the investigation was 'based on judgements rather than sound analysis and conclusion'. It went on to say that any appeal would suffer from the fact that it would be an admission of failure on its part. That inquiry was initiated by the company in February 2010. It was only on 25 November that year that the call for submissions closed.

In the quicklime industry in May this year there were comments that the inquiry had taken three years without a decision. I do not want to say that this is a problem that just emerged with the current government. It has been there for quite a while. The previous government put $27 million into this sector. But we have a situation where Australian companies are required to spent thousands of dollars of their own money to establish a case. They have to go and pretend that they are an Australian buyer, get the responses from Chinese companies as to what they are selling for and then go through the paperwork—hours and hours of work—and basically wait for many months for a decision. As I indicated, in that case in one sense the decision was that there was dumping. Material injury was found. But the authorities concluded that dumping was not the cause of significant material injury. Whilst dumping is not illegal, GATT article VI does give governments the power to act in this sector to overcome it. I do not think this is a matter of red tape; it is a matter of protecting Australian industry.

I want to talk briefly about the attempt earlier this year by the government to abolish the International Trade Remedies Forum. Those who said it should continue were not only the CFMEU but included the Australian Industry Group—not renowned for protectionism, the Food and Beverage Importers Association, the Australian Forest Products Association, the Australian Steel Association; the National Farmers' Federation et cetera. As I understand it, this forum had not been convened for a year and a half. Those on the forum are industry experts. They are people who do the job for nothing. There is industry consultation. In the end, abolition of the forum was not pursued. But I would note that, even at a public hearing of a Senate committee in Canberra, the Anti-Dumping Commission itself said that the work of the International Trade Remedies Forum was 'absolutely relevant to the work of the antidumping system'. This was a very unfortunate attempt, under the guise of red tape, needless meetings et cetera, to abolish a forum that Australian industry saw as being necessary.

It is all right to boast that trade agreements are going to allow this government to undercut Australian conditions, that we will facilitate the entry of people with lower standards into the labour market and that we will not have testing of Australian industry about the availability of Australian workers. There is much boasting about that, but there is very little action in this sphere. If it takes three years to get the issues of quicklime on the agenda, quicklime being crucial to a large number of industries, it is deeply disturbing. We know that China uses prison labour in some employment sectors. It is not only a question of undercutting through a very low wage market; it is also a situation where enforced labour is utilised to undermine Australian conditions.
I believe there is a need for a very vigorous antidumping system. Dumping undermines Australian industry. It is very real and it is of deep concern to Australian industry.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (17:12): It is a great pleasure to speak on the motion moved by the member for Bendigo. I note that the motion calls for more inspection and more compliance. I know the member for Bendigo was not a member of the previous Labor government. I think it is worthwhile pointing out from the outset that, under the previous Labor government, our Customs service was gutted, with 750 jobs scrapped and $64 million stripped from their budget.

Dumping is not about selling cheap goods into the country. Dumping applies to goods that are sold below the cost of production and—which is mainly the case—to goods that are sold at a lower price in the export market than they are in the home market. It is effectively a form of international geographic price discrimination, where a higher price in the local market subsidises the export market. That presents many difficulties in comparing costs. You are not actually comparing apples with apples. The product many companies sell in their domestic market is completely different from the product they sell in the international market. That means that there are many practical difficulties in comparing apples with apples.

The biggest problem I see for Australia with international geographic price discrimination is not that goods are being dumped on the Australian market at a lower price that that for which they are sold in the home market; it is the complete opposite. Time after time, we see examples of goods being sold in Australia at a much higher price than they are sold in any other market in the world. That is perhaps even a greater problem than dumping.

The other point that needs to be made is that, no matter how rigorous an antidumping regime we have, it is no substitute for Australian companies being cost competitive. When the carbon tax was put in place, the carbon tax would be paid by an Australian company producing a good, but that very same good, if produced overseas, would escape the carbon tax. That simply placed Australian companies at an international competitive disadvantage. This is why I am sure everyone that manufactures in Australia must be very concerned about the policies being proposed by the Labor Party, because they want to bring back the carbon tax in some form. They may give it another name—they may call it an ETS or whatever—but they want to bring that back, and that burden will be borne by Australian companies, whereas the overseas companies will not have to pay it.

The other point is that we need to be very careful about overreach on dumping. We have seen any examples overseas where countervailing duties have been placed on products with the idea that they would protect jobs, and what has been found is that that has actually cost jobs. I notice the member for Werriwa brought the example of Viridian glass. Before I came to this place, one of the things that I did was source float glass table tops. We were manufacturing local product, but we needed to get a glass table top. The glass table tops that we could buy with locally made glass were three or four times the price for which they could get the glass table top from overseas. Yes, buying the local glass may have been protecting jobs there, but it would have cost jobs down the supply chain. So it is important sometimes to recognise that many of the imported parts that come into the country are used in the supply chain, and cutting those off with dumping duties will not actually save jobs; it will actually cost jobs. Therefore, we need to make sure that these antidumping regimes are not used as protectionist measures.
Another point relates to the free trade agreements out of China. I often hear people saying: 'China are taking over. Everything in our shops is from China.' If you look at some of the numbers, clothing imports from China are worth $5.1 billion; in telecommunications, we import $4.9 billion worth; in computers, $4.8 billion; in furniture and mattresses, $2.2 billion; in toys, games and supporting goods, $1.8 billion. Just those categories alone add up to $19 billion worth of product that we import from China. But in reverse, in 2013-14, in iron ore alone we exported $57 billion worth to China, plus another $9 billion worth of coal, another $8 billion worth of gold and another $2 billion worth of copper. We are actually exporting to China twice as much as we are importing. That is why free trade is good for this nation, and we commend the free trade agreements put together by this government.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (17:17): In recent months we have seen the free market zealotry of the Abbott government take on another manifestation. I too, like the previous speaker, believe in free trade, but I think it can only be accepted as being so if you have a very effective antidumping regime. Indeed, if you are a true believer in trade, you would be arguing for a very robust antidumping regime, because that is the only way you will get the support of the public for what is essentially wealth creation in the interests of all Australians.

Of course, the attempts by the government earlier this year to abolish measures which provide for a robust antidumping regime are entirely regrettable—their attempt, for example, to abolish the International Trade Remedies Forum, as was said earlier. This forum had the support not only of trade unions but of the entirety of the manufacturing sector, and in the face of this there was a misguided attempt to get rid of it. Of course, the current government has also sought to charge Australian producers a fee for bringing cases to the Anti-Dumping Review Panel.

I do not think anybody can say that having an antidumping regime that has integrity and is robust is a bad thing for Australia, and it was good that, through the Senate inquiry and amendments which were put forward by both Labor and others, the worst of the government's legislation was not proceeded with and, in particular, that we kept the Trade Remedies Forum, because dumping is neither fair market nor free market. The practice does not simply dump Australia with goods; it dumps Australia with higher unemployment. In addition, dumping imposes predatory pricing strategies on Australian consumers and it often exposes Australians to substandard, or even dangerous, products.

A typical dumping strategy unfolds in two phases. In the short term, when importers are allowed to price goods well below their nominal value, dumping eviscerates the jobs and industries of Australian workers making similar products. In the long term, dumping also short-changes Australian consumers. Once local manufacturers have been driven out of business by predatory prices, foreign producers often raise their prices to cement their new-found market power. Dumping therefore inflicts a material injury on local producers. It also injures not only Australian workers but also Australian consumers. If Australian workers become unemployed as a result of dumping activities of foreign businesses, it simply will not matter how cheap the dumped goods might be.

I do remain sceptical about the motives of the government, as I watched it drive the auto industry out of Australia over the last couple of years and it is now attempting to wipe out other large sections of the manufacturing sector when it comes to the building of our next generation of submarines. When Labor was in government, we enlisted the Productivity
Commission to strengthen and streamline Australia's anti-dumping system. Following the commission's expert guidance, Labor established the International Trade Remedies Forum, which I was talking about before and which, as I remarked before, the government has attempted to abolish—and fortunately that has not occurred. Labor also established a new appeals process for Australian businesses which allowed a three-member panel—indeed, of the government—to review more complex anti-dumping decisions made by the CEO of Customs. At their core, Labor's reforms recognised the vital contribution that trade makes to the Australian economy. The reforms also recognised that in trade we must obey international rules as laid down by supranational bodies, such as the World Trade Organization.

It might be argued that strong anti-dumping systems simply induce protectionism by another name. From my perspective, nothing could be further from the truth. Anti-dumping legislation in fact embraces free trade so long as it is conducted fairly. Unfortunately the Abbott government's vision of free markets sees Australian manufacturers and workers as mere grist for the mill. We have already seen this government influence and push out manufacturing businesses, particularly, as I said before, in the auto industry—and with no seeming knowledge of what they hope for the future of Australian manufacturing elsewhere across our economy, particularly at a time when the headwinds of a higher currency have been removed and are likely to be removed for a long time to come. This government has no vision about what replaces what it has smashed. I stand here arguing for free and fair trade and a strong anti-dumping system.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Defence Force and Humanitarian Aid Missions**

*Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (17:23):* I move:

That this House:

1. commends the role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in recent humanitarian aid missions; and
2. congratulates:
   a. the Government on taking the decision to acquire two additional Boeing C-17A Globemaster III aircraft which will assist in future humanitarian and ADF operations; and
   b. the ADF on its rapid deployment of air assets, including C-17s, which supported the provision of disaster relief in Vanuatu and Nepal in 2015.

The people of Solomon include a very high proportion of men and women of the Australian Defence Force—around 5,000 uniformed defence personnel. I note that you, Madam Deputy Speaker Prentice, also have a very large defence contingent in your electorate. Within my electorate all three services are represented with major bases, including the Royal Australian Navy at HMAS *Coonawarra*, the Australian Army at Robertson Barracks and Larrakeyah Barracks, and the Air Force at RAAF Base Darwin.

Over the last decade, the sailors, soldiers and airmen of my electorate—and indeed yours Madam Deputy Speaker, and that of the member for Canberra—have served with distinction in a wide variety of combat and humanitarian functions around the world. It is one of those humanitarian missions which has prompted me to bring the motion to the House today.

On 25 April this year a violent earthquake shook the Himalayas near the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu. The earthquake, measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, left around 8,000 people dead and hundreds of thousands of people homeless. Infrastructure, including power plants,
transmission lines, water pipes and the sewerage network, was left in ruins. Roads and bridges that are needed to transport food from the fields to the cities were destroyed. Within hours of the earthquake striking, I was contacted by representatives of the Nepalese community in Darwin. They were obviously very distressed and were asking what could be done to assist. The Nepalese Association of the Northern Territory called an emergency meeting that afternoon, and I was absolutely honoured to attend. Within a few hours of that meeting we had raised $14,000. They went on to raise another $60,000, and they should be commended for their effort. The Australian government extended an immediate offer of emergency funding but as a clear picture emerged of the scale of the disaster and the need for the aid, it was the C17 and the RAAF crews that were turned to. By 29 April, two C17s had taken off from Amberley bound for Kathmandu, with six tonnes of tarpaulins, six tonnes of medical supplies, five tonnes of woollen blankets, two RAAF aero-medical evacuation teams and 80,000 water purification tablets. On their return trips, the planes carried hundreds of Australian citizens out of the mountains to begin their journeys home. Among them were two very grateful constituents of mine, Suyana and Siraj, and it was great that they were brought back home safely.

The story was similar for Vanuatu, after Tropical Cyclone Pam—the third most intense storm ever recorded in the southern hemisphere—smashed the Pacific nation. The C17 and the professionals of the Royal Australian Air Force who operate these monstrous aircraft were able to deliver helicopters from Australia to Vanuatu within hours, rather than the days it would have taken by sea. These helicopters, in turn, were able to get to the remote islands and to areas cut off by flooding to evacuate people and deliver crucial aid.

It is important that we commend all of the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who were involved in these works and to acknowledge the foresight displayed in the acquisition of two additional Globemaster C17A strategic airlift aircraft. It has not gone without notice in my electorate, particularly among the uniformed men and women who I am so proud to represent, that they are much better off under a coalition government. The previous Rudd Labor government reduced Defence Force spending to its lowest level as a percentage of GDP since 1938. Under the coalition government, $7.2 billion is being invested in defence equipment in the coming financial year, for new C17 aircraft and associated equipment, P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, Triton unmanned aerial vehicles and 58 additional joint strike fighters.

As I said, I am so proud to represent the sailors, soldiers and airmen of my electorate here in this place and I commend them for their professionalism and contribution to these valuable humanitarian missions.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** Is the motion seconded?

**Ms Sudmalis:** I second the motion.

**Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (17:28):** I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Solomon for her motion, and I rise today to acknowledge the hard work and success of the Australian Defence Force. Not only do our defence forces play a vital role in securing our nation and preserving our precious democracy; the ADF also delivers critical humanitarian aid and disaster relief at home and abroad. Earlier this year the ADF delivered lifesaving humanitarian assistance to Vanuatu in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Pam. Our troops played a major part in the relief effort, repairing infrastructure, restoring basic services,
and delivering more than 115 tonnes of vital humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support throughout Vanuatu. Our ADF personnel helped restore access to clean water and repaired school, community and medical facilities. Our C17s delivered hygiene kits, blankets, sleeping bags, shelter kits, insect nets, water storage buckets and water purification tablets. The ADF also played a key role in supporting the response to the earthquake in Nepal by delivering humanitarian and disaster relief stores as well as helping to evacuate Australians from Kathmandu to Bangkok.

I received a letter today from one of my constituents, Sheila Egan, who used to teach my husband at Marist Brothers. Sheila is very concerned that 'mention of Nepal seems to have disappeared from discussions in the community and from the media'. I just wanted to do a call-out to Sheila to thank her for bringing this to my attention and to say again to Canberra and to Australians: donations are still needed to help restore Nepal.

Not only does the ADF provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to Pacific Island countries in times of need; it is also playing a key humanitarian role in the Middle East. Delivering humanitarian aid has been a large focus of Australia’s missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Australia’s C130J Hercules have been fundamental in delivering aid drops to northern Iraq, including the provision of food and water to minorities on Mount Sinjar. In particular, I would like to make mention of the ADF’s role in helping support the hundreds of thousands of women and girls affected by violence in Iraq and for providing humanitarian projects in such areas as reproductive health care, including obstetric services, for hundreds of thousands of pregnant women in Iraq.

Australia has a long and proud track record when it comes to providing humanitarian aid assistance. In fact one of the first aid missions took place in 1918 when HMAS Encounter transported medical supplies and personnel to Tonga and Fiji after an outbreak of influenza. Since then, Australia has responded to numerous calls for international assistance after cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods and drought. The list of projects and the list of missions I could commend the ADF for is too long to cover. But Labor recognises that, when it comes to capability, our single best and biggest asset—the men and women of the Australian Defence Force. It is their courage, their dedication, their bravery and their commitment that make our Australian Defence Force the stellar ADF that it is.

But they need the appropriate tools. That is why Labor welcomes the government’s decision to acquire two extra C17s. The former Labor government successfully procured the two previous C17s which have continued to add to the Royal Australian Air Force’s capabilities. Australia deployed the C17s to Japan during the aftermath of the tsunami and the nuclear reactor disaster and, on very short notice, to Sudan to help with the humanitarian crisis. They have also assisted in our aid to local communities in Queensland and Victoria after flooding and cyclones and internationally through Operation Bring Them Home. They have assisted in the Ukraine and in the search for MH370 off the Western Australian coast, as well as more recently, as I have mentioned, in providing aid to Vanuatu and Nepal.

ADF personnel are increasingly deployed on peacekeeping humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in response to the changing nature of Australia’s strategic environment. It is impossible to exaggerate what we owe to our service personnel, the ADF men and women—and, just as importantly, their families. ADF personnel serve with
dedication and distinction and should be extremely proud of the difference they make all around the world. I know that everyone in this chamber is extremely proud of the difference they make around the world, as is every Canberran. I commend the member for Solomon for her motion.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (17:33): The people of Gilmore are proud to be part of the actions taken by the Australian Defence Force in recent humanitarian aid. There is probably no better project to draw together the divergent views of our residents than pulling together to help others. While we would wish that such events triggering human loss and tragedy never took place, there are few in Gilmore who would not be prepared to help in any way they could. One of my constituents called straight after the announcement of the disaster in Nepal to ask how local collectives could be airlifted to those who most needed help. Local Rotary clubs did a fundraising push to supply shelter boxes to help as well. Australia is always one of the first nations to provide financial assistance—food, water and shelter provision—as well as personnel on the ground to assist other nations in times of desperate trouble. The events of this year alone reflect the importance of our strong humanitarian aid program.

Let me first describe the assistance that was given to Vanuatu in March, when it was hit by a category 5 tropical cyclone called Pam. There may have been a small number of people who lost their lives—11—which has a significant effect on their families, but around 188,000 people living on 22 islands were deeply affected. Their key industries of tourism and agriculture have been badly affected, not to mention their services for education, health and transport as well as their domestic infrastructure. So far Australia has committed more than $50 million in humanitarian assistance, including $15 million in immediate response and $35 million for longer term recovery. The Australian medical assistance team treated 1,341 patients. The Australian urban search and rescue team working alongside locals in Vanuatu put critical repairs in place for 27 schools and five health clinics.

I am proud to describe how my country helps others. This same assistance was put forward for the recent earthquake tragedies in Nepal. In this instance more than 8,000 people died and a further 20,000 people were injured. With $20 million supplied for emergency response, this was a significant help to Nepal.

It is important to note that this humanitarian assistance could not take place without the dedication of our Defence Force personnel and the allocation by the government for the purchase of two additional Boeing C17As. This purchase announcement was made in April this year, taking the total fleet number to eight. The two aircraft, including all associated equipment and facilities, represent a billion-dollar investment in our security and our ability to respond rapidly to disasters in our region. This heavy transport aircraft allows the RAAF to rapidly deploy troops, supplies, combat vehicles, heavy equipment and helicopters anywhere in the world. The C130 Hercules can carry almost 26 tonnes, while the C17 capacity is a maximum of 77 tonnes, three times that of a C130. It is pretty impressive when the list of items that the C17 can carry includes the following: an M1 Abrams main battle tank, four Bushmaster vehicles and three Black Hawk helicopters. It can also operate as an air medical evacuation centre or deliver many tonnes of humanitarian aid.

Actually, the amazing work of these aircraft often goes unnoticed. They were the backbone of the air link for Operation Slipper in Afghanistan and have been part of the aid and deployment operations in the Queensland floods, Christchurch after the earthquakes and in
the Philippines as just a few examples. These operations make a person feel so unbelievably proud of our Defence Force members and a government that is prepared to invest in equipment for them to operate.

Delivery of helicopters as part of the aid to disaster areas means that isolated areas can be reached more readily. These same C17s acted as an aerobridge, evacuating Australians and other foreign nationals out of dangerous territory. Very often the enormity of foreign aid using the Australian Defence Forces is best understood by the description of some of the materials that were delivered to Nepal within two days of the crisis. The aircraft carried six tonnes of tarps, five tonnes of woollen blankets, 80,000 water purification tablets and six tonnes of health supplies.

We invest in foreign aid and we invest in our personnel. This year we are also delivering new and improved personal protective equipment for our soldiers, including new generation body armour. We are funding new, state-of-the-art special forces vehicles to be assembled in Australia, giving enhanced capability and protection to our most elite troops. This government is committed to returning defence spending to two per cent of GDP within the decade, confirming our confidence in our Defence personnel and our commitment to keeping a safe and secure Australia but not forgetting to help our regional neighbours in times of trouble, disaster and other tragedies that strike the area.

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (17:38): I commend the motion before the House moved by the member for Solomon and use this as an opportunity to highlight the excellent work that is being done by the Australian Defence Force at a range of relief operations all across the region at various times over the last decades. The fact is we live in an area where natural disasters are not unusual. When those disasters occur, the actual results for communities and countries are often quite devastating. The earthquake in Nepal and the circumstances of the cyclone at Vanuatu were mentioned but, frankly, every year, we see these sorts of natural events, whether it be tsunamis, whether it be earthquakes, whether it be hurricanes. It is pretty much pick a country. In the Philippines and various islands in the Pacific the fact is that it is a regular event and a regular event where the international community needs to pitch in and give people in very dangerous and difficult circumstances the opportunity to try to survive.

Australia has a proud record with regard to providing support for natural disasters in this area. Certainly the Globemaster has been a very important tool in recent years which has allowed large-scale amounts of aid to be taken where they are needed to support those on the ground who are providing relief support to communities that have been devastated. I have had the honour and privilege to be on a Globemaster on a number of occasions—once in the Middle East—and last Friday at Amberley air base I had the chance to walk through. They are a very impressive piece of kit that give a real capacity to move significant assets where they are needed. I congratulate the government on their decision to expand the fleet up to eight. It is a capacity and a capability that can be used throughout this region and also throughout the world.

I also mention that I had the opportunity the other week to visit the HMAS Canberra, the newest of the LHDs, as it is going through its sea trials. That is another example of a piece of equipment that will have enormous potential when it comes to providing support in relief efforts. I was joined by the member for Tangney, who is in the chamber today. The fact is that the Canberra and its sister ship, the Adelaide, will provide the opportunity when facing
natural disasters to provide large-scale support in terms of medical support, evacuating large numbers of people should that be required and getting equipment to where it is needed in a manner which will ensure it is able to be used for communities that are in a devastated state. That is a very important part of what the Defence Force is doing now and will be a very important part of what the Defence Force will be doing in the years ahead.

Although obviously the war-fighting capacity is a key component from a defence perspective, the bottom line is that, as the front line for provision of urgent aid in communities that are facing the results of natural disasters, our Defence Forces play a central role. We should not forget that, as we know from the past, that at times has come at great risk to Defence personnel and at times comes with the result of great tragedy for Australian Defence Force members when they have been serving their country and helping communities. I think we all know of examples where that has occurred.

With regard to the motion before the chamber, the C17 is an excellent aircraft that provides capacity that is very much needed in terms of ensuring that we pull our weight as a member of the international community to provide the support that is needed for nations that have been devastated as a result of natural disasters. We do not know where those natural disasters will be next. We do not know how bad they will be. What we can say with depressing certainty is that they will happen again and again and again. The role that our Defence Force plays in providing support to people, whether it be medical, supplies or other life-giving materials, is very important. It is a role that is performed with great professionalism and skill and it is a role for which this House should always congratulate the men and women of our Defence Forces serving their country in a very practical manner to help the communities that are in real need.

Debate adjourned.

Budget

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (17:44): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that in its 2015 budget, the Government has slashed investment in science, research and innovation agencies and programs, including cuts of:

(a) $114 million from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation;
(b) $75 million from the Australian Research Council (ARC);
(c) $27.5 million from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation;
(d) $80 million from Cooperative Research Centres;
(e) $173.7 million from the Research Training Scheme;
(f) $260 million from the abolition of Commercialisation Australia;
(g) $84 million from ceasing National ICT Australia funding from 2016;
(h) $120 million from Defence Science and Technology Organisation;
(i) $16.1 million from Geoscience Australia;
(j) $7.8 million from the Australian Institute of Marine Science;
(k) $263 million from Sustainable Research Excellence for universities;
(l) $27 million more from the Cooperative Research Centres program; and
(m) $27 million from its own Entrepreneurs’ Infrastructure Programme;
(2) calls on the Minister for Education to explain the decision to provide $4 million in funding for the establishment of the Bjorn Lomborg Australian Consensus Centre at the University of Western Australia without any reference to the ARC; and

(3) condemns the Government for the lack of transparency around the decision to fund the research centre, while at the same time making significant funding cuts to science, research and innovation.

Today I want to speak particularly about the Bjorn Lomborg centre and the whole process that led to the federal government investing $4 million in this project. That came out of the estimates hearing is that this was a process whereby Lomborg's consensus method—the ironically named 'consensus method'—was proved in abstraction, without being attached to any university that would be prepared to use it. So it was not as if UWA entered into an arrangement with Dr Lomborg and that an application of some type went forward to the government. No, somehow or other, through a process that no-one understands, Dr Lomborg managed to get his methodology before some agency— we know it was not the department of education—and to get approval sometime between May and July 2014 for $4 million without any reference to any peer review and without the involvement of the Australian Research Council or anybody else. He was then told to go out and shop it around Australia's universities to see if he could find someone who would use it.

That is an extraordinary process. We are not able to get any information from the government about this. FOI applications come back with absurd price tags. For the last one, the department of education wanted $1,672.50 in order to provide any documentation. We need to know how this happened—how this very controversial methodology, without any university in Australia having embraced it, received funding.

We know that there have been some very serious critiques of this methodology, which involves bringing together a panel and deliberating the different issues and doing cost-benefit analyses. We know that the selected panellists do not represent a broad cross-section of people, they have been heavily weighted towards the politically conservative, and progressive laureates have not been invited. We note that the panel consists entirely of economists and does not incorporate natural science or engage public health specialists or engineers in the process, and 90 per cent of the papers are also prepared by economists.

The very formula of the cost-benefit analysis on which this is based is an entirely inappropriate tool for assessing aid policy because built into it is the notion that the lives of the wealthy have more value than the lives of the poor. So the cost-benefit analysis weighs up the cost and the benefit, but the cost is based on the additional value of your life; and, if you are a very, very poor person in remote Africa, your life is not valued as highly in economic terms as someone from the Western world. So, the poorer you are and the further you are away from resources, the harder it is for the resources to be delivered to you and the lower you will rate. This is an entirely inappropriate technique for assessing foreign aid.

The other thing that is very alarming is that in many cases it appears that the panel's conclusions are at odds with the evidence considered. When Jeffrey Sachs from Columbia University looked at the papers that went into the formulation on climate change, he came up with a two to one cost-benefit ratio. The opponents actually supported an emissions scheme, but somehow or other the panel concluded that a global carbon tax was a bad investment. So there is a disconnect between the deliberations and the final panel decision.
The government loves to go about claiming, 'But you did the same thing; you made these same decisions.' But under the Labor government, in each instance that has been quoted, the decisions involved reputable Australian universities. The funding for the Whitlam Institute, a pre-established institute, was to house it at the University of Western Sydney. The Conversation had already been launched, with the CSIRO and three eminent universities in Australia—(Time expired)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Landry):** Is the motion seconded?

**Ms BURKE:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (17:49):** As I was saying, the member's motion is basically a work of fantasy and, when you look at the notice paper, with her motion and the details of the motion, she made a whole list of erroneous things which, funnily enough, have not played a part in her speech at all. I am not quite sure why. But never let the truth get in the way of a good story. It is ironic that this is the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, when Napoleon famously said, 'In politics, never retreat, never retract, never admit a mistake.'

The member in her notice paper will be relieved to hear that there have been no funding cuts to science in the 2015 budget. No, there haven't.

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Dr JENSEN:** The notice paper mentions the 2015 budget. The simple fact is she may have been referring, for instance, to efficiency savings made by the CSIRO of their own volition. She is a member of a party that made a number of structural adjustments, and it started under previous Labor governments. Think about it. The evidence is that Labor's government of over six years was bookended by budget slashes to CSIRO funding. Under the Labor Party in 2008, $63.4 million was cut from CSIRO. In the 2013 budget, there was a so-called efficiency dividend on CSIRO, which once again led to budget cuts. The CSIRO told the ABC *Fact Check* program that its decision to put a freeze on hiring, and contract renewals, with regard to the 2014 budget, was entirely made by the CSIRO.

The member appears to be out of line with her own party when it comes to Defence spending, for example. She has lauded the United States for using its Department of Defense to put money into research. Good concept, and I happen to agree with the member. The only problem is the Labor government cut Defence spending to the lowest level, measured as a percentage of GDP, since 1937.

The member of the Perth also seems to conflate the issue of science funding with the funding for the Lomborg centre, which she actually admitted in her speech was to do with the economics and cost-benefit analyses. Quite frankly, the reason for closure of that centre—or for the UWA not going ahead with it—was that certain academics raised a stink. Quite frankly, I have nothing but contempt for the view expressed by those to shut it down. The so-called academics would have been well placed, in fact, to have been involved in an inquisition in the past. It is an absolute disgrace. The interesting thing is that those who complained about it were social scientists and those in the arts, not hard sciences, not mathematics. Would they have been so concerned if it had been an Al Gore centre? No doubt they would have welcomed that charlatan with open arms.

In UWA Vice-Chancellor Paul Johnson's statement announcing his university's abandonment of the program, he referred to the duty of tertiary institutions to actively...
encourage an exploration of new ideas, challenge established thinking and pose the difficult 'what if' questions. He cited UWA's commitment to the open exchange of ideas and thought, and fostering the values of openness, honesty, tolerance, fairness, trust and responsibility.

Do you want to see what the Dark Ages were like? Have a look at the group who would fight the Enlightenment. Any view contrary to their belief—and I stress belief—is to be stopped at all costs. My partner, Trudy, was a classic example of that. She did a PhD at UWA and, boy, you should have seen the academics' reaction to her PhD thesis, because—terrible!—it was done from the realist perspective. This is so far from the Tallentyre precis of Voltaire's philosophy—his attitude was: 'I may hate what you have to say, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it.' Universities are heading back to a time when only the prescribed, correct version would be countenanced. Any others were to be defined as heretics. I fear that these academics lack the courage to seek office— (Time expired)

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (17:54): I rise in support of the member for Perth's motion before the House today. It is correct that these cuts came about in the 2014 budget and were reiterated in 2015 budget. If you look at articles from the time of the 2014 budget, The Canberra Times states:

The country's chief scientist rolled out a sports analogy to make his point recently.

If Australian science was a cricket team we would have a few great players, but a pretty average team, Professor Ian Chubb said …

It goes on to say:

Scientists and researchers are outraged by the Treasurer's cuts to its programs and agencies in the budget handed down three weeks ago.

That is 2014 but restated in 2015.

The CSIRO, ANSTO, the Australian Research Council, the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, the Co-operative Research Centres and a few other agencies lost $420 million between them. The government did announce a generous Medical Research Future Fund, but many worry it will ignore the role basic sciences play in medical discoveries.

Again the article states:

The cuts to science funding also go against the notion that research will underpin an innovation bonanza that replaces the dividends of the minerals boom.

This is the problem that we have from this government. That we have cut after cut in an area where we need to be putting money.

My electorate is home to two very large universities: the largest in the country, Monash University at Clayton and Deakin University in Burwood. Between them they are home to more that 50,000 on-campus students, with many research facilities spread between these two universities—most particularly at Monash in Clayton. These universities are leading research institutions and have been severely affected by the cuts. How do I know this? Because unemployment in my electorate has gone up for the first time since I have been a member in this place. It has gone up beyond the average.

Within Box Hill and Burwood the average unemployment was about 6.3; currently in those suburbs it is 10.2. What is the largest employment area in this part of the world? It is universities; universities and higher education research. Chisholm is also home to one of CSIRO's largest facilities at the Clayton facility, which employs hundreds of researchers. And
yet many people have lost their jobs. I would not put it down just to this government; I would say this has been a culmination over many years, tragically. But the cuts of the previous 2014-2015 budget have absolutely crucified any ability for fantastic work to come out of this area.

CSIRO worked very cooperatively with many businesses in my electorate, particularly the South Eastern Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance, to the benefit of research and to the creation of jobs. When we lose the manufacturing industry through cars in my neck of the woods, where are the jobs going to come from unless they are in research environment and scientific development?

Before the cuts in this year's budget, research by the Parliamentary Library showed that national investment in science and innovation have reached a 25-year low of 0.56 per cent of GDP. The figure will now be dramatically worse. Investment in science innovation is investment in Australia's future. The 2012 study established that basic research investment leads to 30 times more economic growth, while investment in applied research leads to 10 times the economic growth. Without this investment we will not have growth and we will not have jobs.

Labor invested in science and research at adequately-funded universities. In 2015 Deakin University Vice-Chancellor, Jane den Hollander, is faced with a $260 million cut to sustainable research excellence programs, which she has diplomatically called:

… "disappointing" and would harm Australia's ability to compete as a skilled nation in the future. The next generation will be the skilled generation and universities are integral to that, so that's disappointing," she said. "The over-arching theme for us from the Budget is uncertainty. We have no way of knowing what we will have next year and we have no idea what to say to our students.

The government has created a culture of fear and intimidation for people pursuing research. Very few senior researchers are prepared to make public comment about the government's cuts to research funding. Not because they are happy with the cuts but because they fear retribution being meted out through denial of grant applications.

Tragically, we have seen this in their past; this coalition has form. In the words of a final-year PhD student studying in the area of science at Monash, who asked to remain anonymous: 'Scientists who are seen as engaging in political action are often targeted by media and potentially makes obtaining funding in the future more difficult.' The student goes on to say, 'As a final year PhD student currently looking for work as a researcher I am very concerned about increased funding cuts to national science bodies.' He is an individual who has pursued his career for the last eight years and been very supported by the government which he is very pleased about. 'I am currently looking for post-doc positions overseas. There is currently nothing in Australia. I would love to stay here and use my research for the betterment of Australia in science.' It is in the environmental area, which was slightly lampooned by the previous speaker:

It's a huge privilege to work in a field that you enjoy and there are sacrifices that come with that, but having a lack of job security—such that it would be difficult to buy a house—due to the whims of a government, all while working in an area that can be a benefit to society, it's—

(Time expired)

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (18:00): I respectfully but categorically want to disagree with this motion. The reason is very simple: it is wrong. There
are significant and profound enhancements in environmental science, environmental research and practical applied environmental work in one portfolio alone.

Against that background, let me run through four significant areas that I believe are critical, important and exemplars of the government's investment in practical real world environmental science. First—and this is something about which I am extremely pleased and proud—we have invested $142.5 million in the National Environmental Science Program. This program has been created with a six-year commitment to each of the hubs, and it follows three significant themes: firstly, clean air; secondly, clean land; and, thirdly, clean water.

In terms of the clean air space, we have two particular hubs. The first of those is the national Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub run out of the University of Melbourne with other partners, such as the University of Wollongong, and led by Professor Peter Rayner, with an $8 million allocation. Secondly, within the clean air space, we also have the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub, which is to be led by the CSIRO and Dr Helen Cleugh, with $24 million over six years, doing vital work on earth systems, climate science and climate research.

Similarly, the next things we have are the clean land hubs. I am particularly pleased that there is a northern biodiversity hub which is run out of Charles Darwin University, led by Professor Michael Douglas, with an allocation of $24 million over the six years. This is accompanied by something which has been a deep personal project, and that is the Threatened Species Recovery Hub. It is one of the most well-funded of all of the hubs, and it is led by Professor Hugh Possingham of the University of Queensland and Professor David Lindenmayer of the ANU. Their task and their job, with the $30 million allocated to that hub, is to focus on practical projects pioneering recovery of threatened species, whether it is the bettong, the bilby, the quoll or the powerful owl—important iconic species that are at risk if there is no action.

We then follow through to the water hubs. Here, there is a Marine Biodiversity Hub, led by Professor Nic Bax out of the University of Tasmania but working around the country. We move from that to the Tropical Water Quality Hub, which, Madam Deputy Speaker Landry, in your particular seat and others, will play a profound role in helping to pioneer long-term water quality initiatives for the Great Barrier Reef as well as other water quality areas. In particular, this is perhaps the best funded of all the hubs, with $32 million. It is jointly led by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, and it is led by Dr Damien Burrows. This, the threatened species hub and the clean air hub will be particular pioneers in their areas, doing something which has not been done with federal funding previously.

That then brings me to the second major area after the National Environmental Science Program, and that is climate adaptation research. It is fascinating: the previous government defunded Griffith University's National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility. We refunded it for $9 million over three years. Were we to have defunded it, the hue and cry would have rung from every rafter. The previous government, under then Prime Minister Rudd, took the money away; we have refunded it. To that, I add the work that we are doing on the Antarctic with a $24 million Antarctic gateway program and a $25 million Antarctic National Research Council program. These are critical projects going forward.

Then last I come to the extraordinary expenditure in science research hardware. Between the Bureau of Meteorology supercomputer, which was proposed by the previous government
but unfunded, and the Antarctic icebreaker, which was proposed by the previous government and unfunded, we have found approximately half a billion dollars—$500 million—to fulfil vital national research infrastructure. This is a fundamental commitment to the future. We will hear nothing from the opposition about science research because we are delivering where they failed.

Debate adjourned.

BILLS
Marriage Amendment (Marriage Equality) Bill 2015
Second Reading

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

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (18:05): I rise to respond to the private member's bill dealing with marriage equality put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the deputy leader. When the six colonies of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia wrote to the English parliament asking if they could federate, they put forward a proposal in terms of the powers that the new Commonwealth government would have. When Queen Victoria signed off on the piece of legislation, passed through Westminster, on 9 July 1900, thus creating the country of Australia, I guess she had not realised how much laws were going to change over time.

The first piece of legislation discussed by that parliament was the white Australia policy—unanimously supported by all and now quite an archaic piece of legislation. Other pieces of legislation they dealt with not long after gave women a right to vote. Legislation later dealt with allowing married women to stay employed. Then we go forward to 1967, where the referendum came through that said that Indigenous Australians should have the right to vote. Still, nearly 10 per cent of Australians voted against that. When you look back at something only 50 years ago we can see how much Australia has changed. My first day in parliament was the day the Rudd government gave an apology to the stolen generation.

As we see the arc of history, we see how Australia has progressed and our views have become more tolerant and more accepting. The Queensland that I grew up in had homosexuality as a crime in the Criminal Code. In fact, there are still people around today that have had those convictions and have not had them wiped out. Obviously, we know that same-sex couples experience a lot of discrimination. That is why I was proud to be a part of the Labor government that brought in 87 pieces of legislation under the Attorney-General, Rob McClelland, that dealt with that discrimination.

Anyone with any knowledge of couples and commitment knows that marriage is the best way to protect committed, monogamous relationships. The marriage ceremony publicly affirms the love and commitment that two people have for each other—something dealt with in an inquiry that I chaired under the social policy and legal affairs committee that dealt with many of these issues.

Obviously, marriage has changed over time, just like the laws before this parliament have changed over time. When marriage came to Australia—inherited from the British common law tradition—there were still some rules that applied to the white settlers, including the fact
that marriage was limited to those convicts who exhibited good character. Convicts that did not demonstrate soberness or industriousness were not permitted to marry—which some might argue might have been a law targeting the Irish, but I could not possibly support that notion.

When Sir Garfield Barwick brought in the Marriage Act in 1962 he said:

At present there are nine separate systems of marriage law in the States and these Territories; systems which, although possessing many features in common, display considerable diversity in principle and detail.

Things have changed over time. For example, back then the marriageable age in Australian states and territories was the same as the age of consent—so back in 1962 it was 14 for men and 12 for women. If we look at the marriage laws in Queensland, the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act prohibited Indigenous women from marrying anyone other than an Indigenous man without the permission of an Aboriginal protector—not that long ago. However, the Marriage Act, when it came in, did not include a definition of marriage in section 5 at the time of promulgation. But it does give some sample words, which were that marriage, according to law in Australia, is 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life', which is actually what changed under the leadership of Prime Minister Howard, when they amended section 5 of the Marriage Act to that very definition.

Over time, we have seen the approach to marriage. I know it polarises people in my electorate, and that is why I am very committed to consulting with every religious group I can find and everyone that is concerned about this. I know it goes to the heart of many religious faiths, so I will talk with the churches, the mosques and the temples in Moreton, because when this legislation does eventually come to parliament I will have to make a decision according to my conscience, not their conscience, and to go against your conscience is neither right nor safe.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (18:10): The member for Moreton has tried to make a case for the inexorable march of history. The fact is there is no inexorable march of history. Consider for instance communism—once seen as inevitable, but now consigned to the dustbin of history. This is really not about marriage equality. We already have that. What is being sought is a change to the definition of marriage, which is not the same as marriage equality.

Proponents make, in my view, a very fundamental error. They believe that marriage is only about love. At the moment, the statement is that it is between two people who love each other. But, if it really is just about love, why restrict it to one and one? Why not polygamy, polyandry or any other admix? And what is the nature of love that should be used anyway? After all, I love my siblings, I love my children and I love my parents, but does that mean that I should marry them? How about the love of, say, two sisters, who have lived together most of their lives—should that be called marriage, or does there have to be sex involved to constitute marriage?

In reality, marriage is about family and, to use an old term, the begetting of children. You don't think that is the case? If it is not, why is there legislation in many places, including half of the US states, that does not allow marriage between first cousins? It is not that they cannot love each other or have a sexual relationship. It is about the higher probability that they will have children with genetic problems. Indeed, if it is just about love, why the proscription of
the marrying of siblings? After all, apart from the yuk factor that is our natural genetic predisposition against those sorts of relationships due to our innate knowledge of the genetic problems they would cause, why not allow incestuous marriage if one or both of the parties agree to be sterilised?

I find even bringing up the concept distasteful, but these questions need to be asked if marriage is not about family and the producing of offspring. In fact, in Australia, we do allow marriages between first cousins, and also between uncles and nieces or aunts and nephews. The reality of all of these laws, different though they may be in different nations, is that it is all about the resulting offspring. Therefore, almost universally, marriages between siblings, and of parents with their children, are considered incest and are taboo and illegal. But when you look at it, once again, all of these differences in proscription relate to offspring. It is disingenuous to pretend that it is only about love. After all, consider what marriage, through history, has been. At its essence, it is about providing the woman, the mother of the children, with the security that the father will be there for the duration of the upbringing of the children.

What is being sought here, as I said, is not marriage equality but something different, something extra, and therefore a changing of the definition of marriage. Does it not make more sense to simply come up with some other defined union that is, in fact, just based around love, however that love is defined to be? The fact is that those in homosexual unions have had the same rights as heterosexual couples as far as property, distribution of assets following the break-up of the relationship, inheritance issues et cetera are concerned for the best part of a decade. And the member for Moreton is right: Attorney-General McClelland introduced that legislation.

So that is no longer at issue. Why change the definition of an institution that has been around for thousands of years? Why not a new institution and leave the institution of marriage alone? Marriage is fundamentally about procreation and the supportive upbringing of those children to maturity. We should be very careful about making haste with an institution that has served society so well for so long.

Debate adjourned.

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016
Consideration in Detail

Debate resumed.

Defence Portfolio

Proposed expenditure $29,404,935,000

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (18:16): I appreciate this opportunity to ask the minister about the provisions that he has made for projects of interest in the Defence budget. The one I would like to focus on is the replacement for the Pacific Patrol Boat Program. In particular I would like to highlight Tasmania's credentials in relation to the current program and its replacement. My interest in the program is not only because of the Tasmanian connection but also from my time as a senior military officer and senior public servant in the Department of Defence, where, as First Assistant Secretary, Regional Engagement and First Assistant Secretary, International Policy Division, one of my roles was looking after the Defence Cooperation Program, of which the Pacific patrol boats were a subset.
On reflection I would have to say that by any measure the boats made a very positive contribution to our bilateral and multilateral relations in the Pacific. They were, of course, primarily designed for EEZ protection, but there were certainly some shortcomings related in particular to the detect and cue function of those boats and perhaps even the command and control aspect in how boats in different countries cooperated with each other to respond to those threats, often in the fisheries of those countries across national borders.

But there were also some big positives. I can recall defence attaches sending Pacific patrol boat crews to Launceston to the Australian Maritime College, where they would learn the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to operate those boats effectively. My hope is that the replacement boats will not only add to our regional relationships in the future but also provide opportunities for Tasmanian businesses in the construction stage and also the through-life support of the replacement boats.

Part of that, if I can be parochial for a moment, is redressing what I would consider to be a very low share of the Defence dollar in Tasmania—approximately 0.5 per cent of Defence expenditure when by head of population I think it should be somewhere around two to three per cent. I note, Minister, that on 5 March you announced the government's request for tender for the replacement Australian made boats under the Pacific Maritime Security Program or SEA3036 phase 1. I have to say that there are quality Tasmanian companies like Crisp Bros and Haywards, Incat and others which have a proud history of quality engineering and shipbuilding. I think they could make a real contribution to this replacement program. I know there is considerable interest in Tasmanian companies in partnering with some of the lead contractors to get a share of the construction and through-life components of this important project.

I think there are very good reasons to consider Tasmania. Tasmanian industry is highly competent and very capable of building these vessels. I have personally visited Crisp Bros and Haywards to see some of the spectacular design and engineering work that they have done on major projects right around the world. I think it is also fair to say that Tasmania has a stable, knowledgeable and largely non-unionised workforce that is experienced in ensuring high-quality product is built to schedule, something that you do not necessarily see in shipbuilding right around the country.

It is also fair to say that Tasmania has been heavily involved in the present Pacific Patrol Boat Program through the training and pastoral care of Pacific Island crews at the Australian Maritime College. Minister, I am pleased to report to you that more than 90 Tasmanian companies, mainly small and medium enterprises, have indicated their interest in participating in this project. So, Minister, I am very interested in hearing from you about how the tender for this important project is going, particularly in light of the potential economic benefits it could provide for my home state of Tasmania.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:20): I thank the honourable member for Bass for his question. At the outset I acknowledge his long and vast experience in defence, both on the military side and on the corporate or civilian side of defence, and the expertise that he therefore brings to this place in relation to matters of defence.

It is true, as he said, that on 5 March this year I announced that the government would seek tenders for the replacement of the Pacific Patrol boat fleet. This is for the provision of up to 21 steel-hulled vessels which we would provide to Pacific nations in our region. That is worth
something like $600 million to industry. When you add to that the personnel and life sustainment costs, that is about another $1.4 billion over 30 years. So this is a fully-funded $2 billion program for our neighbours. To date, all the countries that we have made the offer to, with the exception of Timor-Leste, have taken up and accepted the offer, and that is going to be very significant so far as those countries are concerned.

This program is in addition to what is contained in the current Pacific Patrol Boat Program because we are seeking to not only sustain these boats throughout their life—so that gives a great deal of assurance to the countries concerned that they will not only get the patrol boats but also they will have workable patrol boats for probably the next three decades—but also, as part of this program, to build in an aerial maritime surveillance component to it.

The great advantage for the countries concerned, such as Papua New Guinea, for example, to our immediate north, is that one of the concerns that they have is in relation to their own economic zone and the poaching of fish—for example, from the waters around Papua New Guinea. If you can add to the patrol boats an element of aerial surveillance, that can have a very lasting impact in terms of being able to protect their own waters against poaching. It is for that reason that I think there is a great deal of interest among the Pacific nations for this replacement program to the one that exists at present. This is not just simply providing them with a boat. It is providing them, hopefully, with the means by which they can determine whether or not there is poaching within their areas. That is added to by the fact that that then has a strategic value as well, because if we can join up this maritime aerial surveillance program then it means not just for one nation in particular in the South Pacific but for a number of nations in the South Pacific, whether it is Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea or Timor-Leste, if they come on board—whatever nation takes up this offer—then there is the opportunity to have a surveillance across the area. That will lead, we hope, to greater regional cooperation between the nations in that region. As I said at a South Pacific defence ministers conference in Port Moresby some weeks ago, this is a major contribution both in terms of interest and in terms of practical assistance to nations in the South Pacific towards their defence and their economic wellbeing.

We have brought forward the Pacific Patrol Boat Program as much as possible and a final decision is expected in late 2016, following an expedited but thorough tender process—it is certainly faster than historical standards—as part of our endeavour to rebuild a naval shipbuilding industry in Australia. I will not go into all the detail now, but the reality is that, as there have not been decisions to purchase a naval vessel in Australia for some years now, that has led to a situation where current projects are coming to an end. There is a so-called valley of death as a result of that and, therefore, there are problems there. We want to put in place a continuous naval shipbuilding industry in Australia. This, in many respects, is the first step towards being able to do that.

So far as Tasmania is concerned, I am pleased to hear that shipbuilders in Tasmania, amongst those that the honourable member mentioned, are very interested in this project. These are vessels that could be constructed in many places in Australia. We are not talking about a submarine or an air warfare destroyer; we are talking about more straightforward craft in that regard. I would say to the honourable member that he should encourage his local industries to be part of this tender process because it may well lead to very positive outcomes for Tasmania.
Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:25): There is a consistent thread in the government's approach to ADF personnel issues. I am sad to say that there is evidence of a failure to show regard and respect for ADF personnel—coupled with a chaotic approach into the bargain. Let us examine the history. In October last year, the government put a take-it-or-leave-it proposal to the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal for a below-inflation wage deal for the ADF—with cuts in conditions. A 1.5 per cent per annum offer was made when inflation was projected to be two per cent or more—and a mean-spirited removal of conditions was also offered, including the removal of one day of stand-down at the end of the working year, of extra recreation leave and of food allowance for members with dependants.

The government defended this package vehemently—right up to the point where it didn't! It decided it had made a mistake and the Prime Minister announced on 1 December last year that the government would no longer require the cuts in conditions. Then, in March this year, there was another reluctant and grudging reversal, adding an extra 0.5 per cent to the below-inflation deal—but only backdating it to 12 March and not to 6 November last year, which was the first payday of the new agreement. After the government announced that nugatory additional increase, however, everything went quiet. It took nearly four months until the tribunal confirmed it on 9 June. In that confirmation, the tribunal made some pertinent points, saying that the negotiations 'should not serve as a good precedent for future WRAs' and that, in the past, 'WRAs have tended to be at least equivalent to the CPI'. They further said that 'it could not have been a surprise that the below CPI quantum of pay increase in the WRA would be criticised.' Finally, we now hear that backdating will not take place until 30 July, meaning that, from the Prime Minister's reluctant announcement on 4 March, it will have taken more than 21 weeks for the increase to hit ADF pay packets.

In light of this unhappy history, I have the following questions—and this is with regard to the ADF workplace remuneration arrangement for 2014-17. First, will the minister commit to seeking a review of the agreement once the inflation figures for 2015-16 are known and in the event that the CPI increase exceeds two per cent, bearing in mind that the forecast is 2.5 per cent? Second, does the minister agree that the process followed by the government in the establishment of the agreement should not 'serve as a good precedent for future WRAs', as stated in the decision of the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal—matter 9 of 2014? Third, on 4 March, the Prime Minister said:

In recognition of these unique circumstances, the Government has decided to increase the wage offer for ADF personnel to two per cent per annum, over the life of the agreement, with effect from the next pay day.

Does the minister agree that the Prime Minister said that?

Fourth, does the minister agree that in fact its backdating to 12 March means that the increase per annum is not two per cent but closer to 1.9 per cent—despite the Prime Minister's statement? Fifth, why do ADF personnel have to wait for 21 weeks to receive the additional 0.5 per cent per annum increase announced by the Prime Minister on 4 March? Sixth, does the minister agree that this long wait represents a failure of process on the part of the government?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:29): I thank the honourable member for her questions. When I came into this job, I examined this issue and I received advice from quite a number of my colleagues who had been speaking to ADF personnel. I am
delighted to acknowledge the members for Bass, Solomon, Ryan and Herbert—who are all here—as being amongst those colleagues who spoke to me on this matter.

The reality was that we increased the offer and made it two per cent. That two per cent is above CPI, and it is above projected CPI. But at the time the Prime Minister and I made the announcement about increasing it from 1.5 per cent to two per cent we said that if that turned out to be below projected CPI in the future then we would look at it again. We want to ensure that our Australian Defence Force personnel are well looked after through their pay and conditions into the future.

The honourable member attacking the government neglected to mention Labor's record in government on Defence. This was a previous government that reduced expenditure on Defence in this country to its lowest level since 1938. Defence spending in this country had not been as low as it was in their last year in government since just before the Second World War, when it fell to 1.56 per cent of GDP. We have promised to increase Defence expenditure in this country once again to two per cent of GDP by 2023-24. That reduction to 1.5 per cent by the previous government included slashing 10.5 per cent from the Defence budget in 2012-13 alone. In fact, the previous government stripped $16 billion out of Defence over the forward estimates. They were $30 billion short of delivering on their two Defence white papers. The reality is that Defence became the personal ATM for the previous Treasurer, Mr Swan. Any time that he wanted to find savings, the first place he went to was Defence. As I said, $16 billion was stripped out of the Defence budget over the forward estimates by the previous government.

I mentioned naval shipbuilding before. In six years, Labor did not commission one single naval vessel from an Australian yard. The so-called valley of death is Labor's valley of death so far as naval shipbuilding is concerned. They broke their promise to grow Defence spending by three per cent to 2017-18. I could go on and on, but I will finish with just one more example of the total neglect of Defence. Under Labor, 119 Defence projects were delayed, 43 projects were degraded and eight projects were cancelled. That is a sorry record.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (18:32): Minister, Solomon has one of the highest Defence populations of any electorate in Australia, as you are very well aware. With four bases within Solomon—the Defence Establishment Berrimah, RAAF Base Darwin, Larrakeyah Barracks, which include HMAS Coonawarra, Robertson Barracks—and 5,000 or so uniformed Defence personnel in the Darwin and Palmerston area, there is a high level of interest in Defence policy in my electorate. It has not escaped the notice of these personnel that the previous Labor-Greens government, under three prime ministerships, cut Defence spending as a proportion of GDP to its lowest level since before World War II.

Minister, the mood is very different now. My constituents both within the Defence community and within the business sector are very happy with the ongoing Defence infrastructure investments in Solomon and, indeed, the Northern Territory. The $18 million in Defence infrastructure projects for the Northern Territory unveiled in the budget, including projects at RAAF Base Tindal, Shoal Bay, RAAF Base Darwin and Robertson Barracks, have been very welcomed by ADF personnel and by the business community in Solomon, which will have the opportunity to participate in the supply and construction of these projects.

Another project which is generating a lot of interest from a Defence perspective is the proposal to create an $18 million joint logistics facility at East Arm Wharf to accommodate
the Royal Australian Navy amphibious vessels and the new Canberra class landing helicopter dock ships. I note today there was an expedience motion that was put to the House. We are very pleased about that. It has also been noted within the community that the facility will benefit both Defence and industrial barge operators, to whom the facility will also be available.

Recently, the Northern Territory branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia welcomed the Prime Minister’s announcement that Australian servicemen killed in the Vietnam War would be repatriated to Australia should the families wish to do so. Minister, as you are aware, it was a Territorian, Mr Bob Shewring, who was one of the driving forces behind this policy, and he was very pleased with the announcement that the Abbott government made.

The other local link with the Northern Territory was a courageous soldier by the name of Corporal Reg Hillier. Corporal Hillier was working as a jackaroo in the Northern Territory and enlisted to serve his country in 1961. His life working in the outback set him up well for Army life and he excelled in this role. He deployed to Vietnam with the First Battalion and was commended for his outstanding leadership and courage. Corporal Hillier—or Reg, as he is affectionately known in the Territory—punched above his weight in combat. His tracking skills were used to follow and attack small enemy units, and his courage in going into Viet Cong tunnels led to the capture of valuable intelligence. Unfortunately, Reg was killed in action at Vo Dat on 29 November 1965. His family could not afford to have him repatriated to Australia so he was laid to rest in Terendak cemetery. Now, thanks to the recent policy change announced by the Abbott government, Corporal Hillier’s remains will be returned home and he will be finally laid to rest in the Northern Territory.

The announcement that ADF pay was being locked in for above-inflation pay increases for the next four years has also been welcomed by my community. Minister, could you update the House on the Abbott government’s initiative to repatriate Australian servicemen killed overseas and the ongoing commitment to the welfare of Australian serving defence personnel? Could you also provide an update on the defence infrastructure in Solomon and the Northern Territory?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:37): I thank the member for Solomon for her contribution this evening and, more importantly, for her ongoing advocacy for some 5,000 defence personnel who reside in her electorate of Solomon. Of course, as she mentioned, there are a number of very significant military establishments in Solomon and, therefore, interest in defence matters is not just for the ADF personnel themselves but more importantly—or as importantly—for their family members.

She mentioned investment in Solomon. In the 2015-16 budget the government has made significant defence investments in the electorate of Solomon. This includes $4.9 million to resolve flooding issues at RAAF Base Darwin, $5 million to upgrade facilities at the Shoal Bay Receiving Station, and funding for new facilities for the Joint Logistics Unit (North). There will also be $18 million spent on a Joint Logistics facility at Darwin's East Arm Wharf, with construction due to commence this year—so that is going to be a very significant addition to the facilities in Darwin. Darwin, of course, with the Robertson Barracks, the RAAF base, HMAS Coonawarra and other facilities there, is the major defence establishment as far as the north of Australia and that part of the Northern Territory are concerned.
There will also be an investment of about $1.1 million as a program to replace the dated aviation fire trucks with modern equipment. This project is going ahead and will provide facilities at Robertson Barracks to support the introduction of these aviation fire trucks. Overall, increased defence funding is reaching a record of $31.9 billion across the nation this year and a very important component of that is in the Northern Territory.

I am glad the member mentioned the question of the repatriation of remains from overseas, particularly those from the Vietnam War at the Terendak cemetery, because this is a matter I am aware she has passionately pursued with the government for some considerable time. As she said, on 25 May this year the Australian government announced its offer to repatriate the remains of 35 Australian servicemen and dependents from Terendak and return them to Australia. For a matter of record, of the 521 Australian war dead from the Vietnam War, 26 are buried overseas—one at Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore, one in Ireland, in accordance with the wishes of that person's family, and the remaining 24 are interred at Terendak. A further six have had their ashes interred or scattered overseas. The Terendak Military Cemetery in Malaysia comprises 323 graves of Commonwealth servicemen and their dependents, including 34 Australians, of which 24 are Vietnam War dead, one Malayan Emergency war dead, two servicemen who were killed in accidents and seven service dependents. The repatriation effort at this stage is limited to the Terendak military cemetery and the one grave at the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore.

I think this gives us an opportunity as a nation. The honourable member mentioned that the family of Corporal Hillier were not able to afford to bring his body home. I think this is an opportunity for us as a nation to put this right and bring these men home—obviously, in accordance with the wishes of their family and remaining relatives. It is the one conflict in Australian history where repatriation of fallen service personnel was not consistent. Indeed, looking back, I think we did a pretty poor job as a nation in relation to those people who served us in Vietnam whatever the political differences about that conflict might have been. I think we as a nation have an obligation to our service men and women to treat them with the utmost respect and we fell down in many regards in relation to the Vietnam War.

The Prime Minister made this announcement on 25 May and said that those who died in the Vietnam War would be repatriated with full military honours, and I think that is the deserving thing to do in these cases. Ultimately, the decision whether or not to repatriate the remains of these Australians lies with their individual families, as it should; but, where the families in these situations would wish the remains to be repatriated to Australia, the honourable thing to do on behalf of the nation is to carry out the wishes of the family.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:41): Before I ask the minister a question I want to again thank him for those comments that he made about the Vietnam vets. My father-in-law is a Vietnam vet, and I know that it was not just the treatment of those who served in that war when they got back that in a way was a blight on Australian society; it was also the treatment of the families during the war—like my husband when his dad was away—who were often on bases and had women doing it tough on their own. I know my mother-in-law was trying to bring up five kids on her own while Chris's father was deployed. Unfortunately, the treatment of the families as well was equally something that we should not be proud of. It was not just the wives of those men but also the children; they went through some pretty rugged times. I
think that as a nation we all have a lot to answer for for that period, so I commend the minister for the comments he just made.

I would like to now turn to paid parental leave. In the 2015-16 budget the government proposed cuts to paid parental leave that will see female ADF personnel lose 18 weeks of paid leave with their newborn baby. It resorted to what I regard as an unworthy campaign of denigration of those who access this scheme—not just the public servants but also the ADF personnel, the AFP members, public servants who access this scheme—as well as a workplace scheme. At one stage the Treasurer agreed to the suggestion that what they were doing amounted to fraud. The government also resorted to semantic gymnastics in trying to deny that there was a consequent loss of conditions.

With regard to the changes in the paid parental scheme I have a number of questions for the minister. First, will the minister confirm that the government, on page 168 of budget paper No. 2, used the expression 'double dipping' in reference to its changes? Second, does the minister agree that this is an emotive and demeaning term? Third, does the minister regard ADF personnel who had accessed both schemes as 'double dippers', as the suggestion was through the insinuation of the response from the Treasurer as fraudsters—and I think the term 'rorters' was also floating around at the time?

Finally, will the minister disassociate himself from the language used in budget paper No. 2? On page 168 of budget paper No. 2 the term 'double-dipping' is used in reference to the changes to the paid parental scheme.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:44): Can I say at the outset in relation to paid parental leave that there has been no reduction in the amount of leave available for those ADF members wishing to be at home to care for their infant children. ADF members remain eligible for 26 different types of paid and unpaid leave as part of the ADF’s conditions of service, and that includes annual leave, long service leave, extra recreational leave, war service leave, leave without pay, maternity leave and parental leave. Indeed, ADF members are encouraged to take other types of paid leave, along with maternity leave, to extend the time that they can spend caring for their newborn at their full pay. Members who do take other forms of paid leave in addition to maternity leave continue to accrue additional leave credits during this time, including annual and long service leave. Government paid parental leave is a matter for the Department of Social Services, and, whilst I had a little bit to do with that in the past, I encourage any other direct questions to that department and that minister.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (18:46): Minister, as you are aware, my seat of Ryan is home to one of the highest proportions of ADF personnel. I think it is second only to the member for Herbert—always top of the state. Minister, as you are aware, we recently sent a contingent over to the Middle East. I thank you and the Prime Minister for giving your time to farewell the troops, which I know they appreciated. I am also aware that there has been a turnover with one squadron, which has just come back, and another squadron has gone in its place. Minister, it highlights the fact that there are so many of our serving men and women around the world. Many are in dangerous locations, which we hear about on a daily basis. I know that there are also many men and women in other places around the world who do not get such a high profile. Indeed, the member for Solomon today moved a very timely motion about the serving men and women who help with humanitarian and other aid. I was just wondering, without
breaching any sort of top secret information, if you would give an overview of where our men and women are serving and the type of work they are undertaking.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:47): I thank the honourable member for Ryan for her question. I think the number of defence personnel in her electorate actually exceeds those in the member for Herbert's electorate.

An honourable member: We were talking quality, though. The quality is higher in Townsville!

Mr ANDREWS: I believe the quality is equally good in both electorates. I would say the quality in the member for Canberra's electorate would be equally good, because when it comes to defence personnel there is no question of their outstanding quality. Indeed, one of the things I have to say is that, in coming to this portfolio six months ago, what stood out for me personally perhaps more than anything else—and there are many things that one can be impressed about so far as the Australian defence forces are concerned—was that the professionalism of the members of the Australian Defence Force was outstanding. Wherever one goes around Australia, they are highly committed men and women who do a wonderful job for this country, and we should never forget that. As I said, about 7,000 defence personnel are in the member for Ryan's electorate.

There are currently over 2,500 Australian defence personnel serving in operations, including several hundred from the 7th Brigade in the member for Ryan's electorate. As she said, she observed that the Prime Minister and I and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition were there at Enoggera a month or so ago to farewell a deployment going to Iraq. That deployment of some 300 regular forces from Australia was complemented by about 100 to 107 from the New Zealand Defence Force. They are currently at Taji, which is about 25 to 30 kilometres north of Baghdad. Taji is a very large base. It measures about six kilometres by seven kilometres, so we are not just talking about some small area. It is a major defence base and it is playing a major role in the conflict in Iraq, because it is there that the Australians and the New Zealanders are part of a building-capacity partner program. We are training regular forces in the Iraqi army. Ultimately, the defeat of ISIL or Daesh must occur on the ground.

We are making significant contributions in the air. We have six Hornets there at the present time flying out of the UAE. We also have an air refueller, which is flying out of the UAE, and a Wedgetail Eagle, which is a command and control aircraft. That is a very significant contribution, the Hornets having replaced the previous rotation of Super Hornets.

In addition to that, we have about 170 special forces, and related forces, on the ground at the international airport compound at Baghdad. They have been there since about September last year and they have been engaged in the training of the counter-terrorism special forces in Iraq and have been doing a very significant job. The combined contribution in Iraq—that the 300 in Taji, the 170 in Baghdad and the air component—is a very significant contribution so far as the conflict there is concerned.

Operation OKRA in Iraq is not our only commitment to the Middle East. Around 1,000 personnel support operations HIGHROAD in Afghanistan and ACCORDION in the broader Middle East region. Three hundred more personnel are supporting Operation MANITOU, promoting maritime security and stability in the Middle East region, while hundreds more are deployed as part of Operation RESOLUTE to keep our maritime borders secure.
This contribution of some 2½ thousand personnel is a very significant, ongoing contribution. Many Australians would not realise that the contribution in Afghanistan, which went for a decade, was our longest military involvement since the beginning of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Some 34,000 Australian defence personnel rotated through Afghanistan over that decade-long period, which means that a very significant number of our defence forces actually served in that decade, in Afghanistan, during that period. This is a major contribution that the defence forces are making.

Then on top of that there is the humanitarian and disaster assistance, which we have seen most recently in Vanuatu, where C17s went in, where defence personnel went in, where HMAS *Tobruk* took supplies up there and where other contributions were made in Vanuatu. With the earthquake in Nepal, a C17 went there taking in supplies and bringing out people from that troubled region. Then closer to home when natural disasters occur in this country, as we have seen in North Queensland, our defence personnel are there as well. This is a magnificent contribution.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:52): Coalition governments have got form when it comes to cuts to Public Service jobs. In 1996, we saw 30,000 Public Service jobs cut throughout Australia and 15,000 of them were cut here in Canberra. What did that mean for Canberra? What that meant was that Canberra went into recession. We had people leave town, business bankruptcies went up, non-business bankruptcies went up, local shops closed down, house prices plummeted, our population fell and thousands and thousands of Canberrans lost their jobs.

Fast-forward to the election of the Abbott government and what did we see? Since the Abbott government has been elected, 8½ thousand jobs have been lost in Canberra—6,000 jobs lost in just one year. Coalition governments have got complete disdain and contempt for the Public Service—the servants of democracy—the people who serve this government. They have complete contempt. They have shown it in the past in 1996. We are seeing it again now with the Abbott government—as I said, 8½ thousand lost here in Canberra; 6,000 jobs lost in one year alone.

We saw in the budget that the government had also slated getting rid of 1,150 Public Service jobs. That was on top of the 2,400 that had already been axed from the defence department, despite the fact that the First Principles Review said, 'We recommend that the focus on Public Service reductions as the primary efficiency mechanism for Defence cease.' It also comes on top of comments from the Secretary of Defence, Dennis Richardson, who said at an ASPI dinner in November 2013:

> There is a bit of a tendency for some to see Defence civilians as constituting something called a 'back-end' supporting the ADF 'front-end' … We have an integrated work force where many civilians report to uniformed personnel and many of the latter report to the former.

Also, in 1996, the then Prime Minister said that the coalition government was going to get rid of 2½ thousand public service jobs through natural attrition. As I said, that ended up being 15,000 here in Canberra and 30,000 across the nation.

Given the fact that the government have already axed 8½ thousand jobs here in Canberra, with 6000 in one year, and have slated in the budget 1150 public service jobs, and have already gotten rid of 2400 jobs and, given the importance of the civilian workforce to the ADF's capability, what are the government's plans for the future of the civilian workforce in
Defence? I am particularly interested in knowing what further plans it has for job cuts in the public service in Defence.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (18:56): It is a little galling to hear the member for Canberra talking about Defence Force cuts. Let me just read the figures from the last few years. In 2011-12 there were 1000 Defence APS positions cut. In 2012-13 there were 1000 Defence APS positions cut. In 2013-14 there were 800 Defence APS positions cut. That adds up to 2800 Defence APS jobs cut by the Labor Party when in government. That is the record in so far as that is concerned.

We are doing a couple of things. First of all, we are not ripping $16 billion out of the forward estimates in Defence. We have had the First Principles Review, which was headed by David Peever and included amongst its membership former general Peter Leahy, former coalition defence minister Robert Hill, former Labor finance minister Lindsay Tanner and Mr Jim Mc Dowell, one of the best known and most expert people involved in the defence industries in Australia and overseas. He is the former head of BAE Systems here in Australia and in Saudi Arabia, as I recall.

That First Principles Review is about ensuring that we have the best corporate structure for the Defence Force on the civilian side in the future. That review reported to the government about three or four months ago. We have put in place an implementation plan, which is being drafted at the present time. That plan is expected to be completed by the end of this month, in just over a week or so. Then, from early July we will be implementing that plan for the structure according to the Peever review.

In addition to that, I have kept in place the review team headed by Mr Peever and I have added one more member to it. That will report to me on a regular basis as to the implementation of the review of Defence. Through that process we hope that we will have a better Defence program in place as far as Defence is concerned into the future.

In addition to that, we are progressing the Defence white paper, which is expected to be published in August of this year. That work has been underway for almost a year now, and I would like to pay tribute publicly to my predecessor, Senator Johnston, for the work that he did both in starting the Defence white paper process and in starting the First Principles Review of Defence.

The Defence white paper will set out a number of things, which will go ultimately to the number of people in the ADF both on the civilian and military sides. It will set out the strategic challenges facing Australia over the next 20 years to the extent that we can envisage what they are. It will put in place a Defence Force structure—what the acquisition purchases we need over the next 20 years are, whether they be submarines, future frigates and assets and equipment we need for the Navy, or the Joint Strike Fighter for the Air Force, so that we have those in place in the future. There will be a defence industry plan as part of this white paper, and it will be very much looking to set up the future of Defence for the next 20 years. Ultimately, we seek to align three things. One is our national aspiration. What do we want to do as far as the defence of this nation is concerned? Is it to send personnel to Iraq or Afghanistan, which I spoke about earlier, or is it to send them on a humanitarian mission to Vanuatu or wherever a natural disaster occurs? That is our national aspiration. That has to be lined up with the capability to deliver on that national aspiration, which goes to the equipment, the assets, that we have to deliver on that. It also goes very much to the training of
the personnel involved and that the professionalism that we have in the defence forces continues into the future. It also means the enablers—the communication system, the cyber ability that we have in the future—all have to be there. The third thing that has to align—and this is where Labor fell down in the past—is there has to be the funding to provide for that capability. Those three things, which I call the trinity as far as defence is concerned—

Mrs Prentice interjecting—

Mr ANDREWS: I will not go so far as to call it the Holy Trinity, Member for Ryan. That defence trinity—aspiration, aligning with capability, aligning with funding—is what a government has to achieve. That is what we are determined to do. It was a failure in the past under the Labor Party, frankly, because they ripped out money from defence. We have to put it back on track.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (19:01): Following on from that response to the member for Canberra’s question, I note that you, on behalf of the Abbott government, have invested more than $5 billion in the last 12 months on new defence capabilities. This will have a wonderful long-term investment impact on our defence industries, as well as on our defence personnel and capability. I am reminded, as the member for Canberra knows, that on Friday the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade had an inspection tour of Amberley. We attended that facility by flying from here in a Hercules—a bit of low-altitude flying on the way.

We landed at Amberley and had a briefing on some of the new facilities and the new capabilities that are happening there. One of particular interest was the C17. We saw how amazing this aeroplane is, how it can be equipped with operating theatres, how it can carry so many personnel and how it has such a variety of capabilities. Perhaps I can take a moment to acknowledge the squadron leader of the C17, Squadron Leader Samantha Freebairn, who is a role model not only for women in the defence services but for women everywhere. She is quite an outstanding leader in what she does.

Minister, I was wondering if you could detail some of the new capabilities in which you are investing and some of the commitment that you have made to acquiring and also guaranteeing funding, so that we can make sure that we do not get that problem that we had under the previous Labor government.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:03): I again thank the member for Ryan for her question and her interest. In 2015-16 the coalition will be investing $7.2 billion in defence equipment. This nearly doubles the amount that Labor spent in their disastrous 2012-13 budget, which, as I said earlier, cut our defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP to the lowest level since 1938.

The honourable member mentions the C17 Globemaster transport aircraft. These are truly phenomenal aircraft. Anybody who has seen one will have seen the sheer size of them. Anybody who has had the privilege of flying in one will understand the capability of these aircraft. I had the privilege of flying in one in January from the UAE to Baghdad, when the Prime Minister and I went to visit the troops in Baghdad. The manoeuvrability of this aircraft, for such a large aircraft, is truly amazing. The storage capacity in the back of it means it can carry very heavy equipment, helicopters, personnel and, as you said, medical stations etcetera. This truly gives us versatility as far as our ability to reach out around the world goes.
There are a number of examples of the aircraft not just going to places like Iraq and Afghanistan. When we had the MH17 disaster in Ukraine, we were able to get the C17 there very quickly. When humanitarian disasters occur in places within our region, the C17 can go to them. It went, as I said earlier, to Nepal. It took relief stores to Nepal and then it was able to evacuate people from that earthquake area zone.

A decision we made recently was to purchase two more of the C17. The reality is that the production of C17s is coming to an end. This was our last opportunity to increase our number of C17s. We decided to purchase two more. That will take our overall fleet of these C17 aircraft to eight. They will have a long lifetime. Probably three or four decades into the future those C17s will still be operating as part of our Defence Force and will still be at that stage, I am sure, some of the most capable aeroplanes in the RAAF. They are based at RAAF Amberley in Queensland. They are the backbone of the various efforts that I have referred to this evening.

In addition to that, we are funding new state-of-the-art special forces vehicles that are being assembled in Australia to give enhanced capability to our most elite troops. We have put out a request for tender for LAND 400, which is the program to provide the new combat reconnaissance vehicles to the Army and replace the ageing fleet of ASLAVs. We have spent $78 million to bring forward the preliminary engineering design work for the future frigate project. We are truly getting on with the job. Of course, we have the competitive evaluation process underway at the present time for the future submarines to replace the Collins class submarines.

Again, decisions should have been made in relation to these in the past. They were not made. That has potentially compromised our Defence capability and therefore our national security in the future. These are long-range projects. The decision taken in the next year or so about frigates and submarines will see the first of those boats delivered in the 2020s. In the case of submarines, it will probably not be until the mid-2020s and so that involved some extension of the life of the Collins class submarines in order to ensure that we have that capability in the future. As I said, the government is getting on with the job. That means ensuring that we have not just the best professional Defence personnel anywhere in the world but also the assets and the capability for them to be able to do their job.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (19:07): Before I ask a question of the minister, I just want to reiterate again the degree of damage that the Abbott government has inflicted on the Public Service since it was elected. As I said, there is form with coalition governments. Thirty thousand Public Service jobs were lost in 1996—15,000 here in Canberra, which had a devastating impact on the Canberra community and the capital region. Since this government has been elected, 17,300 Public Service jobs have been lost, with 8,500 of those here in Canberra.

The Public Service is currently going through the next round of negotiations for its enterprise agreements. As a result of that, there are many, many enterprise agreements that are now very, very overdue. They have expired and there is still no sign of an agreement on the horizon. As a result of that, a number of members of the Public Service are now looking at industrial action in a range of forms right across the spectrum. The CSIRO and government agencies, large and small, right throughout the nation are looking at industrial action as a
result of the below-inflation pay offer that has been made by the government to these servants of democracy.

Particularly concerning are the cuts to conditions. Firstly, there is the insult of the below-inflation pay offer and then, secondly, there are the cuts to conditions. The cuts to conditions are of most concern to women. Women comprise a large number of the Public Service workforce and there are a number of conditions that they fought very hard for over a very long time that they are very concerned about, as they are about the below-inflation pay offer. So my attention now turns to the Defence enterprise certified agreement, and my question is: what did Defence originally budget for with the estimated pay rises for DECA after it expired, for example, in the 2012-13 budget? How did this change over time in subsequent budget statements, including MYEFO and later budgets? Were these changes to estimates made in response to or in advance of the release of the bargaining framework? What risk factors were taken into account in these changes being made? For example, what were the ranges of possible increases that were envisaged?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:10): I reiterate that under Labor 2800 jobs were lost in Defence alone and, indeed, 14,500 across government all without any plan in place at all. In fact, as I said, Labor cut a thousand APS jobs in the 2011-12 budget, another thousand in the 2012-13 budget and a further 800 in the 2013-14 budget—2800 jobs in Defence. If you look at the ADF permanent head count, it has actually increased by approximately by 1398 positions from approximately 56,273 in September 2013 to 57,671 as of 1 April 2015. As I said earlier, the combination of the First Principles Review and the Defence white paper—particularly the Defence white paper, in which a key component will be the enablers that we need in the future—will be a good news story, because there will be, I think, great opportunities for people with specialist skills to join Defence in the future and add to the professionalism of Defence at the present time. The enterprise bargaining agreement is underway at the present time. I know the secretary of my department is keenly interested in that, and I am sure he will do a very good job so far as that process is concerned.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (19:12): I was not able to make the trip to Amberley on Friday because I was in Cairns for the launch of the North Australia white paper—something else that this government is getting on creating and developing. My city of Townsville has not only the finest army base in the country in Lavarack Barracks but also a centrally located air base at Garbutt. In all we have some 6500 members of the ADF in the city. We have a high-skilled ADF, and our soldiers, the sailors of HMAS Canberra and the airmen and women in Townsville rely on quality equipment and support services. The city is always appreciative of the support we receive from the federal government and for our ADF personnel. However—as you said in one of your previous answers, Minister—you must always be that alignment of funding for expectation, so that a level of operational and strategic commitment to the development of those personnel and the equipment they use. I would like to ask you: what is in the Defence budget for Townsville in the next 12 months? Could you particularly touch on the new Chinook helicopters? What operational spending and infrastructure will be needed to support those?

Minister, I have also been contacted by a constituent of mine, Tim McHugh, about cattle having grazing access to the training grounds on High Range outside Townsville on the old Dotswood Station. Because we have spoken about it and because you have spoken about the
drought throughout Queensland and New South Wales quite often, I know that you are keenly aware of the drought we have. How can I progress this discussion? Could you give me pointers on where to go? I know that you have been to Townsville recently, and I would like to extend the invitation to a fair dinkum inspection of facilities in Townsville. I know that the men and women of Lavarack and Ross Island RAAF Base would love to see you in our city to have a really good look at how very good we are at this.

My city is not just a brilliant defence base—Townsville is home to over 5,500 Defence Force veterans. Because so many ADF personnel retire directly into our community, the average age of my veterans is younger than most veteran communities. Many of these men and women do not avail themselves of the full value of the exit processes laid out by DVA. How is DVA working to assist veterans, no matter their age, when they do come to them for help? How can we ensure that every ADF member gets the option to access DVA when they separate from the service of the nation? These men and women bring a work ethic and a sense of community to my city. They are great citizens. We have, however, been a major contributor of personnel to Australia’s longest action, the Afghanistan war. While those carrying physical injuries from wounds are easy to spot, it is the invisible wounds of PTSD which are of major concern to my community. Can you please tell my constituents and my veteran population how DVA and the wider defence community are helping our veterans cope with mental issues so that they can fully participate in my community?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:16): I thank the member for Herbert for his contribution this evening and also for his marvellous advocacy for and representation of particularly the 6,500 Defence Force personnel and their families in his electorate. I was in Townsville, as he recalls, in May this year with the member for Herbert to commission the first of the new fleet of CH47F Chinook helicopters that will be based at RAAF Base Townsville. We are also providing new and upgraded facilities to support the introduction and sustainment of the new Chinooks in Townsville. In 2015-16 this will include a $13.7 million investment as part of the $49.8 million redevelopment project. We will also be investing $23.9 million in 2015-16 to provide enhanced logistics facilities at Lavarack Barracks. There will be a further investment to replace dated aviation firetrucks with modern equipment.

Secondly, the honourable member asked me about the situation with drought conditions in his region. Drought has a devastating impact on many communities around Australia. As someone who grew up on a farm, I appreciate the impact that drought can have not just on the farmers and their families but on surrounding communities. I understand the position that many Queensland graziers find themselves in at the present time, particularly with limited feed to support their livestock. The member for Herbert, as he intimated, has been a strong advocate for allowing livestock to graze on Defence land. I commend him for his work to support local farming communities in this regard. I can confirm to him and to the chamber that Defence has been consulting with the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to find out exactly how Defence land may best be used for agistment in these circumstances. Defence has no objection in principle to supporting local communities and farmers who are struggling through this drought, but obviously we need to work through the various safety, legal, environmental and operational concerns that will arise.
To my knowledge Defence has not received at this stage any applications for agistment, so I suggest to the honourable member for Herbert that the best thing for Mr McHugh to do would be to write to both his office and mine with any specific requests and I will be sure that his correspondence is in the proper hands in Defence and that we can give it proper consideration as soon as possible. As I said, we would like to assist wherever we can in recognition of the devastating conditions affecting farmers in parts of Australia, including in the honourable member's electorate.

I turn to the issue of DVA clients. I note there are some 5,500 Department of Veterans' Affairs clients in the electorate of Herbert, and that is understandable given that Townsville is essentially what the Americans would call a garrison town—and a very important one for Australia.

There have been a wide range of programs and initiatives developed to support ADF personnel, including raising awareness and increasing acceptance of mental health challenges. Defence is constantly working to improve services in this area. The honourable member talked about what happens to the connection with DVA when a member leaves Defence. I can report to him that I have been having discussions with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to try and ensure that we have a better joined-up system when a person leaves Defence, so that there is that contact and pathway to any services that they might require from DVA, rather than just leaving it to chance or leaving it to time to pass or somebody to get around to it. I think we can do a better job in that regard, and, as I said, I have been speaking with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs in that regard. DVA spends about $179 million a year on dedicated mental health services for the veterans and their families. They are currently working on a very significant longitudinal health study, the Transitional and Wellbeing Research Program, which is a $5 million project. Mental health is a real issue, particularly for former Defence personnel, and we need to do whatever we can to assist them in that regard.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (19:21): As we have seen time and time again, this is a government which has an apparently inexhaustible appetite for military commemorations and parades, and an apparently unquenchable appetite for its enthusiasm to be seen around and with soldiers. Indeed, we have seen them eager to militarise those civilian and constabulary operations wherever they can, but we have also seen that underneath this veneer of publicity seeking and style management, there have been some very egregious assaults on the rights of veterans affairs pensioners. While the government does routinely proffer to the Australian community rhetoric around recognising the uniqueness of military service and the lasting honour that should be bestowed on our veterans community, deeds have sadly not followed those words. This has been brought into stark relief by this government's attack on pensions. You will remember that in the lead up to the last election, the government did two things of significance: the first was to make a very great virtue of their commitment to indexing DFRB and DFDB pensions. As they travelled the countryside promoting the indexation arrangements that they intended to bring to those two pensions, they treated veterans groups and ex-service organisations across the country too long, lucid lectures about the virtues of triple indexation. And yet, when they came to government, all of that rhetoric was abandoned. While the DFRDB pension did have its indexation improved—I might say with both sides of the parliament supporting it—we saw on the other hand veterans affairs pensions suffer the most remarkable attack—an attack that, of course, flew in the face, not only of their rhetoric,
but explicit promises made in office. You will remember that on 6 September 2013, on the
eve of the previous federal election, Tony Abbott told *SBS News* there would be no cuts to
education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no changes to the GST and no cuts to the
ABC or SBS. With this commitment ringing in their ears, it is no surprise that veterans were
astonished to discover, in 2014, that their pensions were indeed targeted by this government,
and the triple indexation that was proposed would be abolished. There were of course other
atrocities as part of this which included the abolition of the MSBS pension scheme, the attack
on ADF pay, but in particular we saw some 280,000 veterans—the recipients of some
310,000 payments—all proposed to have their payments stripped, all proposed to have their
pensions declined against the real cost of living.

Successfully, Labor, together with ex-service organisations—the RSL and many others—
were able to campaign for this position to be retreated from. But, alas, the government's
resolve in attacking pensions of our veterans has not reduced. They may have found new
tactics, but their mission has not changed. In particular, last week I received a letter from the
Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia stating their concern that over 12,000 veterans will
be affected by the government's continuing attack on pensions. The government's legislation
will cause the part-service pensions of more than 10,000 veterans to be reduced and some
2,800 to be cancelled. The VVFA themselves have said:

For those veterans whose Part Service Pension is calculated by the 'assets test', the news may be bad.
Veterans have served our country, and they have defended our nation, yet they continue to
endure these attacks from a government that wants to be photographed with them but not take
proper care of them. Why, Minister, is the Abbott government so keen to attack our
veterans—the people who have sacrificed themselves and so much to serve our country?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:25): I thank the honourable
member for Batman for his question and say to him that the government is committed to
ensuring that the unique nature of military service underpins our actions for veterans and their
families. Indeed, the budget provides $12.1 billion in services and support to veterans and
their families, including $6.5 billion for income support and compensation pensions, $5.5
billion in healthcare treatment for veterans and their families and $88.7 million for
commemorations and war graves.

I was a little bemused, I suppose, by the honourable member's comments about parades and
welcomes home. I thought that was something that enjoyed bipartisan support in this place. I
was with the honourable member for Ryan at the farewell to the troops at Enoggera who are
now serving this country and the interests of this country and indeed the broader Western
alliance, if I can put it in those terms, in Iraq at the present time. I was there at the parade that
was held in Melbourne, as parades were held all around the country, for those who served us
over a decade in Afghanistan. It is entirely appropriate that we as a nation recognise in a
bipartisan way—because people from both sides of politics attend these events—the
contribution our defence forces have made on behalf of us, the people of Australia.

Indeed, spending per veteran—to come back to the point—is the highest it has ever been.
Indeed, in 2015-16 we will spend an average of $40,650 per DVA client, up 1.8 per cent on
last year. This contrasts with a decline in spending per veteran of around three per cent in the
last Labor budget. This year's budget maintains indexation for pensions paid by DVA at CPI,
MTAWE and the BPLCI; provides $10 million to increase the number of case coordinators,
which will improve the level of support to veterans with complex and mental health needs; invests a further $3.7 million to extend a trial of in-home telemonitoring; invests $700,000 to improve the Veterans’ Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme; streamlines the appeals process under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act—exactly what veterans have asked us to do; improves compensation available for Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act clients, including excising DVA clients into their own Defence-specific compensation act; and provides additional financial support for the Centenary of Anzac, particularly our centenary of service, which includes the Second World War, Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam. This government is committed to veterans. And, as I have indicated in that very brief summary, there is an indication of the real measures we have taken to assist veterans.

Mr HOGAN (Page) (19:29): Minister, I do have a question, but I just want to give some context to the question before I get to it. I am sure you are very aware that for the Centenary of Anzac many grants were given out in honour of the centenary, obviously all related to World War I—memorials, honour rolls, cenotaphs and what have you. I would just like to go through a number of them that happened in my electorate in the context of the question that I want to ask. The first is one that it was wonderful to be involved with. As part of the grant process we gave $10,000 to the sub-branch of the Grafton RSL, which organised a re-enactment of the Light Horse recruitment.

It went for two days. A lot of young men who lived on farms rode their horses into Grafton from the surrounding areas and signed up. With this re-enactment everyone went to Copmanhurst, which is 20-odd kays out of Grafton, on the night of 23 April. There was a night at the Rest Point Family Hotel, where everyone assembled. The next morning there was a sign-up where you registered which I was involved with. Then they all rode off to Grafton that day. It took six to seven hours. On the morning of Anzac Day, in a very moving ceremony, they all rode into Grafton as part of the Anzac Day memorial. It was just wonderful to see these 150 people on their horses ride in with this re-enactment.

That is one that I wanted to share with you. There were others that I would like to share with you as well. There were lots of replacements of honour rolls. One that was particularly moving to me was at Bonalbo. There was a very moving honour roll there. It was a piece of teak which had been carved with all the names of people from World War I who enlisted in the Richmond Valley and did not return. It was carved with a knife by the mother of one of those men. They had the knife she did it with. Teak, as you would know, is a very hard wood, and the care, patience and devotion she had to do that in memory of her son was very moving.
The last one I wanted to share with you, Minister, is in Lismore. We put a glass enclosure around the Lismore memorial baths. You could not actually see the honour roll in winter because it was shut off by these wooden doors, so we enclosed it in a glass casing. It was quite moving to my wife and me because my wife's great-great-uncle Alfred Webber is listed on that honour roll from World War I.

In the context of that, Minister, my question is: Anzac Day in my community gives people the opportunity to remember, reflect and commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australians who have served their nation. What plans does the government have to continue commemoration of the Centenary of Anzac and Anzac Day in the future as well as the centenary of service, which underpins the government's program?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:33): I thank the member for page for his contribution to this discussion this evening and acknowledge his exceptional advocacy for the constituents of his electorate of Page, not the least of which are members and former members of the Defence Forces in his area. There were some 27 local community organisations across his electorate which shared in $124,833 in funding under the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program, and he detailed some of those. I think the amazing thing is that, wherever you go in this country, whether it is a large city or a small town or village—a hamlet in some cases—there is a cenotaph or an honour roll there and you can read the names of, in many cases, dozens of locals from small areas who went off to fight, particularly in the First World War, and the many who, tragically, did not return from that conflict.

Across Australia this program has supported more than 1,750 applications seeking up to $18.7 million in funding, which delivered on the government's election commitment to place community based commemoration at the heart of the Centenary of Anzac. In the most recent budget, the one we are discussing tonight, the government has continued its investment in the Centenary of Anzac to ensure that the centenary of service—the century of service—by our personnel in the defence forces is properly recognised and honoured.

An additional $35.5 million will be allocated for the Australian government's Centenary of Anzac program for the upcoming 2015-16 budget as planning for commemorative events marking the 100th anniversary of major battles gets underway on the Western Front. Of course, the focus of the centenary celebrations this year was, as it should be, at Gallipoli, but that was a relatively short period of campaign—some seven or eight months at Gallipoli. Then many of the troops, as the honourable member indicated, went back to Egypt and then to the Middle East at the great Battle of Beersheba—which he talked about in his contribution—and then of course for some three years or so on the Western Front.

Indeed, 295,000 Australians served with distinction on the Western Front. Of the more than 62,000 Australians killed in the First World War, 75 per cent were killed on the Western Front. The additional funding will provide for commemorative events at Lone Pine, in Turkey; Fromelles, Pozieres and Le Hamel, in France; Polygon Wood, in Belgium and, of course, Beersheba in Israel. I am sure that there will be many Australians who want to be at those events.

I had the great privilege on Anzac Day of being at the dawn service at Villers–Bretonneux and then the town service in Villers–Bretonneux followed by three services in or near Bullecourt and then later on the Last Post ceremony at Menin Gate at Ieper. Of course, great
battles occurred across the Western Front, which will be commemorated in the coming events.

There were some 7,000 people at Villers–Bretonneux at dawn in very cold, wet conditions. At Bullecourt there were about 2½ thousand people, mostly Australians. Bullecourt, for those who do not know, is more or less in the middle of nowhere in northern France on the Western Front, yet so many hundreds if not thousands of Australians made their way to those commemorative services, and I suspect in the coming years tens of thousands of Australians will attend these commemorative services.

There is also an opportunity to partner with ex-service organisations to mark anniversaries such as the fall of Singapore and Australian sacrifice at Hellfire Pass and, of course, the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan during the Vietnam War. So it is not just the First World War that we are commemorating over the coming years. It is also significant battles and wars which occurred since then, notably the Second World War and of course the Vietnam War.

As I said, next year significantly marks the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has announced that, subject to the agreement of the Vietnamese government, a small mission party of veterans will be supported to return to Vietnam in August 2016 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. There will also be a major commemorative event here in Canberra at the Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade to honour all Australia's Vietnam veterans. As I said earlier, the veterans of that war were, unfortunately, neglected by the country, and it is appropriate that we put things right in this 50th anniversary year of the Battle of Long Tan.

**Mr FEENEY** (Batman) (19:38): Minister, I want to now turn to dental and allied health provider fees. You will recall, of course, that in the 2014-15 budget the Abbott government announced that they were deferring the indexation of Department of Veterans' Affairs dental and allied health provider fees to 1 July 2016. This was estimated to produce savings of some $35.7 million over four years. Budget papers stated that the savings from this measure would be invested by the government in the Medical Research Future Fund.

In the 2015-16 budget, the government extended the pause on indexation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs dental and allied health provider payments until 1 July 2018, for a total of some four years. This extension of indexation is estimated to produce $69.6 million in savings. While the government has retained the savings measure and indeed extended it and deepened it, unlike the initial 2014 budget measure budget papers now state that savings will go to fund other veterans' policy priorities rather than the Medical Research Future Fund.

The 2015 budget also reveals that the Department of Veterans' Affairs will undertake a review of dental and allied health services arrangements specific to the veterans community to complement the broader review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule to be conducted by the Department of Health. Dental and allied health provider fees are those rebates that are provided by the government to individual providers for the services they provide to the veterans community. Dental and healthcare provider organisations have expressed concern in ever more phrenetic terms that this extended pause on indexation will make it increasingly difficult for them to provide services to the veterans community. This is particularly the case, given that there already exists a disparity between the rebates and the mean customary fees,
and it is illegal for providers to charge veterans a co-payment. Data accumulated by the Australian Dental Association has found that there has been an increase in the difference between the ADA mean fees and the DVA rebate from some six per cent in 2006 to 25 per cent in 2014. The Australian Dental Association is very concerned about the impact that the continuing freeze on the indexation of DVA fees will have on the ability of our veterans to access dental payments.

While dentists remain exceedingly loyal to our veterans and, indeed, to their customers, measures such as these are nonetheless likely to impact upon veterans' dental health. It is a fantasy for this government to continue to march around assuring veterans' organisations that it is service providers who have copped a hit, not them, while they undermine the businesses and the business cases of those who provide services to veterans. There will inevitably be a tipping point. While I accept that, as with policies such as direct action on climate change, this is a government that does not believe in market forces. Nonetheless, market forces do continue to exist and, as you pile pressure on service providers, you inevitably pile pressure on veterans. Why is the government still making harsh cuts to the veterans community? Why are you attacking them through the back door? Do you accept that the continuing freeze on indexation of these payments will inevitably affect services to veterans?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (19:42): In relation to the matters raised by the honourable member for Batman, can I stress that these measures do not affect how veterans access DVA funded health care. There will be no additional charges to veterans by providers, and I stress there will be no erosion of existing entitlements for veterans under this measure. Indeed, as he pointed out himself, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will undertake a review of dental and allied health services arrangements specific to the veteran community to complement the broader review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule to be conducted by the Department of Health. Indeed, the savings from this measure he referred to will be redirected by the government to fund other veterans policy measures.

As I said, spending per veteran is the highest it has ever been. In 2015-16 we will spend an average of $40,650 per DVA client—up 1.8 per cent on last year, which contrasts with a decline in spending per veteran of around three per cent in the last Labor budget. These measures include maintenance of indexation for pensioners paid by DVA; the provision of $10 million to increase the number of case coordinators, which will improve the level of support to veterans with complex and mental health problems; investing a further $3.7 million to extend the trial of in-home telemonitoring; investing $700,000 to improve the Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme; streamlining the appeals process under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, exactly what veterans have been asking for; improving compensation available for Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act clients, including excising DVA clients into their own Defence-specific compensation act. As I said in relation to the observations from the member for Page, additional financial support for the Centenary of Anzac and the very important commemorations which will occur in coming years.

As I said, the measures do not affect how veterans access DVA funded health care. There are no additional charges to veterans by providers and no erosion of existing entitlements for veterans under this measure. So this is all very positive news as far as the veterans community in Australia is concerned. The government will continue to work closely, and my colleague and friend, Senator Ronaldson, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, will continue to work very
closely with the veterans community as he has done so in the past. I am quite confident that that very fine, supportive and warm relationship between the minister, the department and the veterans community will continue into the future. This government is proud of the Australian Defence Force personnel and their contribution to Australia. We will continue to support them, not just when they are in the services but also in when they leave the services and become veterans in the future.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.
Remainder of bill—by leave—taken as a whole and agreed to.
Bill agreed to.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

**Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2014-2015**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Conroy) (19:49): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Education Funding

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (19:49): I rise today to shine a light on the government's serial neglect of education in this country. I thought that, while the Minister for Education has been preoccupied with university deregulation, he was neglecting our schools with cuts to funding. But today I see that he has a much more sinister plan for our schools, and that is to destroy the universal nature of preschool, primary and secondary education in this country. It is absolutely appalling. I tell you what, people around Australia are going to be appalled by the revelations that they have heard today.

There are a number of issues which I want to touch on, but the 10 minutes in which I have to highlight the minister's devious plans and also his incompetence seem hardly enough. The Abbott government has conclusively failed Australian schools, students, parents and families. The government is failing to honour its commitment to implement the full Gonski funding by ripping billions of dollars out of our school system. Now the government are desperately trying to play catch-up with Labor on our well-received announcements on STEM and coding in schools, as well as our announcements on universities.

The duplicity does not end there. As I said, the Prime Minister's leaked federation green paper is clearly softening the ground for the government to do a number of things. The first is to rip out all Commonwealth money from our public schools, which would lead to devastating results. This is certainly moving in the opposite direction to where the Gonski model was going—which was to fund our schools on a needs base system that is sector blind—but this is what the government is preparing to do. There is also the issue of charging parents for their children to attend public schools. As I said, this strikes at the very foundation of universal access to education—something that this country has been very proud of. Indeed, many western democracies say that universal education is critical to democracy. Now we see the Liberal Party wanting to split up the have and the have-nots and make it very clear that anything is for sale under its government.

We have also seen—and this has been very concerning—the government taking an axe to vocational education in schools. The government has cut millions of dollars out of the trade training centre program. I am sure that if any member on either side of the chamber were to visit their trade training centres—and I know that those on this side of the House absolutely do that on a regular basis—they would see the great outcomes being achieved there. Those opposite talk up vocational education at schools but we know they paused the national curriculum on the National Trade Cadetships program—an initiative that was designed to look at priority areas and a national curriculum for years 11 and 12 in the areas of vocational education. It came to a complete halt under this government. The day they were elected it was halted, and then they cut millions of dollars out of trade training centres. The government may talk a lot about vocational education—we often hear them talk about that in their schools—but their actions do not match their words at all.
We have also had the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education make an ideological attack on our higher education. This has been universally condemned by the public as well by this parliament. The minister and the Prime Minister continue to pursue what is an incredibly reckless attack on our higher education system. This is what we have got from the government who said there would be no cuts to education. This is what we are seeing before us. I think the Australian people should be incredibly concerned.

There has been the $30 billion cut to Australian schools by the government abandoning its commitment to Gonski and the model of a needs based funding system. This is so short-sighted of the government, and not only in terms of their election promise; it also strikes at the heart of so much of the work that was done on what our schools needed. It was to ensure that every student would get a student resource standard and that those who needed extra help to lift their results—those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with a disability or those from rural and regional areas—would get it. I am surprised that I have not heard any National Party members crying out against this measure. I guess they have been whipped into line by the Liberal Party again. This model, which should be universally accepted as one that will serve us well into the future to ensure that every child gets a good education, is being destroyed by this minister. This was not what he promised before the election, but this is what we have seen.

Now we see the government's latest attack on Australian schools in the Federation green paper. I think everyone should be very concerned. We often hear, 'This is not government policy.' Well, it is the government's document and it was leaked by the government. This is why it is particularly concerning that we see this really concerning state of affairs. There has been no response from this minister to Labor's positive announcements when it comes to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Leader of the Opposition has outlined and articulated a very clear plan for STEM, one where we see coding in our classrooms to prepare our students for high-skilled jobs of the future. We want to see teachers supported in upskilling in STEM disciplines and we want to see students, particularly women, supported in STEM undergraduate degrees that will prepare them for the jobs of a changing economy. We want to see innovation in our country and we want support for micro and small businesses so that they can take their ideas to market. I think this is an exciting and positive plan.

Unfortunately, the best the government have been able to come up with in response is to say that they will make maths and science compulsory in years 11 and 12. There is no innovation, no creativity and nothing about training teachers to meet the demand of students and ensuring they are upskilled. Indeed, in stark contrast to Labor's positive plan, we saw the minister's inaction recently exposed in Senate estimates when it was revealed that the digital technologies curriculum is still sitting on the minister's desk, despite being agreed to by state and territory education ministers in November 2013. There is a forward-thinking minister!

We have also seen the minister announce the idea to make it mandatory in the final years of high school to study maths and science. That is really not an inventive program. We want a bit more invention from this minister, a bit more commitment to our schools and a bit more commitment to our students, not this knee-jerk reaction and ripping and cutting of millions from our schools. I am running out of time. As I said, 10 minutes is not enough to cover this minister's mistakes and the incorrect path he is going down.
The higher education legislation has been rejected by the parliament on a number of occasions and now it is increasingly being rejected by those in the university sector. Certainly vice-chancellors are saying it is probably time to go back to the drawing board and that it is just not practicable now to implement. Labor, along with students, parents and communities, has articulated time and time again that this is an unfair proposal that will see only those who can pay go to university and not our best and brightest. What is worse, despite this proposal being thoroughly rejected by the parliament and the Australian people, the minister has banked the savings in this budget.

It really is time that this minister start taking education seriously and not use it as an opportunity to jump up on his high horse and pontificate and try to take us back to the fifties, which is where all these policies seem to be taking us back to. They are about paying for public schools and paying for university and not actually looking at universal access and the importance of skilling up our community and our young people and giving them the best education. They are our best resource coming into the future. If we do not invest in them, our country will no longer prosper. It is time this minister got serious. I call on him to start investing in education.

**Forde Electorate: Beenleigh PCYC**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (19:59): Speaking positively in a grievance debate is always terrific. It is with great pleasure that speak today about a great program in our community run by the Beenleigh PCYC, which has been the No. 1 PCYC in Queensland for the past number of years. The program is called the Two Tribes program. Two Tribes stands for Together We Obtain Trust, Respect, Inspiration, Belief, Enthusiasm and Support. The program is about assisting young asylum seekers and refugees who are finding difficulty assimilating into the Australian culture. It teaches self-belief through art workshops and encourages a trusting relationship with the police. My thanks go to Sergeant Mark Haestier, the CEO of the Beenleigh PCYC, and Angel Goodfellow, who, essentially, runs the program. Both have done a tremendous job with this program.

On Friday I had the opportunity to drop in and catch up with the latest participants and see their progress. On Friday they were finishing off painting their torso models. The objective of the torso model is to create a piece of art that reflects how they see themselves and also the journey that they have been on over the past six weeks. Sergeant Haestier and Angel are the driving forces behind the success of this Two Tribes program. It is through his role of engaging with local schools in the Beenleigh region that he discovered that not everyone found it easy to make friends and feel a sense of belonging. Visiting a number of schools, in particular around Beenleigh and Eagleby, Mark noticed a little African boy playing on his own. On another occasion, he saw an Indian girl who was not confident enough to join in with the other girls. He asked them why they were not playing with the other kids and both children said it was hard to make friends. From this Mark realised that there needed to be more support to give these children the confidence they needed to make friends and find a sense of belonging. Working with program facilitator Angel Goodfellow, Two Tribes was started, and the first group involved a number of high school kids who had been refugees and asylum seekers before settling in Australia. Many of them had come from war-torn Middle Eastern backgrounds, and they had faced many difficulties in life before moving to Australia with their families, or in some cases without their families.
The six-week program begins with a team-building exercise where Mark takes the students to an outdoor activity adventure facility to help build a trusting relationship with the students. Where many of these children come from, they identify police and uniforms with corruption, and changing that perception is a valuable and important beginning. The six-week program is a full 9 am to 3 pm day on a Friday, and the students take part in art workshops to help express who they are, to break down their fears and their struggles, to help them see clearly who they really are and to build a sense of pride and confidence. Every student who takes part in the Two Tribes program has faced different barriers. For the majority of them, it starts with simple things such as speech and language. For many of these kids, they are often the only person in their household who can speak English. This means that they are often the ones left dealing with housing, Centrelink, education and other family matters. Dealing with these things when their family cannot speak English puts an enormous amount of pressure on these kids, who are so young, and it can make them feel quite isolated.

The Two Tribes program began in 2011, and since then Mark and the team at the Beenleigh PCYC have held six programs, helping some 45 students from the region. Following the program, Mark has received feedback from teachers of local schools who have noticed a tremendous change in their students. One particular comment Mark received from a teacher summed up the success of the program. The teacher said, 'You have removed the cork from his waterfall, and now the river runs freely.'

Every student who has taken part in the Two Tribes program walks away feeling confident, ready to engage with their peers and proud of their refugee heritage. It has been a positive experience for them and they have a new-found sense of belonging. When I visited the Two Tribes program on Friday there was quite an emotional moment with one of the participants, who had a breakthrough and finally felt comfortable to open up about his struggles. It was not only an important moment for him as he works through the program but also an emotional time for Mark and the team who help these kids every day.

There is no doubt as to how these students fare following the Two Tribes program. I was lucky enough to meet two past participants who also dropped in on Friday. One young girl, who was one of the first to take part in the program, dropped in to tell everyone that she was weeks away from completing her nursing degree and to say thank you. Another former Two Tribes participant dropped in to say hello. He is currently a trainee youth worker at Beenleigh State High School. Mark said everyone who has been through the Two Tribes program comes back to visit and many of them are actively involved in the PCYC, being engaged in open days and various youth events.

I have had the privilege of visiting the Two Tribes program on a number of occasions. I never cease to be amazed by the fantastic achievement of the Beenleigh PCYC and those who are running the program and assisting the young people in our community. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work of Sergeant Mark Haestier, who is so passionate about his community and helping to change the lives of vulnerable young people. I also acknowledge the efforts of all the volunteers and the youth connected to the Two Tribes program. You go above and beyond to deliver a program that is helping our region's young refugees and asylum seekers. You are turning their isolation and hardships into a positive experience, and they are walking away with a sense of belonging, friendship and trust and a true appreciation of the country they now live in and of the people who are willing to help
them. With more than 63 per cent of migrant couples who come to Australia having dependent children, programs like this are so important to helping these young people feel welcome and part of the Australian community.

As well as visiting the Two Tribes program, I had the opportunity to attend a number of other community events over the weekend. I will quickly mention them in the time remaining. Shailer Park State School hosted their annual art show and art auction on Friday night. My congratulations to acting principal Julie Canham and all the staff for a tremendous job but also to all the students for the fantastic artwork that they completed and that was part of both the exhibition and the auction. It was a wonderful evening, and I thank the school and year 1 teacher Barbara O'Brien for inviting me along, and also Ian Maurice for conducting the auction. There was certainly no lack of fun things to do over the weekend in Forde. On Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the Eagleby Community Centre open day and the Bethania Community Centre fun day. Both events offered fantastic fun for families and children alike, with a variety of activities and entertainment. It was also a great opportunity for residents to find out about the services these terrific organisations offer. Congratulations to Mim and Andrew Hopkins and their team for the work they put into organising the Bethania Community Centre family fun day, and congratulations to Vanessa Disket and the team for organising the Eagleby Community Centre open day. In addition, thanks to Jim Ferguson and the team at Logan SES for all the wonderful work they do and their wonderful fundraising efforts for Beyond Blue this year at the Logan SES Blue and Orange Ball. It was a terrific example of community spirit and of various organisations working together to support each other. In attending so many wonderful events over the one weekend in Forde I saw what a compassionate, caring and hardworking community we have. There are so many dedicated people supporting and helping others. I am proud and pleased to be able to acknowledge their efforts in this place.

People with Disability

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (20:09): My grievance tonight is that very few people with disability get to enjoy the things that those without disability can enjoy. To demonstrate this I will tell the story of two very special young women who break the mould. They are the first two people with intellectual disability to get a home loan and purchase the unit they live in. I have known Peta Lambert for many years and I know her mother, Laurel, very well. I went along to a session that Laurel had when Peta still lived at home. It was a circle of care to which everybody who cared for Peta was invited. This was a step towards her transitioning to live independently in a unit with her friend Natalie. It was a wonderful experience to be part of this process.

It is absolutely fantastic to know the two young women, Peta Lambert and Natalie Howland, who have become the first young people with intellectual disability in Newcastle to be approved for a home loan. They got the loan through the Newcastle Permanent Building Society, and the sale was settled on 2 December last year. To achieve home ownership they had to go through the most rigorous assessment you can imagine—something that I do not think a person without disability who was purchasing a home would have had to go through. The lengthy process started in June 2013 when they first applied for the home loan. They work together. They had support from House with No Steps, where they both work. Both Nat and Peta get support from the NDIA and have packages. After they went through the process...
of moving from home to their unit they fell in love with the place they lived in. I have been there. They have served me afternoon tea and have taken me around their house. It was a very good experience.

I will go through their story from the perspective of Peta's mother, Laurel. Her 40-year-old daughter Peta decided that she wanted to purchase her own home, and of course it was the unit that she had fallen in love with. But it was quite a challenge. Peta is one of those people who never let disability stand in their way. She is a person who does not like to be stereotyped because of her disability. She asked why, as her sisters and brother owned their own homes, she should not. She wanted to have an ordinary life. That is what the NDIS is supposed to deliver: an ordinary life. Laurel, her mother, pondered and mused about it and it became embedded in her thoughts. All she could think about was how she could assist her daughter to own a home. How does one go about acquiring a mortgage for somebody with intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, hearing impairment and epilepsy?

This has been a precedent and a road map. It is one thing for services and governments to support community inclusion, but here was a real opportunity for it come to fruition. Laurel decided that she would assist her daughter to apply for a mortgage. They happened to choose the right agency to go into and they received support from the community loans officer who they saw. They underwent a financial test and were deemed to be more financially capable of repaying their loan than many other people. They would be in a better position than they were prior to taking out a mortgage.

So the community loans manager came back and gave them a pre-approval to take out the loan, but it was tempered by the knowledge that they had to undergo a number of assessments before that pre-approval could actually lead to an approval. That required a competency assessment by separate registered medical practitioners and an independent legal representative in respect of the mortgage component. Everyone gathered around and helped the young women to be in a position to show that they had the capacity to understand their contract. They did this with the support of their family and friends, who developed training programs to help them be in a position where they could show they understood these mortgage documents. They tested and retested until they were in that position.

They finally presented at this independent assessment, and Laurel said she felt it was like sitting outside a labour ward for the birth of a grandchild. They went in to have their test with the solicitor and came out after that. Before she even saw them, she heard the noise. They were positively joyful as they came out of the office, because they passed. So almost two years from the commencement of this journey it had ended in a settlement and obtaining a home of their own.

Laurel wrote that her anxieties about her own mortality and leaving her beloved children behind with the legacy of caring for Peta had always worried her. She was always worried about what would happen to Peta once she was no longer around. But this had demonstrated that Peta could be independent. Peta could have that ordinary life that everybody aspires to. Peta could really own a home. She has a job. She has an independent life. I bump into her at the shopping centre, and she is really able to enjoy things that we take for granted but to her are like winning the lottery.

Laurel goes on to say: 'I am able to continue. I always saw Peta as a silver thread, but now Peta is no longer a silver thread. She, together with my other three children, illuminate my
life, and I carry a shameless pride for each of them both for who they are and who they've become.'

The thing that really makes this so special is that, when we talk about a person with a disability, people and society as a whole tend to stigmatise and stereotype them—put them in a little box and say: 'This is what they can achieve. This is the life that they should aspire to. This is all that they can look forward to in the future.' But what Peta and Nat have shown is that the sky is the limit. Set your goals high. Go for what you believe in. By trying to limit people, society as a whole is not really giving credence to or recognising the power of motivation. That motivation will help people get around their disability. Nat and Peta are real champions.

I will add that there is another group that Laurel has been involved with. It is called ANSA. They are providing support to carers each year. There have been 15 members with disability in that group, and each and every one of them except one have been able to make a choice about their lifestyle. They are living exactly where they choose to. I think that, as members of parliament, that is something we should be reaching towards.

**Wright Electorate**

**Mr BUCHHOLZ** (Wright—Chief Government Whip) (20:19): I acknowledge the member for Shortland's contribution to this House and the additional work she does in and around the whip's office. It is a privilege to be a federal member of parliament. The honour, for me, is to be able to represent my electors of Wright. In this position there is one true performance indicator, and that is re-election, which comes up every three years. There are things we say as federal members that we are judged upon, and there are things that we do. This evening I want to share some of the things that we—inclusive of my staff—have done with key stakeholders in my electorate, including council and peak bodies, that have worked hard to deliver on some outstanding achievements while I have been the federal member for Wright.

Take, for example, the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program, where the government in my electorate contributed $6.8 million to a $9 million Lockyer Creek Bridge upgrade between Helidon and Warrego. The bridge was compromised during the floods, and it is a main thoroughfare. As a result of our capital investment, that bridge is now able to take heavier loads, ensuring product that is grown in the Lockyer Valley is able to get to its markets. Our Roads to Recovery funding was recovered following attempts by those on the other side of this House to abolish it. Logan City Council had their funding renewed at $14.2 million over the next five years. I acknowledge Pam Parker for what she does as the Mayor of Logan in leading that city to prosperity. Lockyer Valley Regional Council have had their funding renewed for $3.78 million over the next five years. Steve Jones is a worthy advocate for the Lockyer Valley and does a great job. Scenic Rim Regional Council had their funding renewed at $4.4 million over the next five years. John Brent, with 34 years in local government, does an outstanding job in steering that community around. All those mayors were here last week as part of the Local Government Association, when they met with federal government officials. I am proud to announce that this year in our budget measures we sought to double Roads to Recovery funding.

Being a federal member is not just all about building roads. There are social issues that we need to address. Late last year we were able to deliver 21 new aged care places in Beaudesert,
estimated to be worth just under $400,000. Earlier on in the year, in the environmental sector, we had the 25th anniversary of Landcare grants. I commend Tamborine Mountain Landcare, who received $10,000 for their Areca Gully restoration project. They do an awesome job in the advocacy for and their hands-on approach to the environment.

Earlier this year we ran some black spot programs, and the recipients included Mount Nathan, which received $1.262 million in black spot funding to fix a significantly dangerous road. There was $223,000 to relocate a power pole, resurface the intersection and upgrade the line markings at the intersection of Anna Street and Eagles field Street in Beaudesert, which local residents have been complaining about, there having been a number of accidents. There was $205,000 for the Birnam Range Road near Beaudesert, to remove roadside hazards and improve the superelevation and edge lines on one section of the road. There was $53,000 to upgrade signage and install chevron alignment markers, edge lines and guideposts to a section of Kooralbyn Road. I will continue to advocate for the Kooralbyn community for a road that will connect them to Boonah, which will cost roughly $10 million. It would bring so much more economic prosperity to the area, capitalising on weekend traffic for the tourism sector. There is $420,000 to improve the intersection alignment and signage and install street lights at the intersection of Tenthill Creek Road, Ingoldsby Road and Kreskes Road at Lower Tenthill.

There is still more to do in that area, and as the federal government we are committed to working with the state government in identifying priorities. There is $160,000 to improve intersection visibility, ban parking near the intersection, construct indented parking bays and install a pedestrian refuge and additional street lighting at the intersection of Old College Road and Allan Street in Gatton. All of those black spot projects are in the shires I mentioned earlier.

From a Green Army perspective there is a great story—$28,000 for three PCYC Natural Bridge Gondwana Youth Rainforest Rescue projects endorsed by the Bornhoffen PCYC Leadership Development Centre and an additional $80,000 for eight Scenic Rim Region Green Army project teams administered through that area. I recently had the pleasure of touring a couple of the sites, in particular over at Canungra, where I joined the mayor, John Brent, and the deputy mayor, Virginia West. We met with a number of local long-term unemployed people. That project was the epitome of how giving people confidence can transform them—the confidence that grew within that group of young people. The supervisor of the group advised us that when the project first started you could hardly get 'boo' out of the participants. But all of them were eager to display their wares and share with us during our visit what they had learnt.

Earlier in the year, under the Bridges Renewal Program, Middletons Bridge in Lockrose received $646,000 worth of repairs, which the Lockyer Valley Regional Council will undertake. I commend Janice Holstein for her advocacy in lobbying for that funding. Darcy Edmunds Bridge, the main thoroughfare through Jimboomba, is set to receive $1.4 million worth of repairs and upgrades. Under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program there was $375,000 for road upgrades to Sandy Creek Road in the Bromelton area focusing on improved heavy vehicle access for safety. Then there is the National Highway Upgrade Program, with $10 million for the Cunningham Highway from Mutdapilly to Warrill View pavement rehabilitation.
In addition to that, in April 2015 the National Shed Development Program allocated $5,500 to the Tamborine Mountain men's shed in funding for some awnings and some concrete. The men's shed president, Allan Meyers, is the driving force of that men's shed and deserves to be commended on its outstanding performance for the community. Under the Saluting Their Service commemorations program the Logan Village RSL sub-branch received just over $2,000 to restore a 1944 Second World War Ford Blitz ambulance. A passionate convoy of workers worked for many tireless hours to bring that project to fruition. I acknowledge Terry Flanagan for his contribution. There were also many Anzac Day centenary grants. Eleven RSLs and community groups received funding to prepare special commemorations for the centenary of Anzac Day, all of which our community owned.

Gelita Australia is a gelatine factory in my electorate. It is owned by a German manufacturing company. They were at the crossroads as to whether they would continue to invest. There was a $6.5 million upgrade that needed to be done at the plant, and they were contemplating not investing that money. But when the federal government gave a commitment to co-partner with them to the tune of $1.25 million, the German parent company made the decision that Australia was worth investing in. They create gelatine from a by-product of cattle, which strengthens the value of our cattle market. Better screening of their gelatine product will allow them now to potentially move into the pharmaceuticals field and provide gelatine for the small capsules used in receiving medication.

But there is much more to do. There is much more to do in the way of investment in telecommunications. There is more to do in the development of Brome. There are many more bridges that still need work to be done. In the shire of Scenic Rim there are no fewer than 132 bridges that have a maintenance program. And of course there is a lot to do in the jobs area around the high levels of unemployment, in particular for our youth. As the federal member, I will continue to work hard and to keep my electorate informed of the work that our government is doing to ensure a positive and vibrant future.

**Education Funding**

**Health Funding**

**Infrastructure**

*Mr Husic* (Chifley) (20:30): It is an honour to have you here, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, for my contribution in the grievance debate. I have a lot to be aggrieved about. I want to cover off on some of those issues tonight. There are three issues in particular that I want to cover off on, not least of which being one of the most important ones relating to education.

When the controversial program *Struggle Street* aired, I was met with a variety of different reactions about the program. From the local area there were a lot of people who were uptight about what it did in terms of reinforcing stereotype, particularly young people in the area, who, as I have indicated previously to the House, would quite regularly not include their residential details on resumes and job applications for fear that the stigma associated with their area would prevent them from being able to take up work opportunities. This is quite wrong because Australia is a nation that values merit and skill, not the types of superficial things such as where you live. Merit and skill should see you through and open up opportunity for you. So there was a lot of anger on the ground from people as to how those stereotypes were reinforced. But outside the local area a lot of people would say, either
through social media or other contact made with me, 'Isn't this a good thing to put a spotlight on these problems?' While on the surface it seems like it would be a good thing—and you could understand why logic would lead people to draw that conclusion—my concern was always that it would be a short-term focus, a short-term concentration, on issues of concern in our area that would disappear and leave nothing material behind. Nothing demonstrates that more than when you look at education.

If you want to liberate people from 'struggle street', you need to be able to do a variety of things, not least of which is to invest in people's capabilities and skills. One way, the most principled way, you would do that is through education. In our area, I am genuinely concerned for the longer term potential for people to improve themselves through education. The reason I say that was reinforced on Friday when I visited the Mount Druitt campus of Chifley College. Its principal, Cathy Anderson, welcomed me with other teachers and staff at a special morning tea that was held so that teachers and people who are at the coalface, dealing with some of the social issues in our area and who are also dedicated to providing a great pathway for people to improve themselves at that school could express their concerns. They are genuinely concerned about the future of school funding in this country.

Regardless of the type of verbal gymnastics that are undertaken by this government, principally through the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, we have seen a $30 billion cut to the amount of money that would be dedicated to education and would be particularly targeted to areas of need, like areas that I represent in this place. Those cuts in our area translate from that $30 billion to $270 million over 10 years. The Chifley electorate is amongst the worst that are affected, a lot of which are in Western Sydney.

This is an issue that should be a concern not only for locals but for a lot of people who feel that, if you are going to spend your education dollars, you would target those areas of need and you would provide the greatest support for literacy and teacher training. You would provide the greatest support particularly for children who have got learning difficulties as a result of things in their background, like difficult family circumstances or the other socioeconomic demographics that have been demonstrated to hold people back in education and put them at greater risk for unemployment, and not only just short-term unemployment. The concern that I have and that we confront in our area is long-term unemployment—that trap which sets people outside of the workplace and also inhibits their ability to fully participate in society—and that is a longer-term concern.

When I see the type of things that are being proposed by this government, particularly within the education space, after they specifically told people they were on a unity ticket and they gave every impression that they would be there supporting education, it is clearly evident that that is not the case and people have been let down. This is not a simple breach of an election promise; this is the denial of people fulfilling their potential. This is a denial and it is an absolute shame. It is an absolute shame that people in my area whom I know are capable, and I know with a little bit of support would be able to shine, are being denied that through a most cynical government that is draining trust. People already have low levels of trust in government, but they are draining that into the longer term. We have heavy, serious reform that will need to be taken into the longer term and we need to bring people along and convince them of that process—and these people in the Abbott government have denied it.
The other area that I wanted to touch on, flowing from that, is the combination of the federal level of cuts being undertaken by the federal coalition and then seeing what happens on a state level. This week, we will see a state government in New South Wales bring down a budget which is rumoured to have a hefty surplus. On the face of it, a lot of people welcome the surplus, but in our area we have paid for it hard. We have already seen or made reference to federal cuts in education.

Regarding the $50 billion federal cuts in health, we saw a report in the Sydney Morning Herald on Friday which demonstrated that the people who will bear that the most are the poorer people in this country. I represent a sizeable chunk of people in lower socioeconomic circumstances in my area. Through state government cuts, we have seen Mount Druitt Hospital denied a cardiac ward. It was shut down in an area where heart disease kills people; heart disease holds people back. The New South Wales coalition government have taken out the cardiac ward. We will see a concertina effect that will occur from federal cuts and state cuts combined. Yet we have the state government boasting of a surplus while they have managed to cut services in our area. They absolutely should be funding services targeted in our area for the things that concern people most, particularly in terms of heart disease and other things that inhibit people like obesity and diabetes, all of which are lifestyle related and require a lot of investment to get people out of.

The state government will apparently do a whole range of things, including light rail from Homebush to Strathfield, yet people in our area cannot get the simple things you would expect, like train stations that have things like lifts in them to help particularly the elderly and the disabled get access to public transport. In Doonside and Rooty Hill we are still waiting, and we will be interested to see whether or not in this state budget the government funds it. Funnily enough, it managed to find the funds to help support a candidate who was running for election in the state seat of Seven Hills and it funded the Toongabbie station upgrade, but was unable to find funds in seats that were non-held and which, based on need, should have had them ages ago. I wait to see it, but I doubt very much that this budget will have good news for Doonside and Rooty Hill. If they do, fantastic! But I doubt it.

Also in terms of transport there is nothing there for improving people's access to public transport like, for instance, more commuter parking around train stations. We have federal and state coalition governments working against people by combining cuts, but they will not actually work together to make a difference in our cities, for example, by making access to public transport easier. I constantly have people of Doonside and Rooty Hill saying, 'If there were more facilities to park cars, I would park here and catch trains instead of clogging the M7, M2, M4 and M5,' which happens across Western Sydney, and they all combine to restrict movement in that place. They simply do not get public transport or understand how it can actually free up movement. This is not an either/or proposition. It is not that you build public transport to the detriment of road, and it is not that you build road to the detriment of public transport. The important thing is to have an holistic approach to people movement in Sydney.

Sydney, as I have said previously, has become the Southern Hemisphere's LA. It is becoming exceedingly difficult to move around that city and it will require governments to stump up and make the investments necessary to get people moving. People will continue to move in Sydney; there is nothing you can do about that. You cannot dissuade them from it unless you make it so unliveable and so unbearable that people do not choose to live there.
Frankly, that is not a proscription anyone should consider is worthwhile or worthy of pursuit. I have concerns about that combination from the federal and state level impacting on my area. It cannot be ignored. It is causing people to have a diminished quality of life, but as we have seen from this federal government they will say and do anything to retain power and office, regardless of what impact it has on the people who I care about.

**Youth Employment**

Ms PRICE (Durack) (20:40): It is my pleasure to speak in the grievance debate this evening. I want to talk about something that is very dear to my heart, which is youth affairs.

The youth of Australia are in real need of a strong policy response to unemployment. Young people are the most underemployed demographic in our country, and we need to be putting young people into stable, full-time employment. Sadly, youth unemployment has been rising within Australia over the last two years. One in three unemployed Australians is aged between 18 and 24. With full-time work, many of the social issues associated with young people simply evaporate, as their lives stabilise due to full-time employment. Young people need balance and stability in their lives. This prevents these vulnerable young people from making poor choices with their lives which stem from boredom, such as drug and alcohol abuse and other antisocial behaviour.

The budget this government has just delivered has relieved a lot of the pressure from this growing issue. An unprecedented $331 million was pledged to support young Australians as part of the $5.5 billion Growing Jobs and Small Business package.

A changing employment landscape has meant that the young people of Australia are now not just competing with their classmates for jobs but that they are also competing in a global jobs race against people right across the world for a spot in the Australian jobs market. Because of the desirability of Australia to foreign job seekers—the comparatively high wages, the good quality of living, higher rates of job satisfaction et cetera—many young Australians find it difficult to compete and, sadly, they join the ranks of long-term youth unemployed.

This is where I am pleased to say that the Growing Jobs and Small-Business package can make a big difference to the young people in this country. The package includes $221 million for a new youth Transition To Work program. The program will work closely with community organisations to provide flexible, holistic support to help young job seekers find and maintain jobs or to take up an apprenticeship or even a traineeship.

There is also a supplementary $106 million for the most at-risk young job seekers—those in our communities with a history of mental health concerns and also young, unskilled migrants working here in Australia. This program specifically targets the disengaged youth of Australia—those who are considered to be long-term unemployed youth. By allowing these young people to gain employment, they reduce their impact on our social welfare system and gain the confidence to get on, retrain and also retain employment in the future.

We are a nation of entrepreneurs, and we have one of the highest rates of population starting a small business across the developed world. We have to encourage our young people to go out and start their own businesses when no other opportunities are open to them or simply because that is their choice. There are over 40,000 businesses in Australia registered to people in that 18 to 24 age category, which I think speaks volumes about the innovative nature of Australians. This government has committed $70 million to removing the red tape
around starting a small business, and ensures that those wanting to start a business are not tied down by restrictive set-up costs.

In 2014, only 28 per cent of Australians under 24 were employed in full-time work. Because of the competitiveness of finding a job post study, many students and young people are staying at university longer. The $330 million package will help around 45,000 young people to improve their job prospects. The opposition has, in turn, previously contributed a measly $21 million to combat youth unemployment which, sadly, is 15 times less than the Abbott government's recent contribution. The latest budget illustrates that the Abbott government understands young Australians, and is taking steps to ensure they have the skills and the jobs to prosper and to make their own contribution.

With the short time available to me, I would like to acknowledge a young man who is currently carrying out an internship in my office, and who is largely responsible for the speech that I have just delivered—a young man called Alex Bunney. I would like to thank Alex for his contribution to the electorate office in Durack, and to assure them that he is a very talented young man and he has a very fine future.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** Order! The time for the grievance debate has expired. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192B. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

*Federation Chamber adjourned at 20:45.*
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Department of the Treasury: Commonwealth Grants

(Question No.725)

Mr Conroy asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 23 February 2015:
Further to his answer to question in writing No. 419 (House Hansard. 9 February 2015, page 161), what organisation received the grant, and for what purpose.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Grant recipient: Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII).
Purpose: Annual contribution to support AustLII online free-access resource for Australian legal information.

Brisbane Tender CN2797262

(Question No. 747)

Mr Conroy asked the Assistant Treasurer, in writing, on 5 March 2015
In respect of the $196,000 tender to the Sofitel Brisbane (CN2797262), (a) what event is to be conducted at this hotel, (b) when and where will this event take place, and (c) what is the full itinerary for the event.

Mr Frydenberg: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The 2015 ACCC/AER Regulatory Conference will be held at the Sofitel Brisbane on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th August.
This conference has been held annually since 1999 and is attended by 350-400 delegates, primarily from the Australian telecommunications, electricity, gas, rail, post, water, aviation and ports sectors, their legal and economic advisors, senior staff from the various Australian, State government and New Zealand economic infrastructure regulators, consumer groups and government policy staff.
The theme of the 2015 conference is 'Better regulatory outcomes; less regulatory burden'. The program for this year's conference is being finalised, and will be available on the ACCC/AER website later in March: All of the programs for previous conferences are also at http://www.accc.gov.au/about-us/conferences-events/accc-aer-regulatory-conference.
All costs associated with the conference, including venue hire, are fully recovered through the conference registration fee paid by delegates.

Banks and Lenders: Confidentiality clauses

(Question No.758)

Mr Katter asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 12 May 2015
Will the Treasurer require all trading banks and associated lending authorities to provide to the Australian Parliament through the Treasurer the full and complete wording of all confidentiality clauses inserted into all documentation served on clients in proceedings instigated in the last two years by the lender, or any instructed agent acting on behalf of the lender.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
I do not have the power to compel banks (or other lenders) to provide the wording of confidentiality clauses inserted into documentation arising from proceedings instigated by them (or their agents). In particular, such a power is not provided for in the Banking Act 1959, the Corporations Act 2001, or the Competition and Consumer Act 2010.
Where a party to a dispute alleges that a breach of the law has occurred, these should be referred to the relevant regulator. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission are invested with a broad range of powers to gather information to determine whether a breach has occurred and to take appropriate action.

**Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak**

*(Question No. 763)*

**Mr Kelvin Thomson:** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 12 May 2015:

(1) In respect of advice from her department that as of 11 am on 27 February 2015 there were 21 confirmed cases that meet the reporting case definition for the Hepatitis A outbreak linked to the frozen berries consumption (8 in Queensland, 7 in New South Wales, 3 in Victoria, 1 in Western Australia, 1 in the Australian Capital Territory and 1 in South Australia), have there been further cases of Hepatitis A reported that are potentially linked with the frozen berries.

(2) What advice has she received in respect of the potential number of people who could come forward with symptoms and diagnosis of Hepatitis A as a result of consuming potentially infected berries imported from China.

**Ms Ley:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) As at 4 June 2015, there have been 33 cases of hepatitis A that reported consumption of Nanna's frozen mixed berries. These include: 14 in Queensland, 11 in New South Wales, four in Victoria, two in Western Australia, one in the Australian Capital Territory and one in South Australia. One case from Queensland that was previously included has since been excluded after follow-up.

Of these 33 cases, the specimens for 28 have been genotyped and found to be genetically identical, indicating the hepatitis A virus came from a common source. Of the five specimens that were not genetically identical: one had a different genetic sequence likely to have been obtained overseas; two had different sequences but had not travelled and were, therefore, thought to be locally acquired from other sources; and two were unable to be genotyped as they were diagnosed on serology only.

Another six specimens from cases of hepatitis A virus infection were also found to be genetically identical. Of these: one reported eating frozen berries but could not recall the brand; three were infected through close contact with cases who had reported eating Nanna's frozen mixed berries (secondary cases); one case was unsure if they had eaten any berries; and the aforementioned case from Queensland who denied eating any berries.

(2) The maximum period between eating contaminated food and development of symptoms of hepatitis A infection is 50 days. The onset of symptoms for the last case of hepatitis A that reported eating Nanna's frozen mixed berries was 25 March 2015. On 27 May 2015, it was 100 days since the voluntary recalls of the implicated product, or two maximum incubation periods of the hepatitis A virus, making further berry-associated cases of hepatitis A highly unlikely. As such, OzFoodNet and Communicable Diseases Network Australia agreed to stand down the active multi-jurisdictional outbreak investigation from this date.

**Brisbane Event Tender CN2949242**

*(Question No. 764)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on: 12 May 2015

In respect of the $30,000.00 tender to the Hilton Hotel Brisbane for an event (CN2949242),

(a) what is the event,

(b) how many people will attend,

(c) what is the full itinerary, including the menu for catering, and
(d) what is the total cost of all associated activities.

**Mr Morrison:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The events held at the Hilton Hotel Brisbane on 31 March and 1 April 2015 were the Aged Care Changes briefings.

These events were part of the 2015 Aged Care Changes national roadshow to communicate the changes coming into effect from 1 July 2015. The roadshow was targeted at aged care providers and other interested stakeholders. It was presented by officers from the Department of Social Services with a representative from the Department of Human Services also attending the sector briefings to present an update on the aged care payment system.

(b) The total number of people who attended was 686 (31 March – 362; and 1 April – 324).

(c) The Brisbane Aged Care sector briefings were full-day events. The agenda for the days follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00am</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15am – 10:15am</td>
<td>Session 1 (Home Care Packages – Consumer Directed Care)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15am – 10:45am</td>
<td>Session 2 (Department of Human Services)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11am – 1:00pm</td>
<td>Session 3 (My Aged Care + new system showcase)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30pm – 2:30pm</td>
<td>Session 3 continues (My Aged Care)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:45pm – 4:45pm</td>
<td>Session 4 (Commonwealth Home Support Programme)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:45pm – 5:00pm</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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The catering consisted of morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

(d) The total cost for both events was $70,745.25. The $30,000 initial contract was the deposit for the two Brisbane events. The contract was amended to reflect the total cost once known.

**Farmed Deer Industry in Victoria**

*(Question No. 777)*

**Ms McGowan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 12 May 2015:

In respect of levies collected pursuant to the *Deer Slaughter Levy Act 1992* and a project involving the farmed deer industry in Victoria that is looking at ways of upgrading the lairage area of Radfords abattoir in Warragul, Victoria, (a) what amounts of the levied funds are being allocated by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) to support this project, and (b) if none of these levied funds are being allocated by the RIRDC to support this project, to what projects are they being allocated.

**Mr Joyce:** The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) RIRDC is not investing deer industry levies to fund the aforementioned project.

(b) RIRDC is not currently allocating any deer industry levies to projects.

RIRDC’s Deer Reference Panel recommends projects to RIRDC to be funded from industry levies. The Panel is not currently considering any projects.

The *Deer Slaughter Levy Act 1992* was repealed in 1999. The current deer slaughter levy is imposed under the *Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999*