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SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH 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,
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 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 Griffths Hall MP and Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP

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<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<tr>
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## PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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—(Question No. 451) ............................................................................................................. 3348
Cadbury Factory Upgrade—(Question No. 678) ................................................................. 3348
The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition (Sunset Extension) Bill 2015
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2014
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Designated Coastal Waters) Bill 2014
Excess Exploration Credit Tax Bill 2014
Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Amendment (Direct Lending and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 5) Bill 2014
Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 7) Bill 2014
Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2015

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

COMMITTEES
Public Works Committee
Approval of Work

Mr MCCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (12:01): 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: Hamilton Island Replacement Fire Station Project.

As I advised the House when referring this project to the Public Works Committee, Airservices Australia is proposing to construct a new aviation rescue and firefighting facility at Hamilton Island. The facility will include new fire tender bays, maintenance facilities, a fire control centre, office facilities, amenities and associated storage.

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 which is fit for purpose and expedient to carry out. The government expects all agencies to understand and comply with their obligations under the Public Works Committee Act 1969. As recommended by the
committee, my department will shortly be writing to agencies to remind them of their obligations and the important oversight role which the committee plays.

On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for once again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction is expected to commence in mid-2015 and be completed on all sites by mid-2016. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Economics Committee

Report

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (12:03): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics I present the committee's report entitled Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia annual report 2014 (first report), together with the minutes of proceedings, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

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

Mr ALEXANDER: by leave—This report follows a hearing with the governor and other senior officials of the RBA on 13 February in Hurstville, Sydney. The RBA lowered the official interest rate last month from 2.5 per cent to 2.25 per cent, the first rate change in 18 months. At our hearing with the RBA last month, the governor commented that this decision was taken because of a more sustained period of below trend growth than previously forecast. A higher peak in unemployment and slightly lower inflation also contributed to the decision.

The lower interest rate is expected to provide some support to demand in the short term although the governor noted at the hearing that the capacity for monetary policy to do so is perhaps lower than it used to be. The non-resources sector and Australia's growing trade partnerships with Asia are most likely to generate GDP growth in the long-term. Current labour conditions in Australia are still somewhat subdued and the unemployment rate is now expected to peak later than previously anticipated.

The RBA commented at the February hearing that, as growth is likely to remain at current levels for longer than was hoped, the unemployment rate may rise slightly in the near term. The Australian dollar has depreciated considerably against the US dollar in recent months, and this is expected to benefit the traded sectors of the economy. However, the RBA has commented that our dollar still remains above most estimates of its fundamental value. The exchange rate is therefore expected to adjust further, and the governor informed the committee that this will depend to a large degree on how far the terms of trade fall.

It is encouraging to note the governor's view that productivity growth has begun to improve, but it will be important to see further increases in productivity going forward. The committee also noted with interest the governor's view that Australia's public sector debt needs to remain low if we want to have scope to expand fiscal policy in the event of future global financial shocks.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Mr Glenn Stevens, and other representatives of the RBA for appearing before the committee on 13 February 2015. I would also like to thank my committee colleagues, including the member
for Chifley in his capacity as deputy chair, and the secretariat for all their hard work and support. I commend the report to the House.

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

Mr ALEXANDER: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (12:07): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee

Report

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (12:07): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, I present the following reports together with the minutes of proceedings: Revisiting recognition: report on the roundtable with Australian South Sea islanders and Roundtable on surrogacy.

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

Mr CHRISTENSEN: by leave—The first report I presented is in relation to Australian South Sea islanders. Australian South Sea islanders are the Australian-born descendants of Pacific island labourers brought to Australia in the 19th century. Although some South Sea islanders came to Australia by choice, many were tricked by recruiters or kidnapped and brought here by force. Most worked in difficult conditions in the Queensland cane fields, and those who remained in Australia after Federation faced ongoing racial discrimination and harsh treatment throughout the 20th century. Some would say they were treated as slaves.

In 1994 the Australian government recognised Australian South Sea islanders as a unique and distinct ethnic group and accepted that Australian South Sea islander people suffer from severe social and economic disadvantage as a result of that racial discrimination. Recognition occurred in the government's response to the 1992 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report entitled The call for recognition: a report on the situation of Australian South Sea islanders.

Last year, to mark the 20th anniversary of recognition, the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee of this House held a roundtable discussion with leaders of the Australian South Sea Islander community. The committee wanted to hear from Australian South Sea islanders about how far Australia has progressed towards the goals set out in that HREOC report. At the roundtable, the committee heard that little has changed for Australian South Sea islander people in the 20 years since recognition. As a result, the committee wrote to six government ministers to seek advice on how the HREOC report's recommendations and the government's response were implemented and to seek advice on any current policies or programs that relate to the Australian South Sea Islander community. What we found was little evidence of ongoing efforts to address South Sea islander's economic and social disadvantage.
Australian South Sea islanders still experience real social and economic disadvantage. They struggle to access government services and programs, and their culture is not acknowledged sufficiently by the Australian government. More needs to be done to ensure that the long history of injustice faced by this unique group of Australians does not continue. Consequently, the committee has recommended the formation of a taskforce to progress outcomes for Australian South Sea islanders and to regularly report back on outcomes.

I would like to thank members of the committee, especially my deputy chair—who is here in the chamber—the member for Newcastle. I also thank the secretariat, under Dr Anna Dacre, for their work on this inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

The second report follows the committee's roundtable on surrogacy. The desire to be a parent is one that is felt by people of all backgrounds, all genders and all cultures. Unfortunately, one in six Australian couples have infertility issues. With advances in modern science and assisted reproductive technology, surrogacy is becoming an increasingly widespread means of family formation for those who wish to have children.

Domestic surrogacy arrangements are regulated by a patchwork of state and territory legislation, which can be difficult to understand and comply with. International surrogacy often occurs in countries with, I have to say, less robust regulatory and health standards and may, in some cases—certainly in some cases that were discussed during the roundtable—be exploitative. These international surrogacy arrangements engage Australia's human rights obligations and domestic immigration and citizenship law.

The committee's roundtable, which was conducted over two sessions, examined both the Australian government's role in surrogacy matters and the views of experts and practitioners working in the field considering legal, social, economic, scientific and medical issues. At the roundtable, the committee was struck by the diversity of views, the lack of regulatory clarity and the number of welfare and ethical issues relating to both domestic and international surrogacy practices.

The key issues that were raised at our roundtable on surrogacy were the sensitivity of terminology used to describe surrogacy; the questions of informed consent; potential exploitation, compensatory payments, rights and protections for all parties involved, including, in particular, the rights of the child to know their biological parentage; domestic and international legal and human rights considerations; and, finally, the adequacy of Australia's IVF providers and regulatory framework.

The roundtable highlighted the need for a more comprehensive examination of these issues and a more coordinated response to the growth of surrogacy arrangements. As a result, the committee recommends that the Attorney-General refer an inquiry into the regulatory and legislative framework around both domestic and international surrogacy arrangements. In presenting this report, the committee would like to emphasise its great appreciation for those who participated in the committee's roundtable. Again, I thank the rest of my committee, particularly the deputy chair, for the work that has been done on this—and also, foremost—the secretariat staff who are currently sitting in the gallery. I thank them very much for their efforts in compiling these two reports.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (12:14): by leave—I would to make a few brief comments regarding the two reports that have just been tabled. I want to put my comments on the record,
following comments by my chair, the member for Dawson, regarding the two roundtables that the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee has recently conducted.

Firstly, I will speak about the inquiry report regarding Revisiting recognition: report on the roundtable with Australian South Sea Islanders, which was a report on the roundtable that we held with Australian South Sea Islanders. In addition to that appalling colonial history that the chair has mapped out, I would like to say how instructive it was to take evidence directly from Australian South Sea Islanders during that roundtable. Really, it reaffirmed what the committee had been hearing in evidence previously—just how little progress we have made in the 20 years since that formal recognition of Australian South Sea Islanders—and showed some of the ongoing hurt that this has caused a number of people in that community.

There was a particular concern when we wrote to each of the ministers who had some portfolio responsibilities in this area to ask, 'Could you please let us know how far you have got in terms of implementing the HREOC recommendations of 20 years ago?' The disturbing fact was that not only had little progress been made but there was the inability of many departments actually to track that progress now because records have been lost or mislaid. So part of the committee's recommendation was about making sure that we do not again lose sight of how we go about implementing recommendations that have been made; that we have a good system in place for continuous monitoring of achievements. That is why part of that recommendation—I think from the conclusion of the committee—was that not only do we acknowledge that the social and economic situation of Australian South Sea Islanders is now a matter of national concern—as it should be—but the committee itself will continue to monitor the Australian government's policies in relation to South Sea Islander peoples here in Australia. I think that is the important part of our recommendation there.

In relation to that, I also pay tribute to the efforts of the committee secretariat to ensure that our communications with the wider Australian community were as effective as they could possibly be. In particular, I draw the House's attention to the podcast, which was a recording of evidence taken during that roundtable discussion with Australian South Sea Islanders. They had expressed concerns—as the chair pointed out—about the little progress that had been made towards the goals of recognition since 1994. That podcast, importantly, is accompanied by a really remarkable collection of archival photographs depicting the lived experience of Australian South Sea Islander peoples here in this nation.

Now, just briefly in relation to the second report that the chair has tabled—the roundtable on surrogacy. In addition to comments made by the chair, the committee absolutely acknowledges that the issues around surrogacy are broad and complex, and have wide-ranging effects for all parties involved. Certainly, one thing that has become obvious is that there are rapidly-increasing numbers of Australians pursuing surrogacy options in overseas jurisdictions. In turn, that has really highlighted for us the inadequacy of Australia's domestic legislation and also the obligations of Australia as a good international citizen.

In closing—so as not to take up too much of the time of the House—I do want to reiterate the committee's appreciation for all of those people who participated in both roundtables. I thank all participants for giving so generously of their time, their knowledge and their personal, lived experience. Their input is an integral part of the committee's work. Likewise I again thank the committee secretariat, under the very steady leadership of Dr Anna Dacre. The secretariat's hard work and diligence helps to keep us on track and on time.
I would also like to put on record our particular thanks to the now-outgoing inquiry secretary, Mr Thomas Gregory, for his work on the revisiting recognition roundtable in particular, and to welcome the new inquiry secretary, Mr Muzammil Ali, and to thank him for his efforts with regard to the roundtable on surrogacy.

The committee looks forward to working together on a future inquiry into the regulatory and legislative framework around both domestic and international surrogacy arrangements. We trust that the Attorney-General will accept the committee's recommendation and refer this inquiry to our committee as a matter of priority.

I commend both reports to the House.

BILLS
Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Second Reading

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

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (12:20): I rise to oppose the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

In December last year the Federal Court made a determination that the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992 not only covers registered ships trading interstate or overseas but also extends to cover all employees on all registered ships if they are owned by an Australian trading corporation, an Australian financial corporation or a foreign corporation. This decision applies no matter whether they are trading in Australia or what the business of the ship may be, and that includes ships engaged in intrastate work. The government asserts the necessity for this bill arises because of that decision: Samson Maritime Pty Ltd v Aucote 22 December 2014.

Labor acknowledges this decision has created uncertainty in the industry, an uncertainty that needs to be resolved, and we acknowledge that has to be done as expeditiously as possible. That is why we worked cooperatively with the government to expedite a Senate committee process to investigate the proposed bill. However, what the Senate committee process—in particular matters raised in the dissenting report—has revealed is that the current bill is not the solution. The government has clearly not conducted a genuine consultative process in the drafting of this legislation. Key employer bodies and unions were not adequately consulted. The Australian Shipowners Association, I am advised, were not consulted and were not even invited to submit their views to the Senate inquiry. There was no bona fide consultation with the Maritime Union of Australia. To quote from the submission by another union, the Australian Maritime Officers Union, to the Senate inquiry:

Notwithstanding the fact that the AMOU is one of the three unions representing workers who will be directly affected by this legislation, our comment on the Bill was not sought by Government or any relevant Departments or Agencies prior to its introduction into the Parliament.

The government has been caught unprepared and has sought to hastily respond with an ill-conceived bill that may well leave workers worse off. The opposition believes it is absolutely incumbent on the government to meet with industry, employer organisation and employee
organisations to arrive at a sensible solution—something that, we would argue, it has not sought to do. This must be done as a matter of urgency, as a sensible resolution to this is critical for the industry.

The government asserts that the bill will restore the alleged shared understanding of the operation and coverage of the seafarers act prior to the Federal Court decision of last year. Labor believes that this bill goes further than simply restoring that alleged pre-Federal-Court consensus. As the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Federal Court decisions indicate, there was never an existing consensus, and indeed there has never existed an intention that the seafarers act would only cover a very limited cohort of seafarers, as outlined in this bill.

The intent of this bill is to make the legislation only applicable to ships undertaking a voyage of interstate or overseas trade. This goes much further than anything which arises out of the Aucote decision. It must be remembered that the seafarers authority, Mr Aucote's employer and the insurer all believed Mr Aucote to be covered by the act before there was an apparent reconsideration. The insertion of 'directly and substantially', which were the exact words put by counsel for the employer in the Aucote case, is likely to create further confusion about the way in which coverage is interpreted and therefore not resolve the existing uncertainty. As the Maritime Union have noted in their submission to the Senate inquiry: Only those vessels which can be said to be explicitly involved in interstate or overseas trade will be clearly within the scope of the Act … Vessels which operate in mixed intra-state and inter-state activities will be in limbo.

On top of restricting section 19(1), the government is proposing to repeal essential elements of coverage provisions in sections 19(2), 19(3), 19(4) and 19(5) of the 1992 act. These provisions are crucial in clarifying the powers of the Commonwealth to legislate in respect of seafarers. The government's changes would limit the application of 22-year-old legislation.

Given the government's bill proposes to limit the application of the Seacare scheme, it is important to consider that state and territory legislation is not equivalent to the seafarers act as the government claims. State and territory schemes are in some cases inferior. This raises the very real and distinct prospect of workers being worse off as a result of this bill. A compelling example provided to the Senate Inquiry was that under one of the state schemes, if a seafarer aged 30 with a dependent wife and child is permanently incapacitated, he will exhaust his compensation payments after only two years. This worker would then be forced to turn, most likely, to social security and would be on a disability support pension, most likely for the rest of his life. However, under the seafarers act this same worker, if required, would be entitled to ongoing weekly compensation payments as a proportion of his ordinary wages until the age of 65. This legislation therefore would deny existing and future workers their rights and ensure that they would be potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars worse off.

That is the concern that the opposition have. We do believe, with the government, that this is a matter that needs to be determined, we do not accept that the matter is settled by the Federal Court, and we do therefore think that there has to be an expeditious process to settlement. But we do not believe that this bill lands that settlement, because of the likelihood that existing entitlements will be denied by the enactment of this legislation.

Labor understands that the Seacare authority is intending to grant a transitional exemption that aims to provide certainty to maritime industry stakeholders on their workers compensation arrangements while the government considers long-term arrangements.
following the decision. Given the opportunity this exemption creates, the government should expeditiously convene a meeting with the industry to arrive at a sensible solution to end the uncertainty created by the decision for employers and employees. We believe that, by engaging with industry, the government can ensure that employer insurers are not overburdened by any consequences arising from the Federal Court decision but also ensure that seafarers are not disadvantaged in their rights and entitlements.

So we would implore the government to take that advice and convene a meeting of industry. Labor would be happy to work with the government if it chooses to meet with industry to achieve a sensible resolution. We believe that through genuine talks with industry it will be obvious if a particular party is seeking to frustrate the process. Whoever that party is, we would not accept that behaviour, because of the importance of this matter. Therefore we would suggest that through that process there will be a capacity for the government to reconcile the differences within industry, if they are outstanding, and indeed seek to rectify this position. In the conversations I have had with all stakeholders, whilst there are points of difference, the clear view of those stakeholders is that they want this matter resolved, and I do not believe anyone will do anything other than properly and genuinely discuss this matter in order to find a proper settlement for the industry, for the employers and, indeed, for the workforce.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (12:29): I am delighted to speak about the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 because this bill ensures the continued viability of the Seacare scheme by returning the coverage of the scheme to what it has been commonly understood to be since its commencement in 1993—and dating back, in fact, to 1911 under the Seamen's Compensation Act. Importantly, the bill seeks to ensure that all previous claims lodged under the scheme, between 1993 and now, continue to be valid. These claims are currently at risk as a result of a court decision, and I will come back to that in a moment.

Although I may represent a land locked electorate, as a member of the coalition backbench committee on employment I can assure you that this bill is absolutely necessary to secure the rights of workers to workers compensation. It will return those rights to what they had been widely understood to be by maritime industry regulators and participants prior to the Federal Court's decision in Samson Maritime Pty Ltd v Aucote, the Aucote decision.

The Aucote decision has resulted in a profound shift in workers compensation and work health and safety arrangements in the Australian maritime industry under the Seacare workers compensation scheme. Before the Aucote decision, the Seacare scheme was understood to apply to around 330 ships. Following the decision, the Seacare scheme could cover as many as 11,000 ships—from 330 to 11,000—or even more, with potential retrospective effect going back to 1993.

Where the Commonwealth was responsible for regulating workers compensation and work health and safety for a small proportion of the maritime industry before the decision, it now has responsibility for the vast majority of the industry—from 330 to 11,000 or more. This responsibility cannot be supported from existing resources, as the scheme and its funding were never designed to accommodate such costs. It represents a massive cost shift from the states to the Commonwealth—at a time when of course the Commonwealth cannot afford it—
and could require the recouping of insurance fees and money from formerly injured workers going back to 1993, which is something we clearly do not want to see.

The bill therefore seeks to restore the distinction between Commonwealth and state coverage of workers compensation and work health and safety for seafarers that has existed—at least, as we understood it—since 1911. To effectively achieve this, the bill applies to any injury, loss or damage suffered by any employee on or after the commencement of the seafarers act in 1993. Critically, this will ensure that past claims will not be disturbed. The approach ensures that there is certainty as to what a seafarer's appropriate workers compensation rights are and have been. The bill does not seek to change pre-existing workers compensation entitlements and work health and safety protections. The bill is about providing certainty and ensuring that seafarers have proper protections without transferring responsibilities from the states to the Commonwealth and therefore threatening the financial viability of the existing compensation scheme.

Unfortunately, Labor's reckless approach in opposing this bill will see workers worse off. It will lead to great uncertainty about the coverage of work health and safety laws in the industry, and it will mean that there is no safety regulator that is equipped to deal with the size and scale of the sector.

The Seacare scheme has been commonly understood to apply to ships and units engaged in interstate or international trade. Ships and units engaged in intrastate trade—that is, those operating solely or primarily within the coastal waters of a single state—were understood to be covered by state workers compensation and work health and safety laws. This approach to coverage was consistent with the coverage of the Seamen's Compensation Act 1911, which established the Australia's first national workers compensation scheme for seafarers. Based on this understanding, the Seacare scheme applied to approximately 33 employers and 7,516 employees, or 4,721 full-time equivalents, in 2013-14—about 20 per cent of the Australian maritime industry.

Submissions received to the review of the Seacare scheme undertaken by Mr Robin Stewart-Crompton and published in 2013 provide evidence that industry participants had a narrow view of the coverage of the scheme. Everyone thought they knew what this scheme covered and what it did, and the industry was happy with that. The joint submission of the Maritime Union of Australia and the Australian Maritime Officers Union called for coverage of the Seacare scheme to be expanded, demonstrating that those unions were of the view that intrastate trade or commence was not at that time covered by the scheme. So they recognised where it stood at the time.

Approximately 12,000 seafarers who were previously understood to be covered by state workers compensation and work health and safety laws are, in the light of the Aucote decision, covered by the Seacare scheme. Under the seafarers act, employers are required to maintain an insurance policy to cover their liabilities. Failure to comply with this obligation is a criminal offence of strict liability. Employers of seafarers on intrastate voyages would have been acting in good faith on the basis that they were covered by state workers compensation laws and fulfilling obligations under those laws. As a consequence, they would have been and most likely still are maintaining insurance policies, whether private or from the relevant state authority, under the state schemes. In addition to expenses incurred in relation to moving
between workers compensation schemes, employers will also incur regulatory costs adjusting to the rights and responsibilities under the OHS(MI) Act.

The bill will address the impact on employers by returning their legislative obligations to what they were understood to have been before the Aucote decision. It will address the potential liability of employers for penalties for not maintaining the correct insurance policy under the scheme and for not providing returns to the Seacare Authority for the purpose of paying the fund levy. The amendments in the bill, which have retrospective effect, will prevent employers being found guilty of these strict liability offences.

The expanded coverage of the scheme impacts on the regulation of safety. Comcare and AMSA are not funded or resourced to immediately take on the role of administering a substantially larger Seacare scheme. As a result of Aucote, state work health and safety regulators do not have the power to continue enforcing state work health and safety laws on ships for intrastate voyages. This lack of enforcement potentially jeopardises safety in a high-risk industry. The decision also raises questions about the validity of enforcement action taken by state work health and safety regulators.

Further, the OHS(MI) Act has not been substantially amended since its enactment in 1993 and now reflects an outdated approach to work health and safety regulation in comparison to the majority of other Australian jurisdictions. The act requires revision to align it with the model work health and safety laws developed by Safe Work Australia. The majority of states and territories have updated their laws to align with the model.

The model work health and safety laws contain several improvements including broader duties of care, broader obligations for worker consultation and representation, graduated measures for securing compliance, positive officer duties and higher criminal penalties for non-compliance.

The Seacare scheme has the highest rate of serious injury of any Australian work health and safety jurisdiction. In the 2011-12 period the Seacare scheme had a serious injury rate of 36.6 serious injuries per 1,000 employees. While this was a reduction on previous years, it is still markedly higher than the national rate of 11.1 per 1,000 or with the performance of other dangerous industries such as: agriculture, 20.9; mining, 17.1; and construction, 17.5. In comparison, the Seacare scheme is at 36.6.

The Aucote decision impacts on seafarers in terms of which workers compensation scheme—Commonwealth, state or territory—covers them. Workers' compensation schemes across Australia vary substantially, making it difficult to assess whether one particular scheme is better or more generous than another.

To determine if an injured seafarer would receive greater benefits under the Seacare scheme, a number of factors need to be considered including: the injured seafarer's wages; their level of impairment; their subjective preferences for weekly compensation payments or a lump sum payment; and their ability to return to work.

In some circumstances, the Seacare scheme does provide more generous benefits to injured workers, in comparison to other Australian workers' compensation schemes. For example, the scheme pays an employee 100 per cent of pre-injury weekly earnings for the first 45 weeks they are unable to work, a high rate and substantially longer period of maximum benefits than most other workers' compensation schemes in Australia.
However, the Seacare scheme's rehabilitation and return to work performance is substantially worse than other Australian workers' compensation schemes. The average durable return to work rate across all Australian workers' compensation schemes for 2013-14 period was 79 per cent, while the Seacare scheme saw only 64 per cent.

Another impact of the Aucote decisions for seafarers is the likelihood of calls on the fund increasing. This is both because there are now more seafarers in the scheme and because previously injured employees could make claims under the scheme for old injuries against an employer that no longer exists or is unable to pay.

We have actuarial advice that the fund contains sufficient money to meet expected future liabilities, although its current levels are based on expected future liabilities for a scheme covering ships which are directly and substantially engaged in interstate and international trade and commerce, not including intrastate. If the fund is depleted, seafarers who are injured will face significant delays in receiving compensation for injuries or may not be able to obtain any compensation at all, so we are faced with a very grave situation and a very grave risk from this massive expansion of the scheme as a result of the Aucote decision.

The bill restores the coverage to how it was understood to be, prior to the Aucote decisions. Employees on intrastate voyages will remain covered by state workers' compensation and work health and safety laws. This is absolutely central to understand. They will still be covered by the state workers' compensation schemes. The bill will ensure the effective regulation of work health and safety by regulators which are resourced to undertake compliance and enforcement action, and it ensures that no seafarer will lose any workers' compensation payments they have received nor will they face a reduction in workers' compensation payments they are receiving. By returning the operation of the Seacare scheme to the status quo, the previous understanding, the bill prevents significant funding impacts on regulators and agencies, which are not equipped to deal with those impacts.

One of the effects of the Aucote decisions was to put the validity of paid premiums by employers to state workers' compensation schemes along with claims made to and payments made by those insurance schemes in doubt. Given that payments under state or territory workers' compensation laws are arguably invalid due to the overriding operation of federal workers' compensation law there remains the ability, unless the amendments are made, for claims to also be made under the Seafarers Act and for insurance funds to be drawn on to finance these claims.

The effect of this bill would be to return coverage to what it has always been understood to be thereby preventing claims for past injuries on insurers that they could never have anticipated. The Commonwealth will continue to work with the states and territories to address the validity of past claims made under state or territory workers' compensation schemes. To effectively achieve this, the bill applies to any injury, loss or damage suffered by any employee on or after the commencement of the Seafarers Act in 1993. That will ensure that past claims will not be disturbed and will also ensure that there is certainty as to what a seafarer's appropriate workers' compensation rights are and have been. This bill is about providing certainty and ensuring seafarers have proper protections without transferring responsibilities from the states to the Commonwealth and threatening the financial viability of the existing compensation scheme.
I call on all in this chamber to support the bill and to allow urgent passage through the parliament to ensure that the safety of the workers in the sector is not compromised. Any delay will see chaos in the sector for workers and for regulators.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (12:43): I would like to contest the fundamental premise that we have heard from the previous speaker—that this is a matter that needs to be urgently rushed through the parliament because we have just recently had a case determined which has created a great deal of uncertainty and therefore we need to act with great haste here, in a way that is quite extraordinary. We are proposing a major change to a superannuation scheme without any consultation with the industry, with the unions or with the affected employees. We are told this is because the Aucote case was decided in December and this problem was revealed. As the government has analysed it, this extends the coverage to say that employees in shipping that is engaged substantially in intrastate trade are also covered by the current Seacare scheme.

It is important to understand that the government have had plenty of notice that this was an issue. Back in May 2014, there was a decision in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal that found very much what was reconfirmed in the Federal Court. So the government had notice more than six months ago that there was this question of interpretation of this piece of legislation. They had ample time to take action to ensure that they brought all parties together—that they brought the government together with the shipping industry and with the affected unions—and worked out a consensus approach. But they did not do that. They sat on their hands for the intervening seven months that this was before the Federal Court and took no action. I think that is not just a case of complacency but it goes to a problem that we see deeply entrenched in this government in many areas of endeavour, and that is an absolute loathing of the tripartite process.

I think I have spoken here before in this House about this. Many economists have analysed why economies like Germany's have done much better than one would have expected in the circumstances, and it is substantially attributed—whether there is a conservative or a progressive government in place in Germany—to a commitment to these tripartite structures. That has enabled Germany to respond with much greater flexibility to a whole variety of economic challenges that it has faced. But what we have here, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, is an intellectually very primitive government that is motivated primarily by an anti-union ideology and is simply unable to do that grown-up thing of bringing all parts of industry together to work through a process. From my experience of dealing with maritime unions, if you adopt that approach, if you bring them onto a platform with industry and all the players, you can achieve progress.

First of all, the case that has been made by the government that this is a matter of urgency that needs to be dealt with now is disingenuous, because they had a good seven months notice prior to the decision of the full court of the Federal Court that this was an issue in play. Indeed, even given that they did nothing, there is no reason now why we cannot take that approach—get all the players together and negotiate some outcomes here. The government claim—a point that was made by the government's lead speaker on this matter—that we still have uncertainty. Now whether or not a ship is engaged 'directly and substantially' in interstate or international shipping becomes the defining point at which a vessel comes under the seafarers act. That is itself not going to be very clear. In the Western Australian case,
where we have traditionally had—and no doubt we will once again have, when we have
Labor governments back in—coastal shipping routes—

Ms Price: Ha! I look forward to that!

Ms MacTiernan: That is right. That was when we had enlightened governments in
Western Australia that recognised the importance of this for regional WA. But a traditional
coastal shipping company service running through the coastal ports of WA would often go
into the Northern Territory. You could argue that that is 'directly' engaged in interstate—even
though it is a territory—trade, but is it 'substantially' engaged in interstate trade if, for
example, five of the ports that it goes to are Western Australian ports and it goes on to one
port in the Northern Territory? It might cross the threshold for 'directly', but does it cross the
threshold for 'substantially'? Suggesting that this rushed bill, with its 'directly and
substantially' provision, is going to provide clarity is not a no-brainer. There is still real
uncertainty.

There has also got to be some logic about whether or not this is a good system. We have
the government coming in here very often talking about the need for national consistency, the
need for there to be a clear pathway. Many of the coastal shipping activities in Western
Australia, for example, are involved in the offshore oil and gas industry—both exploration
and actual offshore oil and gas production. So we have rig tenders, which service both the
exploration and the drilling rigs; seismic vessels; and exploration vessels. And, of course,
when FLNG commences, there will be vessels going and servicing those facilities.

It is a very interesting delineation because we know that, for example, if we look at the
Torosa field in the Browse Basin, that was considered up until a few months ago—and I think
passing through this parliament—to be out of state waters and in Commonwealth waters, so it
would have been covered by the seafarers act. But due to some detailed surveying of the land,
we found what had been mislabelled as the 'golden rocks'. These golden rocks meant that the
Torosa retention lease actually turns out to be substantially in WA coastal waters, and these
are a series of rocks no bigger than a large
table that have changed the boundary of
Commonwealth and state waters. So, a vessel might be going out to deal with the Browse
Basin—doing exploration in the Browse Basin—and one day it would have been considered
to have been in Commonwealth waters, and now it is considered to be in WA waters.

Suddenly, if the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2015 passes, we find that the sets of circumstances that regulate the long-
term welfare, compensation and entitlements of the respective seafarers will change. That
seems to me to be quite implausible. You might have, for example, someone taking the ship
out to the Prelude—taking a vessel out from Broome to the Prelude lease—and they will be
on one set of formulations and the same person, doing exactly the same work, if the next time
around they are rostered on a vessel that is going out to that part of the Browse Basin, to the
Torosa lease, for example, will have a very different compensation regime. That does not
seem to be very sensible to me. It does not seem to be in keeping with the sort of logic that we
often use to argue that we need to have a consistent set of workplace practices and workplace
arrangements across similar circumstances.

As I say, an increasing amount of the coastal shipping in WA is servicing the offshore oil
and gas industry, and this is going to create a really quite bizarre situation of the same people,
depending on what ship they are rostered on for a particular timeslot, having very, very
different workers compensation entitlements. There is no case for this bill to be rushed through. It is important to ensure that we have some certainty and clarity, but this is something that needs to be properly worked out through a tripartite process taking in to account all these myriad factors. It should not be something that is rushed through because of an ideological inability for this government to participate in tripartite forums.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (12:56): I am pleased to continue the conversation about my electorate of Durack. I too rise to support Amendments to the Seafarers Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Bill 2015. The electorate of Durack hosts some of the busiest ports in Australia, including Port Hedland, Dampier, Karratha and Geraldton, and all seafaring matters are of paramount importance to my constituents, as they are to me.

The bill relates to workers compensation claims made under the seafarers act dating back to 1993. The amendments will ensure confidence in these past claims; the technical amendments to the bill will provide certainty that these past workers compensation claims are not disturbed. The amendments that we are debating will serve to rectify and clarify. The legislation will ensure that the seafarers act and the relevant OH&S act actually align with the historical understanding of aspects of the act.

By way of background, this legislation arises from a Federal Court decision in the Samson Maritime Pty Ltd v Aucote which resulted in a substantial shift in workers compensation and work health and safety arrangements in the Australian maritime industry. This bill will ensure the continued viability of the Seacare scheme by reinstating the coverage of the scheme to what it has been commonly understood to be since its commencement in 1993. Importantly, this bill seeks to ensure that all previous claims lodged under the scheme, between 1993 to now, continue to be valid. In addition, the bill seeks to restore the distinction between Commonwealth and state coverage of workers compensation and work health and safety for seafarers that has existed since 1911.

It is worth underlining the point that this bill does not seek to change pre-existing workers compensation entitlements and the work health and safety protections of seafarers. This bill addresses the impact on employers by returning their legislative obligations to what they had been understood to be. Additionally, this bill addresses the potential liability of employers for penalties for not maintaining the correct insurance policy under the scheme and for not providing returns to the Seacare Authority for the purpose of paying the fund levy.

There is an urgent need for this bill to be passed by the parliament, to provide clarity and certainty. Without this legislation there will continue to be uncertainty about the coverage of work health and safety laws, and it will mean that there is no safety regulator in the industry equipped to deal with the size and scale of this very large and important sector.

Workers compensation schemes across Australia vary substantially making it difficult to assess whether one particular scheme is better, or more generous, than another. In some circumstances, the Seacare scheme does provide more generous benefits to injured workers in comparison to other Australian workers compensation schemes. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal held the view that work which was preparatory or incidental to interstate or international trade or commerce was considered to be covered by the Seacare scheme. The Federal Court has subsequently upheld this view and declared that:

1. The Seacare scheme applies to all seafarers employed by a trading, financial or foreign corporation on a prescribed ship and;
2. To operators of prescribed ships that are a trading, financial or foreign corporation.

The majority of employers and operators within the maritime industry are either trading or foreign corporations. As such, the practical consequences of this broad interpretation are that the Seacare scheme extends to the majority of the Australian maritime industry, including ships and units which primarily operate within a single state. This decision is at odds with the convention that state workers compensation and work health and safety laws cover ships operating within a single state.

Employers of seafarers on intrastate voyages would have been acting in good faith on the basis that they were covered by state workers compensation laws and fulfilling obligations under those laws. As a consequence, they would have been—and most likely still are—maintaining insurance policies under state schemes. Importantly, this bill only seeks to ensure that the scheme operates as it was intended with retrospective effect. The government is seeking to define the coverage to what it has been in practice under successive governments starting with the Keating government through to the second Rudd government. It is disappointing that Labor is opposing this legislation.

It was worth noting that the honourable Senator Eric Abetz, the Minister for Employment, has announced that the government will shortly be bringing forward a bill to make further reforms to the Seacare scheme arising from the Stewart-Crompton review. The government is giving urgent but careful consideration to the recommendations of that review of the Seacare scheme, including those to clarify the coverage of the scheme. Decisions on future reforms to the Seacare scheme will be considered in due course. Significantly, the government will consult with all industry participants on the nature of the reforms.

When participating in debates, I like to reflect on my electorate of Durack. It has the busiest ports in Australia, with mountains of grain, tonnes of iron ore, gas and raw materials hammering through those ports. The Mission to Seafarers has provided an invaluable and historical service in the Durack ports of Port Hedland, Dampier, Port Walcott and Geraldton.

The Mission to Seafarers is a worldwide agency of the Anglican Church which cares for seafarers of all nationalities and creeds. As a Christian ministry, the mission is actively involved in service within the seafaring community and operates in some 300 ports around the world and 23 in Australia with a network of chaplains, lay staff and volunteers who offer seafarers a warm welcome, friendship, and practical and spiritual help. Their symbolic 'flying angel' flag is well recognised and is a very welcoming sight to visiting seafarers.

The current seafaring centres of Durack—in Hedland, Dampier and Geraldton—provide an atmosphere of family and a sense of service and solidarity. Over the years, the mission has sought to help seafarers in all kinds of practical ways. Remember: seafarers are far away from their families for long periods and may face loneliness, ill health or injury. The welcome from the Seafarers' chaplains and volunteers may be the only onshore hospitality they receive.

This week, on Sunday, 29 March, the Mission to Seafarers Geraldton will be opening their doors for a community event. The mission is housed in beautiful heritage premises—one of three of the oldest standing buildings in the seaside city of Geraldton, dating from the earliest days of the Champion Bay settlement, having been built as a school. It served as a church, police lock-up, loco shed and hayshed before it became home to the Mission to Seamen—now Seafarers—in 1938 when the mission first commenced in Geraldton. A priest was sent
from England to be both rector of the new Bluff Point Parish and chaplain in the port. The Geraldton mission has been staffed continuously since March 1938.

Around 500 ships call into Geraldton port each year, which sees 6,000 seafarers visit the Geraldton centre each year, where they are welcomed by Reverend Bill Ross, the chaplain, and his wife Jocelyn. Seafarers Geraldton is a favourite sea haven with testimonials from ships' captains of appreciation of service and value to seafarers wanting to contact family, purchase personal items, and spend time on terra firma or those seeking social and spiritual counsel. Reverend Ross has been honorary chaplain at Geraldton Seafarers since 2010, having spent close to 40 years in the missions in the Durack centres of Dampier, Port Walcott, Wickham, Port Hedland and now Geraldton.

Debate on the seafarers bill—I am very pleased to say—has given me the opportunity to acknowledge the tireless work of Reverend Bill Ross, his wife Jocelyn and the irreplaceable service of the Seafarers Mission in Geraldton and throughout Durack.

In conclusion, this bill restores the coverage of the Seacare scheme to how it has been understood to be, prior to the Aucote decision: employees on intrastate voyages will remain covered by state workers compensation and work health and safety laws.

The bill ensures that no seafarer will lose any workers compensation payments they have received or face a reduction in workers compensation payments they are receiving. I state again: this bill does not seek to change pre-existing entitlements and protections of seafarers; it is about providing certainty and ensuring seafarers have proper protections without transferring responsibilities from the states to the Commonwealth and threatening the financial viability of the existing compensation scheme.

I support the urgent passage of this legislation through the parliament to ensure that the safety of the workers in the sector is not compromised. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:06): I rise to oppose the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This legislation is an ill-thought out response to uncertainty in the shipping industry caused by a Federal Court decision.

The seafarers act establishes a privately underwritten workers compensation scheme, the Seacare scheme. This bill seeks to amend the legislation to clarify uncertainty relating to the scheme that was created by that Federal Court case. In that case, the court held that the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992 extended to cover all employees on all registered ships, if they were owned by an Australian trading corporation, an Australian financial corporation or a freight corporation no matter where they were trading or what business they were conducting.

The bill asserts that only seafarers engaged in interstate trade and commerce should be covered by the Seacare scheme. It is based on the view that the scheme should not apply to employees engaged on ships undertaking intrastate voyages who are covered by state and territory workers compensation and workplace health and safety arrangements. The bill also makes technical changes to ensure that where seafarers are covered by state or territory legislation their employers will not be liable to pay any levies to the Seacare scheme.

The opposition do not support this scheme because we are concerned that it will reduce protections for workers. The government claims that the proposed changes deliver on what it describes as a shared understanding of the effects of the existing legislation within the sector.
However, there is no shared understanding. As the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Federal Court decisions indicate, it was never intended that the seafarers act should cover only a very limited group of seafarers. The passage of this bill would mean that some workers whose workers compensation and health and safety arrangements are covered by Seacare would instead be covered by state and territory arrangements.

The key reason I cannot support this bill is that some state and territory arrangements are weaker than those in place under Seacare. So this bill could mean that some workers will be worse off, and that is the bottom line and the concern that the opposition have. We do not trust those opposite when it comes to workers entitlements because we know that, at their heart, they support Work Choices and when it comes to the maritime sector, of course, they have a policy of supporting Work Choices on water, undermining conditions that have existed that are in the national interest.

It is curious that the government claims that this legislation represents a shared understanding of the seafarers act. A shared understanding is usually the result of shared deliberations, consultation and respectful debate, but as far as I know key employer and employee groups were not consulted over this legislation. It is typical of the way that this government respond on these sorts of issues. If the Federal Court and the AAT decisions have created uncertainty about the legal situation in relation to Seacare, those opposite should actually sit down and talk with those people who are affected. That is just good practice and common courtesy let alone good governance. But from those opposite, they seize any opportunity that there is to undermine existing working conditions.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development has made it clear on a number of occasions that he is opposed to the maritime reforms that were put in place by the former government. These reforms were comprehensive when it came to revitalising the Australian shipping industry. The act that was replaced, the Navigation Act 1912, gives a bit of a hint as to the problems that were there—100-year-old legislation with provisions that were out of date, many of which applied to the conditions available for people in the maritime sector. We had a parliamentary inquiry that was unanimous. We then had a consultative process with industry, unions, the sector—organisations like Shipping Australia, the Australian Shipowners Association and individual companies like Rio Tinto were all engaged in the process—as well as the full range of departments.

It came up with a comprehensive plan, essentially that a permit system would continue, requiring people who wanted to move goods domestically around our coast to first ask if an Australian ship was available to undertake such a task on a competitive basis. Not a protectionist model at all but one at least that acknowledged that there was an Australian shipping industry; and, where they cannot engage an Australian flagged vessel, a foreign flagged vessel could operate. But of course like other industries in the transport sector, it would have to pay Australian level wages—not an unreasonable request, one would have thought.

It had an international shipping register with tax breaks for Australian shippers and seafarers, and of course improved training opportunities for the maritime workforce—one of the first things that the government cut. This arose out of a workforce advisory group that made unanimous recommendations to the government. It included representatives of the shipping industry, the maritime unions, the Australian Navy and those who use the Australian
shipping industry. It made recommendations about making sure that we had a skills base for the future. What did the new government do? When it came in that was one of the first things that it cut.

Yesterday, in this chamber we paid tribute to former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. One of Malcolm Fraser's great legacies is the Australian Maritime College in Launceston, a world renowned institution. Yet this government does not seem to understand the importance of those skills. The government goes back to talking about protectionism, but the truth is that our arrangements are amongst the most open in the world. There is certainly no country in the industrialised world that has more open arrangements than Australia. In the US, under the Jones Act, a ship carrying cargo around the domestic coast of the United States not only has to be US flagged and staffed by US mariners but also has to be built in the US. That is the protectionist model, not what was being implemented here.

And why is an Australian shipping industry in the national interest? Firstly, it is critical for our national economy when some 99 per cent of our exports are carried by ship. It means jobs for Australians and opportunities for business. Once an Australian shipping industry ceases to exist, which is the model those opposite seem to want, then of course costs will increase, because there will not be Australian competition in the sector. In terms of jobs, there are the skills that are required for Australian based shipping—people to be the harbour masters, run the ports and be engaged in the maritime sector on what is an island continent. Secondly, there is the environment. Having Australians onboard who understand our waters on the blue highway reduces the possibility of accidents such as the 2010 grounding of the Shen Neng 1, which tore a three-kilometre gash through the Great Barrier Reef. None of the major maritime accidents off our coast in recent years involved an Australian flagged vessel. Thirdly, there is national security. For those who talk about national security and border protection, the idea that we would not have any merchant fleet with the Australian flag on the back of it, on an island continent such as ours, flies in the face of the rhetoric of those opposite regarding border security. We know that the merchant fleet plays an important role in that area. Lastly, the interrelationship between the nation's naval and merchant fleet is also very important in terms of skills and in terms of the national interest. That is why countries like the US intervene in the way that they do. They understand that connection.

The Minister for Infrastructure, the Deputy Prime Minister, wants to dismantle all the arrangements. On 8 October 2013 he told a PACSHIP conference: To put it bluntly, there is no point in artificially propping up our coastal shipping industry if it is unable to compete - it will have an impact on the broader economy. That is an extraordinary proposition for an Australian minister to make. And Australian based industry is not asking for any special favours. They are actually just asking for a level playing field. The idea that you can pay Third World wages on a ship going from Sydney to Melbourne and have Third World conditions is no different from the idea that you can do that on a truck going down the Hume Highway from Sydney to Melbourne, with all the consequences for safety and for the national interest that that would present. Yet for the government, somehow the blue highway is different from the bitumen highway.

Well, we on this side of the chamber will defend the fact that there is a national interest in having Australian workers on Australian ships with the Australian flag on the back. And this is nothing to do with their absurd proposition of bagging anything to do with the MUA. And it
is not just the opposition saying this. Earlier this year the owner of Cairns based tourism venture Coral Princess Cruises, Tony Briggs, was forced to sell his business to foreign interests because he could not compete with a Bermuda flagged vessel that began operating in competition. He said that changes that this government had flagged would make matters worse and damage Australian businesses. Indeed, he said that they were already damaging Australian businesses because of the uncertainty that was being created. So, this legislation before the House is about uncertainty. They were prepared to undermine existing conditions of workers on the basis of uncertainty, but they are creating uncertainty throughout the industry. This is what Mr Briggs, a businessman based in Cairns, said:

There will never be another passenger ship built in Australia if there is no certainty on how we can operate. It's exporting jobs.

Mr Briggs noted that foreign flagged vessels are at a huge advantage over Australian flagged vessels, because they are not bound by Australian regulations on wages, occupational health and safety or industrial relations. Mr Briggs also noted that 'the main thing is they don't have to pay tax'.

So, this is very much against the national interest. This is a government that is lazy when it comes to doing hard policy formulation. It falls back to its prejudices, whereby it has never seen a member of a union that it did not want to attack. And it does not understand that its role is actually to speak out and to legislate in the national interest. That is why we are urging members of this House to reject this legislation and tell the minister to go back to the drawing board—do some consultations and come back when you have a bill that addresses the issues rather than this minister's ideology.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:21): The Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 concerns the compensation scheme that exists for seafarers and that concerns the maritime sector, Seacare. It arises because of a full court decision of the Federal Court that said that someone was eligible for this scheme, upholding a decision of the AAT, when, according to the government, players in the industry had assumed that such a person would not be eligible. In other words, the full court decision has now said that there are people who are covered by this scheme who up until now people did not think were covered by it.

If you accept that argument at face value, you really have two choices. There are two things you can do if you are a government that is caught on the hop by a full Federal Court decision. One, which would be the sensible one, would be to say to everyone in the industry, 'Well, no-one expected this; let's all sit down around the table and work it out.' Maybe some people did expect it, and maybe others did not. Let us involve the people who represent the workers. Let us involve the employers, and let us involve the state governments, because the effect of this decision is that it alters the balance as to who is covered between state government compensation schemes and the federal scheme. Through that process you could also sit down and work out what it will mean for the various standards of compensation and care around the country if this ruling is upheld. Conversely, if we proceed with some legislation to have a level playing field that 'harmonises' the industry, will that potentially result in some people now having a lesser standard of care and compensation?

Anyone who is familiar with the differences that exist at the federal and state levels between various health and safety and compensation schemes knows that the idea of
harmonising something is easier said than done. The idea of reaching a national standard is something that is easier said than done. Because what you have to do is go through each of the various state schemes and work out questions like access to the scheme, the level of safety that is required, and then, of course, the compensation that follows should someone get injured—and then assess it from each state or territory against the national scheme. That would be one way to go. And, indeed, it is a way that previous governments have gone. Whatever our position as the Greens has been on a final vote on that legislation, what cannot be denied is that before bringing such legislation to parliament a very comprehensive process of reviews and discussions took place. That is one way you can address the problem of a so-called unexpected full court decision—although of course some might say that the decision was not unexpected at all.

The other alternative is to do what this government has done, and say, 'Have we got a bill for you! Let us fix it. Just trust us. Here is a bill we want you to deal with very quickly that is going to introduce a uniform set of national standards,' and then attempt to get it through the parliament as quickly as you possibly can without talking to the stakeholders about it at all. Of course, that is what this government has done. That should come as no surprise. If the government paid attention to the Senate inquiry into this bill, one of the things it would have seen is that, apart from the department's submission, every submission to this bill raised serious questions about its operation. The call was made very strongly by the Senate committee that inquired into it, as well as by a number of the parties lodging submissions to the inquiry, to say, 'What is the urgency? There is no immediate problem that needs to be addressed by this bill such that it needs to be rushed through this parliament in this sitting fortnight. This bill, like every other piece legislation, could go through the usual consultation process.' But, notwithstanding the fact that that is what the Senate committee said, and notwithstanding that the department was the only one making submissions to the inquiry that did not suggest that there serious problems with this bill. Notwithstanding all that, the government comes back here and says, 'We have to rush this through quickly.' That, in many ways, ought to come as no surprise when you look at this government's record on other matters relating to compensation and health and safety for people in the Commonwealth scheme. I can see that they are like a bull at a gate on that. Looking at other industrial relations legislation from this government you can see that in bills that have, thankfully, not yet passed this parliament the government is wanting workers to be able to trade off non-monetary benefits for things like penalty rates. In other words, if you have to work in the fish and chip shop, the fish and chip shop owner can say, 'I want to pay you a hamburger every lunch,' and take that into account when assessing your wage. That is the kind of approach this government thinks is all right. In that context, I think we are right to be very sceptical of the government's desire to rush this bill through.

On current suggestions, it looks like it will pass this House, but I hope that when it reaches the Senate scrutiny is brought to bear on this government's desire to push through changes to a compensation scheme without any consultation with the industry players. For that reason, the Greens will not be supporting this bill, either here or in the other place, and I hope the government hears the submissions and hears the will of the people in the industry and the various stakeholders, and the government just does what good governments should do, which
is to go back and talk to the people who are affected and then come back to this parliament after you have done that.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (13:27): I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. The Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 only seeks to deal with the Aucote decision and to provide an interim solution to protect historic claims under the Seacare Scheme, and to provide certainty for industry participants in the short term until more comprehensive reforms can be brought forward. The bill will ensure that no injured worker who has made a claim prior to the introduction of the bill, including Mr Aucote, will have his claim disturbed. At present, the court's decision means there is a risk that any workers compensation payments made under state schemes could be void and be required to be paid back.

The bill ensures the continued viability of the Commonwealth's Seacare Scheme, and restores certainty about the coverage of that scheme for all participants, including seafarers and their representatives, employers, insurers and regulators. It does this by returning the coverage of the Seacare Scheme to what it has been commonly understood to be by participants since its commencement in 1993 and dating back to 1911 under the Seamen's Compensation Act. While I recognise there is a historical disagreement regarding the coverage of the Seacare Scheme, the government is simply seeking to legislate what has been the scope of the scheme prior to the Aucote decision. This is confirmed by evidence presented to the Senate committee by Mr David Sterrett, Chairperson of the Seacare Authority, who said:

It is important to differentiate between the varying claims that have been made about the coverage of the Seacare Scheme during the life of the scheme and the way in which the scheme has operated since its inception.

Notwithstanding the various claims, the proposed bill will restore coverage to that in which the scheme has operated since its inception. There is no doubt that the introduction of the bill has provided an opportunity for various parties to once again ventilate their differing views as to what coverage they would like to see. However, the bill is only intended to counteract the effect of the recent judgement, not create a new interpretation.

The Federal Court's decision in Samson Maritime Ltd versus Aucote has resulted in a profound shift in workers' compensation and work health and safety arrangements in the Australian maritime industry. Before the Aucote decision, the Seacare Scheme was understood to apply to about 300—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour, and the minister will have leave to continue his remarks at that time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Richmond Electorate: Pensions and Benefits

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:30): Before the election, the Prime Minister promised that there would be no change to pensions. He said on SBS news on 6 September 2013:
No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.
In my area all the National Party candidates ran around saying the same thing—no cuts to pensions. We all now know that the Prime Minister's promises stand for nothing, and in regional Australia the National Party's promises stand for nothing and they cannot be trusted.

In their very first budget, the government launched an unprecedented attack on the pension, with cuts to pension indexation, cuts to pensioner concessions, cuts to deeming thresholds for part-pensioners and an increase in the retirement age to 70. Labor calls on the government to drop these cruel cuts, because pensioners never voted for a cut to their pension. They never voted for this. In my electorate there are 20,520 people on the age pension who will have their pension cut by this cruel Liberal-National government. They never voted for these cuts to indexation which will leave them as much as $80 a week worse off. They never voted for any of these cuts, and they do not want them. Make no mistake: Labor will fight these changes every day until the next federal election.

This Saturday at the New South Wales election, pensioners in my electorate on the North Coast of New South Wales will have a chance to tell the Liberal and National parties that they never voted for a cut to their pension. They should put the National Party last to send a strong message about these pension cuts.

Bennelong Electorate: Ermington West Public School

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:31): I rise to inform the house of a remarkable young student who attends Ermington West Public School in my electorate. Students at this school take part in a regular volunteering session with the Arrunga Uniting Aged Care Centre, which is across the road. Student Melanie Carlson was part of this program. In talking with one of the residents, the state of the flag on the centre's flagpole was raised, which after years in the elements was faded and had started to fray. This led Melanie to get in touch with my office to request a new Australian flag for the home. This month I attended a small ceremony at Arrunga Aged Care Centre along with residents, staff, and the student volunteers from Ermington West Public School. I presented an Australian flag and an Aboriginal flag to Melanie, who in turn presented them to the home.

Speaking to Melanie, I learnt that Ermington West Public School's volunteering program with Arrunga Aged Care Centre is designed for students in year 4, meaning Melanie is no longer able to take part this year. However, she took so much from the experience that she has subsequently started giving up her own time to volunteer outside of school times. Melanie and her fellow students are an excellent advertisement for their school, and I congratulate everyone involved.

Reclink National Program Funding

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (13:32): Well over 10,000 disadvantaged people every year have accessed a total of 90,000 sport and recreation opportunities through Reclink Australia. This has helped greatly people reporting social isolation, alcohol and drug addiction, mental health problems, schizophrenia and depression, disability, repeat offending, abuse, and homelessness. But, regrettably, the loss of federal government funding in last year's budget has meant the closure of Reclink sport and recreation programs Australia wide and, for Tasmania in particular, the loss of valued sport and recreation programs to the most vulnerable.
Indeed, in Tasmania, Reclink had a very successful program where disadvantaged people participated in team sports on a regular basis, including basketball, volleyball, soccer and football in partnership with Basketball Tasmania and AFL Tasmania. At Risdon Prison, for instance, inmates participated in a valued Reclink program and, once released, were encouraged to make connections with Reclink community programs.

So, I suggest, everything considered, for a program that engages so many disadvantaged people with demonstrated outcomes, for a relatively small government investment, a decision to reinstate funding to Reclink should be straightforward, but it is not—a situation made all the more remarkable by the anecdotal evidence suggesting that investment in Reclink was returning a 10-fold benefit. In the circumstances, I call upon the Minister for Sport to immediately reinstate funding for the Reclink National Program.

Mallee Electorate: Regional Newspapers

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (13:34): I rise to talk in the Australian parliament about my concerns with Fairfax Media wanting to cut regional journalism. One thing about country communities is that they need to be able to tell their story. The Wimmera Mail Times and the Stawell Times News are successful, profitable businesses. They are good papers. The move by Fairfax Media that will take away jobs and take away photographers is, I think, very short sighted.

I, as a proud National Party member, have a vision for growth. I have a vision for everything that our country communities can be. People in these communities want to buy their paper and be able to see photos of their children and their grandchildren playing in local sporting events and engaging in local community groups and telling their story. It is very clear that, if you want country towns to grow and inland cities to develop, they need to have access to good education, good public transport, good health services and good jobs. But it is also critical that their story is being told.

I have written to the CEO of Fairfax Media, Mr Greg Hywood. I have not received a reply yet, and I ask him whether he has the vision that so many regional MPs have for the regions and whether he will look at how they can grow the management of Fairfax Media and put them in the regional areas, grow the job opportunities and continue to allow us to tell our stories through our local newspapers?

Lalor Electorate: Pensions and Benefits

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:35): I stand today on behalf of the 11,602 age pensioners of Lalor. These people may have voted for this government. They may have been reassured by the Prime Minister's declaration that there would be no changes to pensions—only to have that promise dashed in the government's first budget. He threw out that promise. He threw it out on the night of his first budget. Instead, he introduced cuts to pension indexation, cuts to pensioner concessions, cuts to deeming thresholds for part-pensioners and an increase in the retirement age to 70. Pensioners will be as much as $80 a week worse off within a decade—and those opposite have been standing up saying that pensions are going up. Australian pensioners are no fools. They know what the higher of two means. They fully understand that this government that this government is cutting the pension.

This government's agenda is not about 'ending the age of entitlement'; this government's agenda is about ending the age of dignity. These cuts will mean that pensioners in my
community are going to be scraping day in and day out across the next decade while these cuts come into play. I call on this government to stop its cuts to the pension, to reinstate the great plan that was in place for pensions and to reinstate the rise that pensioners got under Labor.

McMillan Electorate: Toora Post Office

Drought

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (13:37): Thirty-six thousand five hundred days ago the local post office opened in Toora. I was there for the 100th anniversary celebration. I received a very special thank you card:

To Russell

Thank you so much for your support of our local post office. It is very much appreciated as is your attendance today to celebrate our centenary.

Maree and Greg Stewart

What a day it was at the celebration of the Toora post office. We enjoyed together the company of the local Toora primary school students, and every one of them had designed a coloured stamp of their own. Australia Post came down and made a great presentation, which was a lovely prize, to the student who won the best stamp. It was a great day for all of us, but the thanks should have gone to Malcolm Turnbull for his efforts on behalf of local post offices right across regional Australia.

In my last 30 seconds, I would like to identify with Mark Coulton, a member of this House, who has an ongoing drought in his area. Drought is worse than a bushfire. Drought is something that continues to grab hold of a community every day. We do not get the resources that come in after a bushfire, where we get state, local, federal and community donations. I just want to identify with those in Australia today facing drought in that north-central part of New South Wales and Queensland. We are on their side.

Scullin Electorate: Pensions and Benefits

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:39): In the time that I have been in this place, one of the very great privileges I have enjoyed has been to be able to engage with seniors groups and pensioners groups in the Scullin electorate—groups that show off the diversity of the Scullin electorate. In these 18 months, I have really been struck by the generosity pensioners of Scullin have shown to me in sharing the benefits of their experiences. I have also been struck in recent months by the visceral nature of their response to the cynicism of this mean and tricky government. Pensioners in Scullin remember all too well that election night pledge of no change—really!

What we have seen in this budget is not just a broken promise but a straight-out attack on the living standards of Australia's pensioners. This is in stark contrast to Labor's work in government which did so much to lift age pensioners out of poverty and which made such a difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by giving them the dignity that they deserved in their retirement. Today Labor stands proud of that legacy and stands with the 16,000 pensioners in the Scullin electorate—and pensioners right around Australia—in
calling on this government to drop these cuts and keep to its promises to Australian pensioners.

**Fisher Electorate: Roads**

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (13:40): I rise today to speak about the Bruce Highway between Mooloolaba and Caloundra interchange—a critical piece of infrastructure for the people of the Sunshine Coast. I welcome to the new portfolio Minister Mark Bailey, who is the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports in the new Queensland government. I ask him, in a bipartisan way, to reassure the local business community and the local environmental community that the money that was promised in 2013 between the then LNP government and the Liberal-National coalition in opposition will flow to this road. It is a critical road, which needs those two intersections upgraded for safety and for the flow of traffic.

I floated an idea—that is a little outside the circle—which was going to ensure that we could connect Caloundra to the Roys Road interchange through a property which is currently owned by Stockland. This has been rejected by the main roads department, which said it is not in the best interest of the community. However, the chamber of commerce, the environmental groups and the Glasshouse Mountains Advancement Network all beg to differ. I would ask the new minister to work with us to ensure that the local business community gets urgent access to new information, and that we have locally-based information sessions so certainty can abound. I reinforce the view of the local environmental groups that the loss of many hectares is unnecessary at the Caloundra interchange, and that there are better options.

**Newcastle Electorate: Pensions and Benefits**

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:42): Before the election we remember well the Prime Minister’s promise that there would be no changes to pensions—yet in his very first budget he launched an unprecedented attack on pensioners. He made real cuts to the pension by lowering the rate at which pensions increase over time. He made cuts to important pensioner concessions. He cut deeming rates for part pensioners and increased the retirement age to 70.

Today Labor again calls on the government to drop these cruel cuts. The 15,770 pensioners in my electorate of Newcastle did not vote for a cut of up to $80 a week to their pension. Novocastrians did not vote for a government that would force them to work longer than any other nation in the developed world. A retirement age of 70 years will unfairly impact on those working in major industries in Newcastle like manufacturing, health care and construction—industries that employ large numbers of manual workers. These are the people who do the heavy lifting.

Newcastle did not vote to have their part pensions reduced because of changes to the deeming rate thresholds, and they did not vote to have $1.3 billion of Commonwealth support for their pensioner concessions ripped out from underneath them. More than 300 Novocastrians wrote to me after the budget, telling me that they did not support changes to the pension. Their message was clear: 'Mr Abbott, don’t pocket our pensions.' Enough is enough. Labor will always stand up for pensioners, and we will fight these changes every day until the next election—and this Saturday, New South Wales voters get a chance to send a clear message about these cruel cuts: put Liberals last. *(Time expired)*
Migration

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (13:43): The Bowen Basin and regional service centres on the central Queensland coast are ground zero for job losses, with a far more devastating impact on the national economy than the cessation of car manufacturing in Australia. In a very short time, direct job losses surpassed 10,000 workers, and the flow-on effect across local communities has been devastating. This has all happened with the downturn in coal prices on the international stage. I welcome this government’s commitment, as a result, to crack down on 457 visas and those who rort the system. Labor talked about it a lot, but in their last term in office, the number of 457 visa holders more than doubled from 42,000 in 2010 to 110,000 in 2013.

Now, in just 18 months the Liberal-National government has not only halted the growth of 457 visa holders but numbers have actually declined. To further crack down on 457s, this government has adopted a number of recommendations from an independent review, including penalties for receiving payment in return for sponsoring a 457 visa worker; cross checks to ensure 457 workers receive their nominated salary and that they are not undercutting Australian workers; proactive prosecution and naming and shaming of offenders exploiting overseas workers and misusing the program; and a review of occupations available for sponsorship under the program.

I support this tough approach from the government, and my constituents in North Queensland and Central Queensland can count on this government to stand up for local people for local jobs.

Canberra Electorate: Pensions and Benefits

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:45): This government should be ashamed of its unprecedented attacks on pensioners. The Prime Minister promised before the election that there would be no change to the pensions. This is one of the biggest broken promises yet. His nightmare of a first budget included cuts to pension indexation, cuts to pensioner concessions, cuts to deeming thresholds for part-pensioners and an increase in the retirement age to 70.

These cuts will have a terrible impact on the 12,220 aged pensioners in my electorate, who have said that they will struggle to make ends meet. They never voted for cuts to indexation, which will leave them as much as $80 a week worse off within a decade; they never voted for a government that will rip $23 billion out of the pension system by 2024-2025; and they never voted for the oldest retirement age in the world. These callous cuts will unfairly impact on low-income workers, blue-collar workers and women, and they will unfairly impact on those on disability support pensions.

I will read from a letter that I received from a woman in my electorate who is on the DSP. She asks me:
… if you can, on my – and others – behalf – take up the battle to stop these changes from occurring. Please, PLEASE bring to the attention of the media and public the comment by Abbott on 1st September 2013, which now appears to be a blatant lie. And please advocate for people like me.
Jacqui, we will take up the fight. We will continue to fight for you and we will continue to fight these— (Time expired)
Calare Electorate: National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (13:46): Today was a great day for the east of my electorate and also for the Western Sydney Area Health Service, which goes from Penrith out to Lithgow, with the announcement of the early rollout of the NDIS in that part of our state.

It is expected that nearly 2,000 people and kids aged up to 17 will benefit from today’s announcement, many of whom hail from my electorate—particularly around Lithgow and all the way through to Penrith. The rollout of the NDIS is, in this case, a year earlier than was anticipated. That is terrific to see.

The NDIS means that people with a disability will be empowered to decide which services and supports they receive, and who will deliver them. For too long they have not been able to make those choices. We are getting on the front foot and rolling out the NDIS earlier than planned.

And we are right behind it. We are 100 per cent committed to the full national rollout. This might only be a small target area, the Western Sydney Area Health Service, but it is a step in the right direction, particularly for those young people. Eventually, the NDIS will provide reasonable and necessary support for around 460,000 Australians with permanent and significant disabilities. I know that in Calare we have thousands of people who will certainly benefit from it. (Time expired)

Makin Electorate: Pensions and Benefits

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:48): There are over 18,300 aged pensioners in the Makin electorate, which I represent, and over 206,000 in the state of South Australia. Before the election they were not told by the Abbott government that if it were elected it would change indexation to pensions to CPI only, making them $80 a week worse off within a decade; cut deeming thresholds for part-pensioners; cut pensioner concessions; increase the pension age to about 70 years of age by the year 2035; and cut $1.3 billion worth of other Commonwealth funded pension concessions. In fact, they were told the opposite—right on election eve, when they were told there would be no cuts to pensions.

In addition to all that, the Abbott government proposed to make doctor visits dearer and X-rays, pathology tests and medicines more expensive, knowing full well the impact that would have on aged pensioners around Australia, because they are one of the user groups of our health system.

Aged pensioners are being targeted unfairly by the Abbott government as it tries to balance its budget. Aged pensioners will not be conned by the spin of this government. They know full well that they are being targeted by this government and that they are being asked to wear an unfair burden in the government’s attempts to balance its budget.

The Abbott government should drop its unfair cuts to pensions which, over the next 10 years, will rip some $23 billion from pensions. It should treat them in the way that they deserve.

Banks Electorate: Girl Guides

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:50): I want to speak this afternoon about some recent visits I made to Girl Guides associations in my electorate.
There is a strong Girl Guides tradition in the electorate of Banks, with five groups currently active. Girl Guides aims to give young girls an important education outside of school in four key areas: character and intelligence, skill and handicraft, physical health and service for others.

I recently visited groups in Revesby and Lugarno. Revesby Girl Guides meet weekly at Endeavour Hall during the school term. They engage in activities aiming to help the kids learn important new skills and, additionally, to develop skills in leadership. The guides progress through challenges, with the aim of earning badges and progressing over time into more challenging divisions. I thank in particular at Revesby Girl Guides the leader, Natalie Albrecht, and organisers, Diane Albrecht and Beryl Matthews.

Over at Lugarno I was fortunate to visit Lugarno Junior Girl Guides—indeed, on the same day that I visited Revesby. Lugarno Girl Guides also do a terrific job in helping to develop those important personal skills in girls. Thank you to Kim Phillips, the organiser of the group, and to everyone else who is involved in helping to give the girls in our local community important skills as they grow.

**Pensions and Benefits**

**Mr Griffin** (Bruce) (13:51): 'No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS'—the words of the Prime Minister a matter of days before the last federal election. There was no equivocation and no suggestion that there were reasons why there might be a need to make adjustments. It was absolutely explicit and absolutely clear cut. And yet what have we seen? We have seen a series of proposals from this government, sponsored by this Prime Minister, to attack the very people whose support he sought before the last election, with absolutely clear and explicit commitments.

When he talked about 'no change to pensions', what he then announced was changes to the very means by which pensions are calculated and adjusted over time to maintain living standards—the very means by which those who survive, have worked through their working lives and have earned the right to gain a pension seek to maintain their living standards in their twilight years. Those changes will have a dramatic impact on the living standards of those people: a cut equivalent to something like $80 per week over the next decade, and some $23 billion ripped out of pensions entitlements by 2024-25. It is a disgrace.

**Bereavement**

**Mr Coulton** (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (13:53): When a close family member or friend passes away, it can be a very distressing time. It is very common for people to be unsure about what needs to be done or what processes are necessary. An unexpected death can be particularly difficult to deal with. The Department of Human Services has a lot of useful information about the services available in the sad situation when a family member dies. These services include the Australian Funeral Directors Association and information on who to notify, on removing a person from mailing lists and on closing social media accounts. Financial assistance is available through Human Services, including the bereavement payment. There are also links to other social support services that are available to help with the grieving process.
A constituent of mine in Dubbo is particularly concerned about the nature of funeral insurance. I met with Cindy Neilsen in my office last week, and I raise these issues on her behalf. Cindy is a passionate community member who regularly holds a soapbox session in Victoria Park in Dubbo. I thank Cindy for coming to meet with me. I would encourage residents to visit the Human Services website, www.humanservices.gov.au, for more information about the assistance that is available for residents in times of bereavement.

**Bendigo Electorate: Pensions and Benefits**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:54): When I talk to the many age pensioners in my electorate—and there are a lot in the electorate of Bendigo: in fact, 18,500—they talk to me about the despair and lack of hope they have about trying to survive on the age pension currently. They talk about the embarrassment that they have about having to ask for help from their children to pay the bills. They talk about the need to access emergency relief because they simply cannot survive on days 12 and 13 of the pension cycle. These people are not leasers, as this government likes to call them. These are hardworking people who in their retirement deserve respect, dignity and support from their government. When these people started working in their early 20s and 30s, there was not such a thing as superannuation. They worked hard and, as my colleagues have said, they have earnt the right to have a decent income in retirement.

Yet all we have seen from this government is nothing but cuts. All we have seen from this government is a lack of respect for some of our hardest working Australians, who in their retirement need our support and need respect from this government. This is a government whose Prime Minister, prior to the election, said that there would be no changes to pensions. You can understand why the pensioners in my electorate and in electorates around the country are outraged that this government is proposing to cut their pension by $80 a week over the next decade. It is a disgrace, and this government and this Prime Minister should stop trying to pocket the pensions of so many people. *(Time expired)*

**Brisbane Electorate: Hear and Say**

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (13:56): I am delighted to update the House on a recent visit to the new Hear and Say facility based in the electorate of Brisbane on 12 March 2015. Hear and Say was established by Dr Dimity Dornan AO in 1992 and has grown to help over 600 children, young adults and families across Australia each year. Hear and Say's overarching aim is to help deaf children to hear, listen and speak so they are able to attend regular school. This aim is assisted by a number of programs and services offered, including early intervention, audiology, auditory-verbal therapy, social skill development and parent education.

The new facility was opened in Ashgrove on 3 March this year to help accommodate this growing demand for Hear and Say programs and services. I had the opportunity to discuss a number of vital topics with Dr Dornan and her team during my visit, including the NDIS rollout, the school screening pilot, hearing loss and social outcomes, and the future of human bionics. During my visit I was pleased to see firsthand the exceptional work being undertaken and the leaps and bounds that Hear and Say will be making in coming years. I commend the incredible work being done by Dr Dornan and her dedicated team at Hear and Say in Ashgrove. I look forward to being able to update the House in the coming years, particularly as Hear and Say grows from strength to strength.
Science meets Parliament 2015

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:57): I want to welcome and acknowledge all the participants at Science meets Parliament, who are up in Canberra today and tomorrow, and I want to thank them for their ongoing contribution to our wellbeing and to collective human intelligence, as well as, critically, to our economy here in Australia. I also want to thank them for having the patience of Job, because every time the scientists come up here they have great meetings with members of parliament who tell them they recognise the importance of science, and then when they walk out of this building we find CSIRO getting funding cuts of over $111 million; we find science being treated as a political football, with 1,700 jobs and some world-leading science research infrastructure being put on the chopping block just to make a short-term, grubby political point; and we find that, under this government, spending on science, research and innovation is now going to be at its lowest since we started keeping records in the late seventies.

I am sick of science and research being treated as a political football. I am sick of the science and research budget being treated as a honey pot that can be dipped into every time federal governments feel like the budget is getting tight. It is time to put funding for science and research on a multipartisan footing, beyond the short-term electoral cycle. Our trading partners are spending upwards of three, four and, in some cases, five or six per cent of their GDP on science and research. We are languishing at 2.2. It is time we recognised the importance of science and research.

Solomon Electorate: Simpson Prize

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:59): On Monday I had the pleasure of meeting two of my electorate's brightest students, Gabrielle Schiller and Lucy Frost, right here in Parliament House. Gabrielle is from Darwin Middle School, in my electorate, and she was the runner-up for the Simpson Prize. Lucy is from the Palmerston Senior College, and she is the winner for the Northern Territory. Congratulations to both of them.

I would like to read an extract from Lucy's essay. It said:

To the extent of giving up their lives is how far an Australian would go to protect what they love.
To the extent of defending our nation, our history and our Mother Country.

All Australians would go to the absolute lengths to prove their loyalty and their pride in what they believe in.

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

CONDOLENCES

Mr Lee Kuan Yew GCMG, CH

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 23 March 2015 of Lee Kuan Yew GCMG CH, former Prime Minister of Singapore, and place on record its acknowledgement of his role as the founding father of the modern Singapore and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Lee Kuan Yew did not just lead his country; he made his country. In the mid-1950s, when he first came to prominence in Singapore, his country was poor and friendless. Today, it is rich
and well connected. It is one of the great success stories of the modern world, thanks to the ideas, the drive and the judgement of Lee Kuan Yew and thanks to the talents of the Singaporean people which he unleashed. It is a remarkable economic success story. It is one of the most remarkable economic success stories in history. Within a generation, Singapore has moved from the Third World to the First World.

Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew blazed a trail that has been followed by other countries in our region—by Taiwan and by South Korea—and most recently it has been followed by China itself. He was once asked which of his decisions had made the biggest contribution to Singapore's success. 'Making English the common language' was his response. This not only defused ethnic tensions inside Singapore but also gave Singapore easy entry into the global economy. He also maintained Singapore's British based common-law legal system and ran an utterly clean and corruption-free administration.

One statistic tells the story of modern Singapore. In 1965, Singapore's gross domestic product per head was about one-third that of Australia. Today, Singapore's GDP per head is almost double that of Australia. In the 1980s, when Singapore was surging ahead and Australia risked stagnating, he said that we risked ending up as—to use that phrase—'the poor white trash of Asia'. That phrase stung because we feared that it might be true. I have to say that a quarter century of reform under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and then under John Howard and Peter Costello restored our position, but, if we are to avoid his prophecy, the challenge for this generation is to ensure that the age of reform in this country has been merely interrupted, not ended.

The relationship between Singapore and Australia is strong and growing stronger all the time, thanks to Lee Kuan Yew and his successors, especially his son, the current Prime Minister—and friend of Australia—Lee Hsien Loong, who should receive our deepest condolences today. Today, two-way trade between Singapore and Australia is some $30 billion a year. Singapore is our fourth largest source of inwards investment. Every year, some 300,000 Australians travel to Singapore, and every year about the same number of Singaporeans travel to Australia. Some 100,000 Singaporean citizens are alumni of Australian universities, and Singapore is a military ally of Australia. Under the Five Power Defence Arrangement, Singaporean forces regularly exercise and train here in this country.

We share a language and much institutional architecture with Singapore. Singapore and Australia are natural partners, and I hope that over time our relationship with Singapore will be as easy, as close and as familial as it has long been with New Zealand. And, if so, that too will be part of Lee Kuan Yew's legacy. He did not just build Australia but spurred this country at a critical time in our history to be better than we might have been.

Today we mourn Lee Kuan Yew's passing, but forever we will celebrate the life of this great nation builder and leader for our time. I acknowledge the presence today of the Singaporean High Commissioner, and I hope that he will pass on to his government and his country the condolences of the people and the parliament of Australia.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Labor pays tribute to the father of modern Singapore and a principal architect of harmony and prosperity in our region. Lee Kuan Yew owns a giant legacy of many dimensions, and today we recognise,
briefly, what he accomplished. Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore was born in turbulent times at home and in the region. Nations across Asia felt the ragged edge of the British withdrawal and decolonisation. The Malayan Emergency, Konfrontasi and the Sukarno split threatened peace and stability, and there were internal as well as external perils.

As Prime Minister Bob Hawke—Lee Kuan Yew's great friend on the world stage and friendly rival on the golf course—recalled, Harry Lee faced profound challenges at home. To quote Bob Hawke:

He found himself leading a country deeply divided on religious and ethnic lines, surrounded by powerful potential enemies, with a weak economy and no natural resources at all.

From that uncertain platform he built a modern, prosperous nation—a leader in the region, especially through ASEAN—and a trading powerhouse in the world. But his ambitions for his people and his country reached higher than this. In 1997, at a celebration of the Chinese New Year, Lee Kuan Yew reflected on how far his nation had come and the measure of true success. He said:

We cannot measure our happiness just by GDP growth. It is how our families and friends care for each other, how we look after our old and nurture our young. They are what make for a closely knit society, one we can be proud to belong to.

Australians, in fact, owe a debt to Lee Kuan Yew. He built modern Singapore. Modern Singapore and modern Singaporeans are a dynamic people, amongst the first rank of Australia's friends and allies. Lee Kuan Yew, the proud father and tireless servant of the nation he brought forth, is now at rest. Our condolences to his family, his friends and all the people of Singapore who share grief at his passing.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:08): The Prime Minister has already acknowledged the presence of His Excellency Burhan Gafoor, the High Commissioner for Singapore. We make him most welcome on this sad occasion.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCES

Mr Lee Kuan Yew GCMG, CH

The SPEAKER (14:08): As a mark of respect, I would ask all present to rise in their places to signify their approval of the motion.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

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

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

Question agreed to.
MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:09): I inform the House that the Minister for Trade and Investment will be absent from question time this week. He is in Hong Kong promoting our interests at a series of investment conferences. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Has the minister been given a guarantee that there will be no further cuts to her portfolio? What prompted this guarantee? Does the minister have any advice for her cabinet colleagues on how to avoid further cuts in their portfolios?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:10): I thank the member for her question. Yes, the Australian aid budget is under pressure. There is one reason it is under pressure—the Australian Labor Party. While Labor was wasting billions of dollars on $900 cheque giveaways, on pink batts, on an $11 billion blowout in our border protection, was there any concern about the sustainability of the Australian aid budget? When we have to find $1 billion a month just to pay off Labor's debt—just to pay the interest on Labor's debt—do we hear any concerns from Labor about our aid budget? Spare me the crocodile tears. Labor is responsible for the pressure that the aid budget is under. If Labor is so concerned about the aid budget, why is Labor not passing the $5 billion in savings that Labor itself identified? If you are concerned about the aid budget, look into the mirror. You are the ones that are putting the aid budget under pressure.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition maintains that an $11 billion has been cut from the aid budget. I call upon the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: come to the dispatch box and confirm that Labor will put $11 billion back into the aid budget, and then say where you are going to find the savings. Then say what you are going to cut for the budget. Schools? Hospitals? Education? Training? Where are you going to find the $11 billion?

While Labor goes on with its crocodile tears about the aid budget, not once does it admit that it is responsible for the pressure that the aid budget is under. It is Labor's $11 billion blow-out in border protection, $900 cheque giveaways, pink batts, school halls—that is what put the aid budget under pressure.

Ms Owens and Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Parramatta and Moreton are both warned!

Ms JULIE BISHOP: The record debt and deficit that we inherited from Labor puts pressure on the aid budget. As Bob Carr said—it is not my wont to quote Bob Carr often—'You cannot run aid on borrowings.' That is the pressure the aid budget is under. If Labor has any concern about it, pass the $5 billion in savings.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on both sides of the House. I will not tolerate this degree of noise again this week, and if it simply means the people who are the noisiest getting removed the first and earliest, so be it.
Great Barrier Reef

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the actions the government is taking to protect the Great Barrier Reef?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:13): I thank the member for Dawson for his question. The Great Barrier Reef, of 1,000 islands and 3,000 reefs, that stretches 2,000 kilometres along our coastal seas, is not just one of the natural wonders of the world—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is also warned!

Mr ABBOTT: but it is a great economic asset for Australia as well. Because this is a great economic asset and one of the natural wonders of the world, the future of the Great Barrier Reef is important to every single Australian. It is important to every single member of this parliament. That is why I was pleased to be with the member for Dawson, the Minister for the Environment and the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage at Hamilton Island on Saturday to announce a long-term sustainability plan for the Great Barrier Reef.

It was the Fraser government which banned drilling on the Great Barrier Reef. It was the Fraser government which established the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It was the Fraser government which gave World Heritage listing to the Great Barrier Reef. It was the Howard government which established green zones over a third of the Barrier Reef to protect it from overfishing.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

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

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: And this government has put in place a long-term sustainability plan for the Barrier Reef and, perhaps most importantly, this government has already ended the dumping of dredge spoil from capital dredging in the heritage listed areas of the Great Barrier Reef. This is a very important further step to protect the reef—the ending of the dumping of capital dredging spoil in the heritage listed Great Barrier Reef. It has been done by this government and it is in the great conservationist tradition of coalition governments over the decades.

At the heart of the long-term plan is water quality. Already, there has been a 10 per cent reduction in sediment, in fertiliser run-off; a 28 per cent reduction in pesticide run-off. By 2025, under the sustainability plan, there will be an 80 per cent reduction in fertiliser run-off and a 50 per cent reduction in sediment. To this end, we have added $100 million—it is now $140 million—to the Reef Trust. It will operate much the same as the Emissions Reduction Fund. It will go to landholders and seek the lowest-cost, most-effective ways to improve land and, in so doing, to protect the Barrier Reef.

This is an extraordinary national asset. It is something that we are entrusted with the custodianship of for our generation. We will protect it for our time so that, for all time, this marvellous wonder of the world can be enjoyed by humanity.
Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister also rule out his $80 a week cut to pensions?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:17): This is a truly bizarre question from the Leader of the Opposition, because the married pension has gone up $78 a fortnight under this government. The single pension has gone up $51 a fortnight under this government. Just last week both of them went up by some $5 or more. This is a government which is putting pensions up, and this government will push pensions up twice a year, every year. That is what we will do. We will put pensions up twice a year, every year.

We have done the right thing by the pensioners of Australia by scrapping the carbon tax that the Leader of the Opposition wants to bring back. He does. He wants to bring back the carbon tax. We have scrapped the carbon tax and we have kept the compensation. You know what else we have done, Madam Speaker? We have kept the hand of government, the long hand of the former minister for financial regulations, out of pensioners' pockets. That is what we have done. He had his hand deep into the pockets of pensioners. He was going after their inactive bank accounts. We have said, 'Bill, hands off pensioners' bank accounts.' That is what we have said. Thanks to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Pyne: Balaclava Bill!

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: some 156,000 inactive bank accounts, tens of thousands of which belong to the pensioners of Australia, were trousered. They were trousered by the Leader of the Opposition—a half-a-billion-dollar raid on the pensioners of Australia. Well, the pensioners of Australia can rest easy. They can relax. They can be calm, because we have ended Bill Shorten's cash grab. That is what we have done. So we are doing the right thing by the pensioners of Australia, now and forever.

Iraq and Syria

Mr IRONS (Swan) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the increasing number of children and teenagers being drawn into the crimes of the Daesh death cult?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:19): I thank the member for Swan for his question and I acknowledge his concern about this matter. The government is committed to protecting vulnerable young Australians from the clutches of violent extremists such as Daesh. The number of Australians involved in or supporting Daesh continues to grow. Worryingly, the demographic is getting younger. Australian children as young as eight are being caught up in Daesh's poisonous web. Minors from around the world are being drawn to the Syria-Iraq conflict, cynically exploited by Daesh as cannon fodder, as suicide bombers, as sex slaves.

Australians have been appalled by an Australian child holding up a severed head of a Syrian soldier, 14-year-old Australian girls being married off to terrorist fighters and the tragic cases of Australian suicide bombers, young teenagers Adam Dahman and Jake Bilardi. The exploitation of children in war is an affront to humanity. Child soldiers have been exploited and abused in conflicts in Sierra Leone and Uganda. Boko Haram, another violent
terrorist organisation, is using young girls as suicide bombers in Nigeria. But the nature and scale with which Daesh is exploiting the young and vulnerable is unprecedented. Just last week, Daesh posted photos of Indonesian children 10 years and younger reportedly being trained to use assault weapons in Daesh controlled territory. It is hard not to be pessimistic about their fate.

I am aware that a number of Australian minors have been taken by their parents to Syria and Iraq to take part in the conflict. Others have attempted to leave without the knowledge of their families. Thankfully, we have stopped many of them leaving, with our newly strengthened border control regulations and laws. Yet others are supporting Daesh from home, with funding and with other forms of support. Daesh propaganda is reaching into our households promoting a false sense of meaning and belonging, but in reality they are just drawing vulnerable minors into violence and brutality and death. It must be stopped.

That is why the Australian government is working with community leaders to put in place a comprehensive package of intervention strategies. It is why more than $21 million is committed to counter the lies that terrorists spread online and to extend mainstream community voices to those who most need to hear them. It is why we are working with partner countries to share intelligence and experiences on combating extremist propaganda. This government is committed to preventing the exploitation of children and teenagers by violent extremists and to keeping our people safe.

Age Pension

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:23): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister also rule out increasing the pension age to the highest in the developed world?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (14:23): I thank the Prime Minister for allowing me to respond to the question. As those opposite would know, they were the ones who originally put forward measures through this parliament to increase the pension age to 67. They did that with the support of those on this side of the chamber, when we sat in opposition, because we understood the need to ensure that we had a sustainable safety net for future Australians.

Now they find themselves in opposition, they seem to think they have to run out of ideas and not be able to support proper, sensible and sustainable ideas to ensure the safety net that is there for Australians today is there for Australians in the future. If it were left to those opposite, they would just let the pension run off the edge of a cliff. They would let it run off the edge of a cliff without any thought for the welfare of future Australians about having a sustainable safety net. What do we hear from them? They continue to go on by scaring pensioners today. That is the policy of those opposite—to scare pensioners.

This is the policy of the government: to increase the pension. As the Prime Minister said couples are better off by $78 a fortnight under the pension under this government. Pensioners today are better off under this government than they would have been under those opposite if they sat on this side. I will tell you why—

Ms Macklin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The minister should not mislead the parliament—
The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. That is a total abuse of the standing orders and the member knows it. Should she try it again she will leave under standing order 94(a).

Mr MORRISON: I will tell you why—because this government got rid of the carbon tax, and we kept the carbon tax compensation.

Opposition members interjecting—

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

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr MORRISON: So how much better are pensioners as a result of getting rid of the carbon tax? I can tell you, because the compensation is $14.10 for a single pensioner per fortnight, and it is $21.20 for a couple for a fortnight.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor! The member for Scullin is not in his seat and may not speak!

Mr MORRISON: That is how much better off pensioners are under this government than they would have been under those opposite, because today the Leader of the Opposition has launched a four word slogan and he has put it into a website. Let me tell you the difference between the four word slogans of those opposite and the three word achievements of this government. We have stopped the boats. We have scrapped the carbon tax. We have got rid of the mining tax, and we have halved the trajectory of Labor's debt and that of the fiscal arsonists who sit on that side of the House who were on this side and set the budget ablaze.

Let me finish with the shadow minister who is often quoted in this place, the member for Fraser. When it comes to what he thinks about a pension age of 70 he said, '70 is the new 64'. What a bunch of hypocrites you are.

Asylum Seekers

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The minister should withdraw the unparliamentary language that he has just used.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. To use the term to call one person a hypocrite is one thing; to use it as a generic term is different. If you pay attention to the House of Representatives Practice, you will see the difference.

Opposition members: They are all hypocrites!

The SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition will not be disorderly or he will leave the chamber under 94(a).

Mr BANDT: When the Greens first raised issues of rape and child abuse in the Nauruan detention facility, the immigration minister said staff from Save the Children were coaching detainees to make these stories up. Given that the Moss report finds compelling evidence of rape and abuse, but no evidence of wrongdoing by Save the Children staff, when will you apologise to Save the Children's workers and, crucially, how much longer will you leave the 107 children currently in Nauru locked up and exposed to abuse?

Government members interjecting—
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:28): Let me be absolutely clear at the outset. It is appalling and reprehensible that misconduct of a grievous type seems to have taken place at this centre. It is absolutely appalling that this has happened and we are working with the government of Nauru, which runs the centre, to try to ensure that this kind of thing is appropriately dealt with, that it is punished and that it never happens again. That is what we are doing. That is why, as the minister for immigration and border protection made crystal clear on Friday, we have accepted all 19 recommendations of the Moss review.

Let me deal with the issue of children in detention. No-one wants to see children in detention. There were children in detention under the former Howard government, but because the Howard government stopped the boats, the children left detention. There were no children in immigration detention when the Howard government left office.

Ms Parke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On a point of relevance, the substance of the question is about when the government will apologise to Save the Children.

Mr ABBOTT: Under the former government, under members opposite—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: there were at its peak almost 2,000 children in immigration detention. Almost 2,000 children who had arrived illegally by boat were in immigration detention. When this government took office there were 1,400 children in immigration detention. There are less than 200 now. And the reason why the children are leaving detention is because the boats have stopped.

It would be a lot easier to take this question from the Greens member of this House more seriously if he and his colleagues in the Senate and elsewhere had been readier to give credit where it is due. This government has stopped the boats. In stopping the boats, we have stopped the deaths at sea. In stopping the boats, we have allowed the children to leave detention. That is as it should be. Not only have we been able to stop the deaths and stop the children staying in detention but we have been able to run—to restart, in effect—a decent humanitarian program, because those coming to Australia are now being chosen by us and not by the people smugglers. That is the achievement of this government.

Child and Forced Marriage

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister update the House on action the government is taking to combat the illegal practice of forced marriage?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:31): I thank the member for Grey for that question. He knows that there are no worse crimes than those that are committed against
the young and the vulnerable. All of our children have the right to be protected from those who would seek to exploit them.

*Mr Bandt interjecting—*

**Mr Keenan:** It is particularly appalling if it is parents who are involved in breaking this bond of trust. Recently, a 27-year-old Sydney man was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for marrying at 12-year-old girl in a backyard ceremony which was only discovered when she presented to hospital with pregnancy complications. Despite being told by members of his community that it was illegal to marry this girl, the man deliberately pursued her. Very sadly, in this case, it was the parents who worked to conspire to force this child into the marriage.

We have specialist teams within the Australian Federal Police who deal with allegations of forced marriage. They are highly trained to do so because they are obviously dealing with very vulnerable victims. They work with other government agencies and with the non-government sector to ensure that the victims are referred to people who can provide them with the appropriate additional care and support.

Since the introduction of legislation to outlaw forced marriage in March 2013, there have been a total of 36 referrals to the Australian Federal Police. The AFP takes these investigations very seriously. I would encourage anyone with information about a forced marriage or a suspected forced marriage to contact the police immediately. We are also working with the non-government sector to raise awareness of this crime. Last year, I launched a forced marriage community pack which includes a range of materials to help and assist people who may be at risk of forced marriage. The government has also funded, to the tune of almost half a million dollars, three community organisations that will work to prevent and address this crime.

I have also introduced legislation in the House that makes it clear that those under the age of 16, children, can never be presumed capable of consenting to a marriage. Anyone who forces a child under the age of 16 into a marriage will be committing an offence. The government is also increasing penalties for those who cause girls to enter into a forced marriage to be in line with the most serious antislavery offences.

Forced marriage places girls and women at risk of emotional and physical abuse. It has absolutely no place here in Australia. The nature of this crime is that those who have been forced into marriage are the most vulnerable in our community, and we will do everything we can as a government to continue to work to protect all of our children.

**Mr Christensen:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not want to interrupt the minister but the member for Melbourne, during that statement on child brides, forced child marriage, made the interjection, 'At least they are not in detention.' That is disgraceful. I would ask that he withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** There is no point of order.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr McCormack:** You did say it.

**The Speaker:** There will be silence. There is no point of order. It is a question of argument. But the—

**Mr McCormack:** It is exactly what you said.
Mr Bandt: There is nothing you will not do.

The SPEAKER: There will be silence. We will not have a debate on the question. Before I call the honourable member for Watson on his question, I wish to advise the House—

Honourable members interjecting—

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

Mr Champion: Why don't you kick some of them out?

The SPEAKER: I think you can leave right now under section 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr Burke: On a point of order. Did you just kick a member of parliament out for saying, 'Why don't you ever kick anyone out from the other side?' Is that what just happened? That is a new level. I did not think you could get to the next level, but we are there.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr Pyne: The Manager of Opposition Business just grossly reflected on the chair, and I would ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. We will continue with question time.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:36): I wish to advise that we have with us a special envoy from the President of Armenia. She is the Minister of Diaspora. We make her most welcome.

We also have with us officers including from 20 overseas countries who are attending the Defence and Strategic Studies Course, and we also make them most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the government has ruled out further cuts on foreign aid, will the Prime Minister, for the benefit of the hypocrites seated behind him, also rule out a $50 billion cut to health, which will have a devastating impact on New South Wales hospitals?

The SPEAKER: The member can rephrase his question and not try to be smart.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have given my instruction. You will leave that word out.

Mr BURKE: Madam Speaker, which word was unparliamentary?

The SPEAKER: I said you will rephrase it and not try to be smart.

Mr BURKE: I want to know which word was unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: You are reflecting on the chair by wording it in that way and I will not have it.

Mr BURKE: You have ruled every word parliamentary.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. If the Manager of Opposition Business cares to reflect on his question, he will find that it contained 'inferences, imputations and
insults and ironical expressions'. Clearly, none of those people are on this side of the House; therefore, that is the word you should be withdrawing.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House has made the point. I have made my observation to the Manager of Opposition Business. He may ask his question by leaving that word out.

Mr BURKE: My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister also rule out his $50 billion cut to health, which will have a devastating impact on New South Wales hospitals?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): There is no such thing. For the benefit of members opposite, public hospital funding goes up nine per cent this year, nine per cent next year, nine per cent the year after that and eight per cent in the year after that.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—
Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney and the member for Watson will put their props down.

Mr ABBOTT: We are increasing public hospital funding every single year—nine per cent, nine per cent, nine per cent and eight per cent. It is going up every year and members opposite should stop peddling these falsehoods.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will put her props down or leave! The choice is hers.

Mr ABBOTT: Madam Speaker, what they should also do if they do not like the budget that we brought down last year is tell us what they would do. We know that Medicare, which cost $8 billion a decade ago, costs $20 billion now and will cost $34 billion a decade hence. We have a plan. What is the opposition's? If you do not like our plan—

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: to fix the problem that you created, tell us what your plan is. Our plan, as the Minister for Health has made absolutely crystal clear, is to protect our great Medicare system. Not for nothing was I, as health minister, the best friend that Medicare has had. I will now give that title to the current health minister. But I want to be the best Prime Minister that Medicare has ever had. The way to do that is to work constructively with the health professionals and to work constructively with the Australian Medical Association. That is exactly what we are doing, to protect the vulnerable, to improve services to make our great Medicare system even better and to increase public hospital funding by nine per cent this year, nine per cent next year, nine per cent the year after that and eight per cent in the final year. That is what we are doing.

Economy

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (14:41): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline the importance of building a strong and prosperous economy, and what positive signs have emerged in the Australian economy in recent months?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:42): I really do thank the honourable member for Gilmore for her question and recognise she is an indefatigable fighter for her electorate—there is no doubt about that. As the member for Gilmore knows, and as Australians know, you have to live within your means. Like a household budget, the national budget needs to be structured on the basis that you live within your means. At the moment, the Australian government borrows $100 million every day just to pay the day-to-day bills. That is $100 million a day that needs to be borrowed and a great chunk of that comes from people living overseas. So we borrow it from those people living overseas just to meet head-on our day-to-day expenditure.

Of course, it was much higher under Labor. They locked in a spending trajectory that was unsustainable into the future. A hundred million dollars a day would buy you 40 kilometres of new road every day. It would buy you two brand new schools every day. In a week, you would get a brand new major teaching hospital. But instead, we are borrowing $100 million a day just to pay our day-to-day bills. It is clearly unsustainable.

Only one side of politics has a plan—that is, the coalition. We have a plan to meet head-on that challenge to ensure that we as a nation get to a point where we start to live within our means. Of course, today marks the seven-week mark until the nation's next budget. The focus of the 2015 budget will be to build a stronger Australian economy. The budget will be responsible, it will be measured and it will be fair. Initiatives in the budget will be focused on jobs, on growth and on opportunity. Initiatives will be focused on how we can do more to help Australian families and to help small businesses, because, after all, small business represents 4½ million employees in Australia. It is the small businesses in Australia that are going to be the job generators and the innovation users that are going to build our prosperity into the future. And of course if we can do more to help families in Australia through more accessible, more flexible affordable child care, then the 165,000 parents out there who actually do want to work but cannot work at the moment will have a fairer go.

So, we are very focused on a number of key goals, but overwhelmingly we want to ensure that the Australian budget works in partnership with the Reserve Bank on monetary policy, to work together to ensure that we build stronger economic growth in the Australian economy in the face of headwinds overseas, that we create more jobs and that we build greater prosperity to the benefit of every Australian household.

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister also rule out cutting $9½ billion to New South Wales schools, as is clear from your 2014-15 budget overview here, at page 7?

The SPEAKER: No props.

Mr SHORTEN: Madam Speaker, it is not a prop; it is a fact.

The SPEAKER: Put it down.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:45): The Leader of the Opposition is not well acquainted with the truth of the situation, funnily enough.

Honourable members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will not raise the prop.

Mr ABBOTT: Let me inform the Leader of the Opposition exactly what we are doing for the schools of New South Wales. Year on year, schools funding in New South Wales grows by seven per cent, eight per cent, nine per cent and six per cent—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: which is a combined increase in funding for New South Wales schools of 33 per cent over the next four years—a 33 per cent increase in funding, and somehow the Leader of the Opposition turns that into a cut.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: This is Mr Anybody-Can-Be-Somebody—the great political philosopher. Anybody can be somebody. The Irish political philosopher—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: I shouldn't have—I don't want to get into any more trouble! I know not all Irishmen have a sense of humour these days! It is the Leader of the Opposition who says that when you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.

An honourable member: Especially the low road!

Mr ABBOTT: Always the low road, from this Leader of the Opposition. But to put his mind at rest: school funding in New South Wales goes up by seven per cent, eight per cent, nine per cent and six per cent. That is a 33 per cent increase in funding for New South Wales schools over the next four years, and we can do that sustainably, because we want to get the budget under control. What we have already done is cut Labor's debt and deficit by half. We have stopped the boats, we have scrapped the carbon tax and we have cut Labor's debt and deficit by half going forward. That is why we can afford to provide more funding to New South Wales schools.

Infrastructure

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (14:48): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on action the government has taken to improve infrastructure in New South Wales? How will this create jobs and opportunity?

The SPEAKER: I call the Prime Minister—I beg your pardon: the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:48): There is no coup underway, I can assure you. Now, as the member obviously knows, investing in infrastructure is absolutely critical for New South Wales and indeed for our country if we are to have a prosperous nation with an economically bright future. Before question time we had New South Wales Labor members jumping up, frothing at the mouth and criticising the coalition. But they stood quietly by for 16 years while the New South Wales Labor government underinvested in infrastructure. They stood quietly by when the Carr, Iemma, Rees and Keneally governments allowed infrastructure
development in New South Wales to stall. By contrast, our decision to work with the Baird and Grant governments and the rest of the New South Wales coalition has meant a revitalisation of infrastructure investment in that state.

You have all heard of our $50 billion plan to upgrade infrastructure across the nation. Almost $15 billion of that money is being provided for New South Wales. Already there are significant projects underway—for instance, $3.6 billion for the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan, which will upgrade major roads. And already we have started to generate some of the 8,000 jobs that will be created as part of that project. The member for Grayndler never proposed any road infrastructure upgrades for Western Sydney until last week—he must have met a photocopier along the way somewhere or other—and he went out with the New South Wales Labor leader to announce that Labor was going to build the road that we had already started. If he had looked around while he was out there he would have realised that his announcement had been trumped.

Mr Morrison interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Social Services will desist.

Mr TRUSS: The roads were already under construction.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, a point of order: the member needs to be relevant to the question and not mislead and explain how the rail line—

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

Mr TRUSS: We have already got on with the job. We have already got the roads under construction that Labor is just talking about announcing. But of course there are other projects as well: our $1.5 billion commitment to WestConnex, which will remove 52 sets of traffic lights from the journey and reduce the travel time between Parramatta and Sydney airport by 40 minutes, also taking 3,000 trucks off Parramatta Road; 10,000 jobs will be created as a part of that work. What about NorthConnex?—15 minutes taken off; 21 sets of traffic lights will be bypassed. And of course Labor is now saying that they are going to stop this project. It is not bad enough for them to be lagging behind. Your own candidate got out there and said, at a big public meeting, that he was going to stop the project. The reality is that, under Labor, infrastructure will grind to a halt just as it did under the previous 16 years of Labor government.

Disability Services

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister now also reverse his cuts to the More Support for Students with Disabilities program?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:52): I am very glad the member for Port Adelaide has asked this question because—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor has been warned. He will either desist or leave.

Mr PYNE: it gives me the opportunity to set the facts straight on a disgraceful campaign being waged by the Australian Education Union spreading lies and frightening the parents of children with disabilities at schools. Could the AEU sink any lower than frightening the
parents of children with disabilities at school by spreading a campaign of lies and misinformation?

The simple facts are that the government did initiate exactly the disability loading that the previous government announced when they were in government. We did that in 2014. We delivered the disability loading that was announced by the previous government. It started in 2014. It continues in 2015. There is more money being spent this year on children with disabilities in schools than last year and the year before that. So, in fact, funds are increasing for children with disabilities across Australia because of this government. We implemented exactly the policy that Labor announced in government for the new school funding model. We do not alter it at all, other than getting Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland into the model, and putting $1.2 billion into it. So, in fact, children with disabilities are attracting more funds this year than last year and the two years before that, under the loading that the Labor Party left for this government that we implemented and will run until 2018.

The data for children with disabilities is provided by the states and territories, and that data, which has not been nationally consistent, will be nationally consistent from 2016 onwards. They are the facts. I am seeing the lobby groups associated with this this afternoon to explain to them that they have had the wool pulled over their eyes by the Australian Education Union. The AEU should hang their heads in shame. It is embarrassing that the Labor Party would join this disgraceful campaign of trying to frighten the parents of children with disabilities. It surprises me, as the Leader of the Opposition was the person who initiated the National Disability Insurance Scheme and he has prided himself on his record in that role. It should be a bipartisan issue to support children with disabilities in schools.

Mr Butler: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table an extract from the Department of Education budget statements that confirms that this initiative will conclude in December 2014.

Leave not granted.

Workplace Relations

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Education and Training representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister inform the House of recent court decisions relating to violence and intimidation in Australian workplaces. Are there any obstacles getting in the way of stamping out this thuggery?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:57): I thank the member for Moore for his question. It is a very important issue, because last week the Federal Court handed down yet another decision finding against the CFMEU and its officials, this time over the violent picket that the CFMEU staged at the Grocon building site in Melbourne in 2012. Once again, the Federal Court found that the CFMEU engaged in deliberate unlawful behaviour. But once again, the Leader of the Opposition remains totally silent on the subject. I think it is legitimate to ask why that would be the case.

One of the CFMEU officials the court found against, who was responsible for the violence at Grocon, was a Mr Craig Johnston, who has had cause to be mentioned in this House before, when the Prime Minister was the Minister for Workplace Relations. Mr Johnston has form in terms of these kinds of incidents. In 1996 he led the Parliament House riot at this place. In
2001 he was sentenced to nine months jail for trying to enforce his union's right of entry to a Melbourne office with a crowbar. The court took a dim view of trying to enforce the right of entry with a crowbar, and he paid by spending nine months in jail in Melbourne. After that violent incident, though, a most unusual thing happened. Mr Johnston's union friends approached Premier Steve Bracks and Greg Combet, who was then the Secretary of the ACTU, and they asked what could be done to help Mr Johnston with the difficulties in which he found himself.

One of those union leaders, unfortunately, sits in this House. One of those leaders who approached Steve Bracks and Greg Combet and asked what help could be given to Craig Johnston to make sure that those charges did not go ahead was the Leader of the Opposition, unfortunately, when he was the secretary of the union in Victoria. There was photographic evidence, because he also, in order to support his friend Craig Johnston, stormed a meeting that Kim Beazley was speaking at, and was photographed with the offender Craig Johnston. He had quite a lot of hair in those days!

The SPEAKER: We do not use props. The minister will put the prop down. The Leader of the House will put the prop down. The minister has the call, but not for the prop.

Mr Pyne: Certainly; that would be quite inappropriate! But I am happy to table the photograph of the then secretary of the union with Craig Johnston and Kim Beazley. But it does lead to a very important point. The Leader of the Opposition could deal with this cloud hanging over his head in terms of his lack of voice on the issue of thuggery in workplaces by supporting the government's Australian Building and Construction Commission being re-established with the Registered Organisations Commission. I call on him to do so.

Higher Education

Mr Shorten (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the government has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, will the Prime Minister also rule out cuts to higher education?

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:00): What we want to do with higher education is very clear: we want to liberate our universities from the dead hand of Canberra. We want our universities to be as good as they possibly can. That is what we want.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence. The Prime Minister has the call. We see a number of students who have been with us and who are leaving the chamber; they will do it rather quietly, please.

Mr Abbott: Their education is safe with this government. Their future prospects are bright with this government because the universities of Australia will be better in the future than they have been in the past, because our universities comprise the best and the brightest people in our country. Why do they have to be micromanaged by officials in Canberra? Why do they have to be subject to endless regulation from public servants here in Canberra? What we want to do is not just to have one Australian university in the world's top 50; we want to have at least two Australian universities in the world's top 20. We want that to happen soon, and the best way to bring that about is for members opposite to get out of the way and let our higher education reforms through the Senate.
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Homelessness

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Will the minister update the House on action the government is taking to support the homeless?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (15:02): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question. It was a great pleasure to be with the member for Corangamite in her electorate last Friday at the Waurn Ponds new Goodstart early childhood education centre, where we were taught many a song and a dance by the local children there. But I am asked about what the government is doing to support the homeless. When this government came to office, the 2013 budget, which the member for Lilley will recall, showed that the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for the years 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 allocated to support that agreement zero—nil. Absolute nil. Zip. Zero. That was the funding provided by the previous government to support that National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

I am pleased to advise the House that it was my predecessor, Minister Andrews, who took the first decision to extend the funding for that agreement for the current year, but I am also pleased to announce, in more good news from the Abbott government, that the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness will be continued for a further two years with $230 million provided by this government—offset fully in the budget—to ensure that we can deliver important services across the states, addressing the important issue of homelessness. That includes $45.6 million in Victoria, the home state of the member who asked the question, and it also includes $60 million for my home state of New South Wales. This agreement will see these funds matched by the states.

But we are not only just funding the program which the previous government shut the door on funding; what we are doing is improving the agreement because under the former government the agreement was a bit woolly. Money was shovelled out the door with no great accountability. We are improving the accountability standards and we are going to give very clear priorities. I am sure those opposite would agree with this: the priority for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness should have a focus. To focus it on domestic violence, those affected by domestic violence and young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness should be the national priorities of this program.

I would hope—and I am sure it is the case—that it is the agreement of both sides of the House that that should be the priority, and that is what it will be under this. I appreciate the welcome that has been given to this announcement by the sector and by the states and I look forward to working with them as we move through the implementation of this arrangement. I note that this is in addition to the $1.3 billion paid annually under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the $4.4 billion to support 1.3 million Australians through Commonwealth rental assistance.

So this government has stumped up when it comes to funding for homelessness in supporting the agreement that those opposite defunded. (Time expired)

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the Prime Minister has ruled out further cuts to foreign affairs but
today refused to specifically rule out cuts to pensions, cuts to schools, cuts to hospitals, isn't the budget all about the leadership of the Liberal Party and not about the people of Australia, and doesn't it show how chaotic this government is when it comes to the budget?

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the House. I have to say that is a statement, not a question.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:06): Madam Speaker, I agree with the assessment you made—

The SPEAKER: I'm sure that's very nice!

Mr PYNE: but, since I've got the call, I think therefore you should rule the question out until the Leader of the Opposition can get his act together. He's had a bad day!

The SPEAKER: You see, the Leader of the House was doing very well until he got gratuitous in his remarks as well. So I will give the Leader of the Opposition the chance to put a proper question together—not full of rhetoric and not full of just statements.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:07): Given that the Prime Minister has ruled out further cuts to foreign aid, but today, in a range of questions from the opposition, has specifically refused to rule out cuts to pensions, cuts to schools and cuts to hospitals, isn't this budget all about the Prime Minister's job and nothing about Australians?

The SPEAKER: I am afraid that is not good enough. It is out of order. I call the honourable member for Bass.

Bank Deposits

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (15:07): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Will the Assistant Treasurer update the House on the government's plans to protect the savings of Australians, particularly senior Australians, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

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

Mr Burke: Under what standing order was that question ruled out?

The SPEAKER: It was under standing order 100. I call the honourable member for Bass.

Mr NIKOLIC: My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Will the Assistant Treasurer update the House on the government's plans to protect the savings of Australians, particularly senior Australians, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Assistant Treasurer) (15:08): I thank the member for Bass for his passion about this issue and his commitment to good economic policy. Last week, the Prime Minister announced that the government will be reversing the desparate cash-grab by the Leader of Opposition, when he changed the unclaimed money rules from seven years to three years, and now we are taking it back to seven years. This is consistent with the recommendation of David Murray's Financial System Inquiry. It has been welcomed by a large number of stakeholders. Michael O'Neil, the CEO of National Seniors Australia, with over 200,000 members said:
The former legislation was ridiculous. This is the people's money—not the government's money. Today is a win for common sense.
Ian Yates, the CEO of the Councils on the Ageing, said:

The decision … will give many older Australians peace of mind …

Mark Degotardi, the CEO of Customer Owned Banking Association, said that this is a 'good outcome for consumers'.

I am asked: am I aware of any alternative approaches? Well, the member for Fraser was trying to defend the efforts of 'Bankrobber Bill' when he came out the other day and said:

We put these rules—

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat and the Assistant Treasurer will kindly refer to members by their proper titles.

Mr FRYDENBERG: I withdraw. The member for Fraser was trying to defend the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition by saying:

We put these rules in places to stop the value of these accounts being eroded over time by thieves.

This was little comfort to 82-year-old Moira Stanford, whose story was documented in the Daily Telegraph, when she went down to her local bank to take money out of her rainy-day fund to pay a tradesman. When she went to the bank she was told the money was no longer there. Had she withdrawn those funds? No! Had she been targeted by an internet scammer? No! What had happened? In the words of the late Michael Jackson, she had been targeted by a 'smooth criminal'. There was the Leader of the Opposition, moonwalking bank to bank, seeking to raid the savings of—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Assistant Treasurer is clearly on unparliamentary-language ground now, and is clearly making accusations and imputations.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. There will be silence! The Leader of the Opposition had approached the Speaker, and I was in conversation with him. If the Assistant Treasurer made an unparliamentary use of language, he will kindly withdraw it.

Mr Dreyfus: Withdraw!

Mr FRYDENBERG: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs: I do not need his help.

Mr FRYDENBERG: There was the Leader of Opposition going from bank to bank raiding the savings of ordinary Australians. He had the gall on 15 November 2012 to put out a press release describing his $550 million bounty as a 'windfall'. Yet again, the Leader of the Opposition has shown that if you do not know where you are going any road will get you there, even if it is at the expense of the savings of hardworking ordinary Australians.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Budget

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:12): I should also correct the record in one small respect. I was quoting public hospital funding in New South Wales from memory. I said it was nine per cent, nine per cent and nine per cent and eight per cent going up—that is what I said. In fact, it is better than that. I have now got the figures in front of me. Commonwealth
funding to public hospitals in New South Wales goes up eight per cent, 10 per cent, 10 per cent and eight per cent. It is even better than what I told the House earlier this afternoon.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (15:12): I seek to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr BANDT: I claim to have been misrepresented.

The SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr BANDT: The member for Dawson made a comment during question time, which I will not repeat, which was simply untrue.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right. The member has the call.

Mr BANDT: It was simply untrue. I also make the point that it was raised as a point of order. You ruled that there was no point of order. I might just note that that puts the member at a disadvantage, not being able to respond to an untrue allegation that is made about them during question time whilst broadcasting is in effect.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Dawson.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (15:13): I claim to have been misrepresented.

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

Mr CHRISTENSEN: Yes, I claim to have been misrepresented because the member for Melbourne has just claimed I said something untrue. All I will say is I have ears, and look how close I am to him.

The SPEAKER: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has a matter he wishes to raise. Is it a personal explanation? Does he claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:14): I do, most grievously—by the Leader of the House.

The SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr SHORTEN: Today, during question time, the Leader of the House suggested that I asked for charges against an individual to be dropped. That allegation is completely untrue.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:15): On indulgence: if I did misrepresent the Leader of the Opposition on that serious matter, I apologise for doing so. I was simply reflecting a story in The Sydney Morning Herald—which I am happy to table for the benefit of the parliament so that members can see the facts as they were presented by The Sydney Morning Herald.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

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

Pensions and Benefits

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

The urgent need for the Government to back down on its cuts to pensions

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

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

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (15:15): I thank all of those behind me on the Labor side of the parliament for everything they have done to support pensioners, to support all of the pensioners in Australia—3.7 million of them.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence in the chamber. We are on a matter of public importance.

Ms MACKLIN: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You can understand why those opposite are ashamed. Before the last election, the Prime Minister said on national television that there would be no changes to pensions. 'No changes at all', the Prime Minister said—and it was not the first time he said it. He was absolutely unequivocal about it: 'No changes to pensions; no cuts to pensions.' That was the promise that this Prime Minister made to 3.7 million pensioners around Australia before the last election.

We now know that this Prime Minister can no longer be believed about anything he says. He has told a huge untruth to all pensioners in Australia. We now know that this Prime Minister's words stand for absolutely nothing. In their first budget, the Prime Minister and the Treasurer broke their promise with an unprecedented attack on Australia's pensions. It is written in the budget, there for every single person to see, that what this government wants to do is cut the indexation rate for the pension, cut the deeming thresholds for the pension and increase the age for the age pension—to the highest age in the developed world.

Mr Chester interjecting—

Ms MACKLIN: The member for Gippsland is making a heck of a lot of noise. He has done nothing to defend pensioners. But what he did do is come in here on 24 June last year as a member of the National Party and vote for a cut to pension indexation. Each and every one of them on that side did so.

Mr Morrison interjecting—

Ms MACKLIN: The minister at the table is saying that it was not voted on. You were here! You voted for it! You were not the minister at the time, but it was in a bill that came into the parliament on 24 June last year—and each and every one of you voted to cut pension indexation. Each and every one of you voted for that bill, each and every one of you voted to increase the pension age and each and every one of you will now be held to account in your electorates as we campaign right around this country to show how untruthful you have been. Shame on each and every one of you as you seek to punish age pensioners, as you seek to
punish disability support pensioners. Each and every one of you also voted to cut the indexation of the carer payment on 24 June last year.

All of us on this side of the parliament know that pensioners have to get by on a very modest income of around $20,000 a year. We also know, and pensioners increasingly know: if this government were ever to get their way in the Senate—and we will do everything to try to prevent that—the Australian Council of Social Services has worked out that there would be an effective cut of around $80 a week. Pensioners would be $80 a week worse off over the next decade if this government got its way.

This minister and this government continue to try to mislead pensioners. The Prime Minister tried to say that pensioners are not getting their pension cut, but pensioners are not fooled. Pensioners are also not fooled by this minister, who again today claimed that pensioners would be better off under the current government than under Labor. This is of course completely and totally false. Labor's fair indexation system makes sure that the pension is indexed by whichever measure is the higher: the Consumer Price Index, the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index—which Labor created and this government wants to get rid of—and male total average weekly earnings. Labor will always make sure that the pension is benchmarked against male total average weekly earnings.

John Howard understood how important it was. He put it into legislation. This government wants to get rid of that link to wages. Peter Whiteford at the Australian National University has done analysis of this to show what would happen over the next 40 years. The government did not show this in the Intergenerational report. They were too frightened to put this detail in the Intergenerational report because the independent analysis shows that the pension would go from the current level of 28 per cent of male wages to 16 per cent of male wages. That is exactly what would happen if those opposite were to get their way.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has also belled the cat on this issue. The Parliamentary Budget Office, independent of Labor and independent of the government, has made clear that this government will spend $23 billion less on pensions. Whose pockets is that money going to come out of? It will come out of the pockets of pensioners, because pensioners will not be getting the same level of increase that they would have got if Labor's method of indexation had continued.

What we know, and what the all pensioner organisations know, is that this will drive pensioners further into poverty. Does this minister want to have, on his head, the driving of pensioners into poverty as a result of this change to pension indexation? Is that what everybody over there wants to have?

I see the member for Barton is here. There are 17,500 pensioners in the electorate of Barton alone. And this member for Barton has already voted, on 24 June last year, to cut the pension indexation of 17,500 pensioners in his electorate. We could say the same for National Party seats. In the electorate of Page—just to choose another electorate—there are a lot of pensioners. In the electorate of Page there are 21,800 pensioners, but the member for Page also voted for these cuts. The member for Page is going to have to go along to the pensioners in each of the towns and villages in his electorate and own up to them that he has voted to cut the pension.
What Labor is going to do continuously, from now until the next election, is make clear the dishonesty of each and every one of those opposite—from the Prime Minister down. The Prime Minister promised before the election that there would be no changes to pensions. We are going to stand with all the pensioners—aged pensioners, disability pensioners and carers—and we will fight these unfair changes each and every day until the next election, and we will make sure that until these changes are dropped from the parliament the government is held to account by the pensioners of Australia.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (15:29): I thank those opposite for the opportunity to participate in this debate, and to point out very clearly the untruths that the member's statements are based on, in representing to this House that somehow pensions have been cut in this country. We know that pensions have not been cut. Pensions have continued to increase every six months. And we know that since this government was elected the increase in the pension has been over six per cent. It has gone up $78 for couple pensioners since we were elected 18 months ago, and it has gone up $51.80 for single pensioners. That is an increase of over six per cent in those fortnightly payments. That is what has happened to the pension for the 2½ million people who are on the age pension in this country.

The commitment that was given by the Prime Minister before the election was that there would be no changes to pensions during this term of parliament. And that is exactly what has occurred. There have been no changes to pensions at all in relation to this term of parliament. Instead, we have done a number of things. We have increased the pension. That has certainly happened. It has gone up by the amounts that I have said—over six per cent—under this government. Not only that; pensions have increased faster than wages.

I know those opposite are very enamoured of the male total average weekly earnings. If the pension had only gone up by male total average weekly earnings then today pensioners on a single pension would be $22.40 worse off, and couples would be $33.60 worse off. I am simply saying that the pension has risen faster than wages under this government. For those opposite to suggest that the pension has fallen—that the pension has been cut—is just an out and out untruth; it is a complete untruth.

As I said in question time, pensioners are better off today than they would have been if those opposite had remained in government. There is a very simple reason for that: there has been a greater than six per cent increase in the pension under this government, and we got rid of the carbon tax. But we did not just get rid of the carbon tax; we kept the carbon tax compensation.

If you want to know what the impact would have been on pensioners had the carbon tax continued, then you only need to look at the carbon tax compensation which those opposite said pensioners would need to deal with the carbon tax falling upon our pensioners. And what is the value of that? For a single pensioner it is $14.10 per fortnight. So, had we not got rid of the carbon tax then they would have been $14.10 worse off. If those opposite had stayed in government and they had not got rid of the carbon tax, then single pensioners today would be $14.10 worse off per fortnight, and couple pensioners would be $21.20 worse off per fortnight.

So we have kept the pension going up, we have got rid of the carbon tax and we have kept the carbon tax compensation. But more recently we have had changes to deeming rates which
delivered, in addition to what I have talked about, $200 million for those on part pensions. That means $83.20 extra a year for those on part pensions. So it is not just those on full pensions who have received an increase from this government, it is those on part pensions as well. Those opposite have gone around the country and they have only one policy when it comes to the pension, and that is just to scare vulnerable pensioners—to tell them things that are not true and to tell them that their pension is being cut when in fact their pension has been increased.

It was under the previous opposition that a measure was put forward into this place to increase the pension by some $30, and it was actually opposed by the government at the time. This is what the member opposite who put this forward, the member for Jagajaga, said about putting forward a motion to increase the pension, and it was opposed by the government:

Playing politics with pensioners is really about as low as you can go.

The member for Jagajaga knows that the pension has been going up, together with the Leader of the Opposition, who says, 'It does not matter which road you take; any road will get you there.' It is quite that clear that on pensions those opposite are taking the low road, and they are prepared to scare pensioners and tell them things that are not true, at a time in pensioners lives when there should be some stability, some certainty and some reassurance.

Those opposite are running around frightening pensioners, and they are doing it before the New South Wales state election too. They are doing it in their last ditch effort in New South Wales. They are running around in New South Wales saying, 'New South Wales is not for sale.' No-one told Eddie Obeid that. He thought it was his for sale, to be able to share it with his mates. No-one told Ian Macdonald that.

But coming back to the issue of pensions, what we are seeking to do is ensure that we can have a sustainable and adequate pension for the future and that we are engaged in a conversation about a policy future. I have said on I do not know how many occasions—a conversation that the member for Jagajaga does not want to be part of—that I am open to all sorts of options about how we can ensure that the pension is sustainable, because the intergenerational report says that if we go down the path that Labor is suggesting, which is do nothing and ride the pension off the edge of a cliff, then it will reach 3.6 per cent of GDP. If you go down the path currently modelled in the intergenerational report, which would see it move to average weekly earnings over that period of time, it would be 2.7 per cent of GDP.

Ms Macklin: It is not your policy.

Mr MORRISON: It is our policy—I note the interjection from the member for Jagajaga—because it is an official government document. You only have to look it up. It is right there in the intergenerational report.

The question for those opposite is this: how are you going to fund your policy to stay on a pension trajectory that will in the long run ensure that the pension runs off the edge of a cliff? What we have from those opposite is complete unfunded empathy. They will go around and they will scare pensioners and will empathise with every single problem in the country and not put forward one solution as to how you address them. That is a cruel thing to do, particularly to pensioners. It is a cruel thing to say that their pensions are going down when they are actually going up. It is a cruel thing to do to future generations who rely on the pension to say, 'You can just keep going on your merry way, you do not have to make any
changes and the pension will be there for those in the future.’ Well it will not be. If you do not embrace sustainable policies for the pension and for other measures then you will find yourself in a very difficult situation.

In government they understood that, perhaps. I am referring to comments by Senator Evans, the former Leader of the Government in the Senate. He did not make much sense when he was talking about immigration, but perhaps he was making a bit more sense when he was talking about the pension, when there was a proposal from those on this side, when we were in opposition, to increase the pension, which I note and acknowledge that the government ultimately took up when they increased the pension. They ultimately caught up and got there. But this is what they said about the proposal at the time:

I know that this proposition is disarmingly attractive—

that is to increase the pension—

… it is very easy for minors and Independents to argue. They do not have to balance the budget.

He said:

It is a really easy headline.

Today it is a four-word slogan that they have turned into a website—and they talk about four-word slogans. This government has three word achievements: we did stop the boats, we did abolish the carbon tax, we did get rid of the mining tax and we have been dealing with Labor's deficit and debt disaster, which was left by the fiscal arsonists opposite. He also said:

It is really easy to get a clap at a pensioner meeting, but that is no substitute for the serious work of this parliament and the serious work of government in public policy.

So what we see now is an opposition that when in government was prepared to make an argument like that. When invited, in opposition, to a serious discussion about how we make sure that the safety net that generations of Australians have received from those who went before us, that those who sit in this parliament now, at least on the government benches, want to make sure is there in the future, they do not want to be part of the debate. They simply want to allow our safety net to wither while they go around in a populist dance with pensioners all around the country, seeking to frighten them. Scaring the pensioners is not a policy; it is just populist nonsense from an opposition that has completely lost its way.

This government will continue to increase pensions and will do the right thing by pensioners, today and tomorrow.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (15:35): I am very pleased to be speaking on this matter of public importance, which is the urgent need for the government to back down on its cuts to pensions. I was particularly interested to hear the series of untruths by the minister for more than 10 minutes. It was just quite astounding. I would challenge him to come to my electorate of Richmond and speak to the more than 20,000 pensioners to tell them that rubbish that he spouted here. It was just unbelievable.

Mrs ELLIOT said: The fact is that they are cutting pensions and it is hurting people. I can see the minister is walking out now. I challenge him to come to my electorate. I daresay he would not do that and tell them the sort of rubbish that he was just spruiking in here. The fact is that this government's unfair budget and cruel cuts have been devastating to the nation and to older Australians, particularly those older Australians in regional areas like my electorate of Richmond.
All we see from this government is chaos and constant mismanagement and conflicting narratives and sometimes backflips—just total chaos. All we get are bad decisions from a bad government, and one of the worst decisions is the cuts to pensions for our older Australians. I am calling on the government to back down and reverse those cruel cuts.

Locals in my area have every right to feel betrayed by this government in regional areas, and, of course, they are particularly feeling betrayed by the National Party. The Liberal-National government continues to relentlessly attack the standard of living of older Australians by cutting their pensions and slashing services, particularly health services, and by increasing taxes, like the petrol tax.

Before the election, the Prime Minister promised there would be no change to pensions. He said on SBS News on 6 September 2013: 'No cuts to education. No cuts to health. No change to pensions. No changes to the GST. No cuts to the ABC or SBS.' In my area, all the National Party candidates were running around saying 'no cuts to pensions'. We now know that the Prime Minister's promises stand for nothing. In regional Australia the National Party promises stand for nothing. They cannot be trusted.

What happened of course in their very first budget is that this government launched this unprecedented attack upon the pension. They had cuts to pension indexation, cuts to pensioner concessions, cuts to the deeming thresholds for part pensioners—and increasing the retirement age to 70. So we are calling on the government to drop these cruel cuts. Pensioners never voted for a cut to their pension.

In my electorate there are 20,520 people on the age pension who had their pension cut by this cruel government. The fact is that they never voted for these cuts to indexation to leave them $80 a week worse off. They never voted for any of these cruel cuts. Make no mistake; Labor will fight these changes every day until the next federal election; every single day we will fight them.

This Saturday at the New South Wales election, pensioners on the North Coast in my electorate will have a chance to tell the National Party that they never voted for this cut to their pension. They have a chance to send them a message. They should put the National Party last and send a strong message about their pension cuts. I am urging them to do that.

They should also send a message that they do not want their electricity networks privatised and their electricity bills going up, which is exactly what will happen if the National Party get their way and sell off TransGrid. TransGrid is the distribution network that carries electricity through regional New South Wales through the North Coast of New South Wales.

I was surprised that just today in Tweed Heads the National Party have been caught out telling lies. The state National Party MP for Tweed, Geoff Provest, was out at prepoll handing out a form which said:

Our Poles and Wires will remain 100% publicly owned.

He was caught out telling lies. The fact is that the Nationals are selling off the electricity network which includes TransGrid. And, as I have said, TransGrid distributes electricity throughout regional New South Wales. So the fact is that you just cannot trust the National Party. There they are, out there peddling these lies. As I said: send the National Party a message; number every box, and put the National Party last. Putting up electricity prices is another cruel attack on our pensioners.
As I have said, one of the cruellest measures in the last budget was the cuts to age pensions. It really was devastating to people in regional areas—and that was on top of the other broken promises by this government, particularly their cuts to health. It is only Labor that supports our pensioners and older Australians. In 2009 we implemented the largest increase in the pension in 100 years, and that included a $70 per fortnight increase to the base rate of the pension. We listened to the community and we made sure that increase was in place.

Yet, from this government, all we get are cruel cuts and broken promises. Can I tell you that, for those more than 20,000 pensioners in my electorate, these pension cuts are devastating. These people are living week to week; they have the pension cuts, the cuts to their health and hospital services; they have increased taxes, like the petrol tax; and now, potentially, they have increases in their electricity because of the Liberal-National state government.

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (15:40): The Labor Party has run a lot of fear campaigns since we have come to government, but perhaps the worst fear campaign of them all is to suggest to the vulnerable pensioners of Australia that they are going to have their funding cut.

We heard it today from the Leader of the Opposition who came into this House and was asking questions of the Prime Minister, implying that pensioners were going to have $80 a fortnight cut from their pensions. It is just wrong. It is absolutely misleading and it is deliberately setting fear amongst pensioners across this country. Nothing like that is going to happen. The Leader of the Opposition knows that. The member for Jagajaga knows that. The member who just spoke knows that as well. It is a deliberate fear campaign, and it is atrocious. The member for Jagajaga said herself that we should not be playing politics with pensioners. She is exactly right, but unfortunately that is exactly what she has been doing.

I want to clear up once and for all what has actually happened with the pension since we came to government. What has actually happened is that the pension has gone up six percentage points in the 18 months since we were elected to government. That means, for example, that the pension for a married couple is now $78 higher. The pension for a single is $51.80 higher than what it was when we first came to government. We also know the pension goes up—

Ms Butler interjecting—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Mr TUDGE: They do not like listening to this. They do not like hearing the fact that the pension goes up each and every year. In fact, it goes up twice a year: in March and in September. It will go up again. This September, next March, the following September—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order on my left. The honourable member for Griffith is out of her place in this chamber and is disorderly as she interjects.

Mr TUDGE: the following March, the pension will go up.

Plus we have got rid of the carbon tax but we kept the carbon tax compensation for pensioners. What does this mean? This means there is an additional $21.20 for a married
couple per fortnight. For a single it means they have an additional $14.10 per fortnight, which they would not have had the Labor Party still been in government. Had the Labor Party still been in government, the carbon tax would still be in place. And it would not just be sitting at $23 per tonne, but, according to their own forecast, it was to go all the way up to $350 per tonne. That was their forecast, outlined in their economic documents.

But perhaps the worst thing that Bill Shorten was directly responsible for in relation to pensioners was the raiding of their inactive accounts. The member for Kooyong gave a very clear example today of a 92-year-old lady who had her funds raided. For those who are not aware, this is what Bill Shorten oversaw: he said that if there were ever inactive accounts—if an account was inactive for only three years—he would go and grab that money. And do you know what? Within a 12-month period, he took $550 million from pensioners and from other people who had inactive accounts. That is what they did. Bank robber Bill—bandit Bill—took $550 million from pensioners' accounts.

I have been asked where that $550 million sits in the scheme of things against the great bank robberies of the world. It is a great question. I did a bit of research and, believe it or not, the great train robbery of 1963 only rated $74 million. So it is well above that. That came in at No. 7. No. 5 was the Knightsbridge security deposit robbery of 1987. That was $200 million in Italy. The British Bank of the Middle East robbery of 1976 was $210 million—which of course was stolen in the middle of the Civil War in Beirut. That came in at No. 4. The Dar Es Salaam bank robbery in 2007 in Baghdad, just after the Iraq war had begun, was $282 million. Bill Shorten comes in at No. 2—only beaten by Saddam Hussein, who robbed $920 million the day before—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The parliamentary secretary will refer to members by their title in this place.

Mr TUDGE: I shall. Had Bill Shorten had one further year, he would have—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUDGE: Had the Leader of the Opposition had one further year, he would have—(Time expired)

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (15:46): It is time for the members on the other side of this parliament to tell the truth. It is time for them to stop their masquerade. It is time for them to stop pretending that they are the best friends that pensioners have ever had. It is time for them to fess up and admit to the pensioners of Australia that they are cutting their pension. Australian pensioners know that you cannot trust the Abbott government. Before the election, Tony Abbott and his bunch of merry men promised one thing and since the election he has done another thing. Before the election he said that there would be no changes to the pension.

Mr Tudge: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hope that, instead of referring to Tony Abbott, she could refer to his correct title—as I was picked up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Shortland will refer to members by their title in this place.

Ms HALL: I understand why those on the other side of this House want to stop me. They do not like hearing the truth. They do not like hearing that the Prime Minister and all of them have voted to cut pensioners' pensions. The pensioners of Australia know it.
Mr Tudge interjecting—

Ms HALL: I do. I really understand that they do not want the pensioners to know the truth. I am quite happy for the parliamentary secretary to stand up any time, because I will be making sure that all pensioners know that those on the other side of this House are attacking their pensions.

The debate around indexation is quite interesting. With the CPI pensioners' pensions go up, but what those on the other side of this House are not telling the pensioners is that, instead of having the choice of the pensioner and beneficiary living index, the CPI and male total average weekly earnings, they are choosing what they believe to be the lowest possible indexation available. Previously there was a choice of three; now there is a choice of one—one that will deliver the lowest possible indexation; one that is going to see pensioners $80 worse off over 10 years and will result in $23 billion less being paid to pensioners by 2024.

This government does not like pensioners. This government attacks pensioners. This government wants to increase the pension age to 70. This government just does not understand that some people at 70 years of age are blue-collar workers and could not possibly work. Those opposite are showing their total lack of understanding of the people they represent in this parliament.

The Shortland electorate has 21,877 pensioners—the fifth most in New South Wales and the seventh most in Australia, but not quite as many as Paterson, which is the fourth. I wonder where the member for Paterson is and why he is not in here today standing up for the pensioners in Paterson. The pensioners in Paterson look to him to represent them in this parliament.

I hate to report this to the parliament, but pensioners do not trust the Abbott government. That may surprise those on the other side of this House, but it is not a surprise to any of us here. We all know that you cannot trust the Abbott government. We all know that the Abbott government has made cuts to pensions, has attacked Medicare, has increased the cost of medication and has increased the fuel tax. This government is constantly attacking pensioners. The Abbott government does not like pensioners. It views them as a fiscal liability. It does not value the enormous contribution pensioners and our veterans have made, both in the past and on an ongoing basis—through, for example childcare and volunteerism—and it used the Intergenerational report to validate its attack on pensioners.

The Abbott government is attacking pensioners who have made Australia the great country it is today. My message to the Abbott government is: stop attacking pensioners. Stop attacking their standard of living. (Time expired)

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (15:51): During his excellent contribution, my friend the hardworking member for Aston expressed surprise at today's motion from the member for Jagajaga—which I can tell him actually continues the scare campaign that she had led since last year's budget. She has led a veritable conga line of those on the other side to my home state of Tasmania. These scare merchants have visited my state to misrepresent government policy and scare vulnerable people about their pensions. I can recall the member for Jagajaga visiting last May, where she said that pensioner concessions would be cut. Yet the Premier of Tasmania had made clear that the Commonwealth contribution to those concessions was only relatively minor and that the state would be filling that gap and there
were in fact no changes to pensioner concessions. That was an entirely false claim by the member for Jagajaga.

The member for Jagajaga also claimed that pensions would be cut from 1 July, knowing that was untrue and that her comments would cause anxiety to vulnerable people. I note the member for Gorton visited Tasmania a few weeks after the member for Jagajaga and replicated the exact same Pinocchio act. He had the audacity to complain about the high youth unemployment rate in Tasmania, but he forgot to mention that unemployment in Tasmania—both adult and youth—rose to the highest in the country under Labor-Green governments in Hobart and Canberra. I note he does not have very much to say today when the unemployment rate in Tasmania is at a three-year low after only a very short period of time of coalition government in Canberra and Liberal government in Tasmania. The member for Jagajaga and the member for Gorton and their Labor-Green mates are frankly all scare and no solution. They are in denial and fail to acknowledge the extraordinary economic damage they left behind—and they now stand in the way of our efforts to clean up that mess.

It is little wonder to me that the ABC's Fact Check found the member for Jagajaga's mendacious claims about the age pension 'unfounded'. What that means is: without foundation; untrue. What the member for Jagajaga, the member for Gorton and their Labor mates conveniently forgot is that they were senior members of the Labor-Green government. They were at the heart of those appalling Labor-Green decisions that now impose a billion dollars every month in borrowings just to pay the interest on their debt. They are the ones on that side of the House responsible for the fact that we borrow $100 million every day in this country just to pay the bills. Think about the opportunity costs!

Ms Butler interjecting—

Mr NIKOLIC: I note that Mr Rudd's replacement over there—still out of her seat and still interjecting—does not think about the enormous opportunity cost of that $100 million every day we borrow more than we earn: new roads, two new schools a day, a new teaching hospital every week. If only we did not have to pay those opportunity costs.

What rampant hypocrisy when it comes to pensions! The member for Lilley, when he was the Labor Treasurer, announced in the 2009 budget that to make the pension sustainable Labor would change the pension. Mr Swan referred to the need for 'major structural savings to support the longer term sustainability of our pension system'. A joint media release was issued by the members for Lilley and Jagajaga—the member for Jagajaga was the minister for families at the time—referring to Labor's pension changes as 'a responsible reform to meet the challenge of an ageing population and the economic impact it will have for all Australians.' What has changed? What has caused this transition to skeletons and spiders and scare tactics in Launceston and Tasmania? What has caused this transition to this abhorrent, populist nonsense?

It takes a special sort of bastardry to scare vulnerable people, but that is exactly what is happening with the mendacious claims of those opposite. Spare us your hypocrisy! Under this government pensions went up last Friday. They go up twice a year. It has gone up by over six per cent since this government was elected—up $78 for couples and over $50 for single pensioners per fortnight. They have also been able to maintain the carbon tax compensation payment at $14.10 for singles and $21.20 for couples. We got rid of the carbon tax, which
those on the opposite side want to bring back. They want to continue to seize pensioners' dormant bank accounts. We on this side are the best friends that pensioners have ever had.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I just remind the member for Bass that the use of one of the words in that address he just gave does not raise the standards in this place. I do not want to repeat the word, but I remind him for next time—and that applies to both sides of the chamber. If we want to raise the standards in this place, we should make sure that the language is appropriate and one that you would use in front of your own children.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (15:56): I too am pleased to rise today to speak to this very important matter of public interest and to join my whip colleagues today. Those in the chamber may not have noticed that all three whips from this side of the House are speaking on the MPI today. It is a collegiate affair because all three of us are really concerned about the impacts this government's cruel budget is having all the way across Australia.

We have heard a lot today in this MPI from those opposite about a scare campaign and a fear campaign. I have a fairly important observation to share on the notion of a fear campaign. The first thing I would say to those opposite is that I did not need to contact a pensioner in my electorate the day after the budget. The pensioners in my community, particularly those on the disability support pension, are not fools. They are very insulted by the impugning that they are somehow foolish, that they are somehow gullible, that they somehow cannot think for themselves, and that they cannot tell the difference between a policy that will choose the higher increase to the pension and one that is fixed and fixed to what, over time—given past experience—will prove to be the lesser of the two. Pensioners are by no means fools. As we on this side of the House rightly know, they will campaign. They will stand up. They will watch a budget speech. They will read a budget. They will find out where the cruel cuts are coming from, as they did in May last year.

This cruel budget lives on beyond anyone's memory of the life of a budget—to month 11. It is six weeks out from the second budget and we are still talking about the cruel cuts in this budget. Today we on this side are talking to what that budget has in store for pensioners across this country. It is not good news. It is not good news at all. Professor Peter Whiteford, an independent analyst, says that the value of pensions will drop from 28 per cent of average weekly earnings today to 16 per cent of average weekly earnings in 2055.

I know many pensioners in my electorate, and I do not know any of them who would be comfortable in thinking that they are going to be living on 16 per cent of average weekly earnings. Of course, weekly earnings impact on the cost of things as well, so we can imagine that as time goes on, and if we continue on the never-ending increase of the CPI—if it continues to go up the way that it has—that their spending capacity will be very reduced.

In my electorate I have over 11,000 aged pensioners and I have 5,000 disability support pensioners, and I want to spend a bit of time speaking about them today. I want to tell the House, again, about Ms Wen Jian, who approached me days after this cruel budget. She is 46 years of age and she has lived 30 years suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. This is not a leaner; this is someone who worked in our community for as long as she could work with this debilitating disease and she now volunteers three days a week.

I heard the member for Shortland mention the value of volunteers—our pensioners—in the community. I would like those opposite to stop and to think about the unpaid labour they do
in our community, how valuable they are to the Australian population and how valued they should be.

Of course, we heard a lot: from the very beginning the Treasurer talked about the 'age of entitlement'. I think the agenda here is to wipe out the 'age of dignity' for our aged pensioners, for a disability support pensioners and for our carers. On this side, we would like to see a reverse of these cuts. We ask the minister, please: go home tonight and study, practice and learn to roll his eyes! He could then go back to that razor gang, see if he could do a really good eye roll and get this cut reversed.

The pensioners of Australia will campaign with us and we will campaign with them every day until the next election to avoid these cruel cuts. You cannot pull the wool over pensioners eyes and you cannot pull the wool over our eyes.

**Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (16:01):** I rise today to give assurance to my community that on Friday their pensions went up. In fact, under this government—the coalition government—their pensions rose by $51.80 per fortnight for singles and $78 for couples. So, let me tell the people of Lindsay and the pensioners of Lindsay: do not listen to the scare campaigns, because they are simply not true. On Friday, your pensions went up, and that is thanks to this government—$51.80 for singles and $78 for couples. That is the good news. Under this government, pensions have gone up by six percentage points. This is a government that cares about your future and this is a government that cares about the pensioners in Lindsay.

Let's talk about the facts. The total increase to the indexing pensions saw single age pensioners receive a $5.90 boost to their fortnightly payments or $153.40 a year. Couples will receive an extra $8.80 a fortnight or $228.80 per year. These increases will see the maximum age pension rise to $860.20 a fortnight for single pensioners and $1,296.80 for couples.

Those opposite are blatantly scaring and frightening pensioners right around our country. It is a shameful thing for them to do, because these are people who have served our country. These are people who have paid taxes for their entire lives, and that is why we are looking after them. That is why we are providing support to our pensioners.

Let us not forget that it is this coalition government that scrapped the carbon tax. On average, that is about $500 a year in savings to families right across Australia. But for pensioners, we ensured that we left the carbon tax compensation there. We believe that they deserved this increase. So, really, we can put together the increases that have happened. This has happened not once a year but twice a year; twice a year they have received increases in their pensions. With this, pensioners will be effectively better off each fortnight by $66 for singles and by almost $100 for couples.

These are great announcements—these are good things for pensioners. We are focused on serving pensioners. Let's remember that it was those opposite who looked at dormant bank accounts. They only had to be dormant for three years then in they went and stole all the money—they stole the money! Well, we will not be doing that. We will not be in there stealing the money from dormant bank accounts.

You need in the vicinity of $1.2 million to be a self-funded retiree, and there are a lot of people in the Lindsay community who really do work hard to ensure that they can be self-funded retirees. But, again, there are a lot of people who sit on part pensions. That is why we fought very hard to provide more equity when it comes to the deeming rates. The deeming
rates are absolutely crucial, and that is why I am very proud to say that under this government the new deeming rates for part pensioners will mean an increase in their payments of $3.20 a fortnight or $83.20 a year. The lower deeming rate will decrease from two per cent to 1.75 per cent for financial investments up to $48,000 for single pensioners and allowees or $79,600 for pensioner couples and $39,800 for each member of an allowee couple. This is great news for those on a part pension.

The upper deeming rate will decrease from 3.5 per cent to 3.25 per cent for balances over these amounts. These payments show that the coalition understands the pressures facing pensioners, and that we have a plan to support pensioners with the rising cost of living and changing economic circumstances.

I have outlined, firstly, that pensions are going up and, secondly, that we are providing support through providing better deeming rates for those on part pensions. We have also scrapped the carbon tax, we have scrapped the mining tax and we are leaving that compensation in there to help pensioners with their cost of living. That is what is important.

Finally, we will not be raiding dormant bank accounts. We believe that pensioners have worked hard for their money and that they should keep their money there. We are not like those opposite, or the Leader of the Opposition, who are in there stealing people's bank accounts; we are actually—

**Mr Dreyfus:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask that the member withdraw; I do not care what her speaking notes say, but that phrase is unparliamentary and she knows it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta):** I will ask the honourable member to withdraw that statement.

**Ms SCOTT:** I withdraw, but we will ensure—

**Mr Dreyfus:** No buts!

**Ms SCOTT:** that we leave that money in their bank accounts.

**Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:07):** We are fast approaching the 2015 budget. We are going to come back in a month's time, and we will see what this government is going to do then. But just remember: it has not sold the 2014 budget yet. Today the Prime Minister in question time wanted to assure the House, 'I have done the right thing for pensioners.' Well, let's just look at the track record. This is the same Tony Abbott who went to the last election saying, 'No cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to pensions, no cuts to the ABC or SBS.' Which one did not get cut? All of them did. This is a perfect track record. Anywhere else, you would actually call this lies, but I will not do that, because I do not want to offend the House. But to come out and say something, to use the word of my friend from Bass, mendacious! To come out and give a misleading statement to pensioners, of all people—the people least able to actually weather these cuts!

We know there is an $80 billion cut to health and education. We know what occurred with ABC, so I do not need to go there. But what occurred with pensioners was a change to the indexation rate. It was actually designed to save money. The government say, 'We're going to adjust it twice annually,' but the Parliamentary Budget office belled the cat on this. It said that, between now and 2022, there will be a saving of $23 billion. So let's not gloss over this: this is actually a budget saving. That is why they changed the indexation rate. They are also
going to claw back the relativity between pensions and wages from 28 per cent to 16 per cent, and they are saying: 'This is no cut. Nothing to see here. Move on.' But if you are living on a fixed income—if you are a pensioner—you cannot decide, 'Well, I'm going to go and work an extra night's shiftwork,' or, 'I'm going to take some overtime tomorrow to make up this difference.' You are on a fixed income of not much more than $20,000.

When you think about the government's intentions for health, we know what they want to do for health: they want to tax people every time they go to the GP. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work out that it is going to be the aged pensioners who are going to disproportionately use the services of a general practitioner. They are the ones who are going to be slugged with increased taxes out of that.

This mob opposite want to talk about doing the right thing for pensioners. I wonder when they are going to start. It did not start in the 2014 budget. I know that Tony Abbott says that the 2015 budget is going to be dull and boring, but what are they going to do about this budget? Who are they going to attack? They have their hearts set on attacking pensioners.

Mr Nikolic: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, could the honourable member refer to the Prime Minister by his title, not his name.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): That is correct. I will ask the honourable member for Fowler to please refer to the Prime Minister.

Mr HAYES: I refer to the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, the person who has told those lies to pensioners—the person who actually got up there and promised before the last election—

Mr Nikolic: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, that is an unparliamentary term, and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr HAYES: The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, before the last election, went out and told pensioners there would be no cuts to pensions. If that is not a bald-faced lie, what is?

Mr Nikolic: Mr Deputy Speaker, he compounds his rookie error by repeating the term again.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If it assists the House, would the member for Fowler please withdraw.

Mr HAYES: I will not call going out and telling pensioners before the last election, 'We are not going to touch pensions,' a lie. I withdraw that part. I know the truth hurts sometimes in this place, and sometimes you have to take some responsibility. He is going to actually stand up and deny the truth.

Mr Nikolic: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I draw your attention to the fact that the honourable member, having withdrawn that claim, then said, 'The truth hurts,' which is a repetition of the same claim. I ask him to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On that point, there is no point of order.

Mr HAYES: Of course there is no point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. We will give him a copy of the standing orders later. It will improve his education.

I have actually looked at a number of our colleagues over here; you would not be surprised. I have seen nothing in any of the publications they put out within their electorates that takes responsibility for cutting pensions. They are ashamed of this.
Mr PASIN (Barker) (16:12): Excuse me if, having listened to the member for Jagajaga and the members for Richmond, Shortland, Lalor and Fowler, I feel like I have been flogged by a feather. Just a brief observation: you know an argument does not have a lot of punch when you have to invoke all three whips to speak. I think that is an example of the reality of this situation: that no-one on that side wants to own the member for Jagajaga's claim, which is born of an intention to scare the pensioners of Australia.

I know those opposite have spent time at the member for Lilley's special school for economics, but they really need to get over this idea that more means less, that less means more, that a budget surplus means a deficit and that a deficit means a surplus. We really need to get to the bottom of this, so let's have a think about what our government has done in the 18 months while we have been here with respect to pensions and pensioners.

Chronologically—because I find that easier—the first thing we did, of course, was to scrap the carbon tax. I will not go into any great detail about that, other than to say that those opposite, at the first practicable opportunity, will seek to re-establish that tax. However, in addition to scrapping the carbon tax, we kept the carbon tax compensation, meaning that the pensioners of Australia are $14.10 per fortnight better off for a single and $21.20 better off for a couple. For those opposite—those alumni of the Lilley school of special economics—that is more money in pensioners' pockets. It is $366.60 per annum for a single or $551.20 for a couple.

The next thing we did is that we maintained the very long tradition of twice-annual increases of the pension. Pensions went up in March 2014 and in September 2014. They went up again in March 2015—indeed, last Friday. That means that single pensioners in this nation are, as a result of those increases, $51.80 better off per fortnight, and a couple is $78 better off per fortnight. What does that mean in annualised figures? It means that a single person living on the full pension is $1,346.80 per annum better off, and couples are $2,028 per annum better off.

That is more, not less. I repeat it because I am worried for those opposite, who, as I have said, spent time studying at the member for Lilley school of economics. It is a six per cent increase over 18 months, far outstripping wage growth—six per cent in 18 months. It clearly exposes what we are seeing here as a false and misleading scare campaign. In addition to that—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Order! I thank the honourable member for Barker. Unfortunately, the discussion has concluded.

**BILLS**

**Succession to the Crown Bill 2015**

Assent

Message from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bill.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Australian Defence Force: Mental Health**

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (16:16): I ask leave of the House to make a ministerial statement relating to mental health in the Australian Defence Force.

Leave granted.
Mr ROBERT: I rise with a great sense of responsibility to deliver this ministerial statement on the floor of the House. I do so having just returned from Townsville, where I, like the entire community, honoured the 34,500 personnel who deployed to Afghanistan and the Middle East as part of Operation Slipper.

In my address to ADF personnel, their families and friends in Townsville I said the following:
Operation Slipper was a conflict that involved so many, yet not without cost. 41 of our nation's sons were killed in action; 262 suffered serious physical wounds; and we acknowledge the unseen wounds of so many more. Your mission is over, but our mission to stand with, and support you continues.

This government, like those before it, takes these words seriously. We do acknowledge the unseen psychological wounds from conflict and training and we are committed to assist those carrying physical or psychological scars as a result of that service.

The government and senior Defence leadership are absolutely committed to ensuring our ADF personnel are prepared for the unique occupational risks of military service and are as resilient as possible. Likewise we are committed to promoting good mental health for all of our members and their families and, importantly, caring for those with a mental health condition.

Accordingly, today I will outline what the government is doing in terms of mental health research to more fully understand the challenges some of our service men and women face. I will also take stock of the many and varied programs and actions currently used to support ADF personnel and their families. And finally, so that everyone is aware of the journey we will take, I will address what comes next in terms of mental health policy in the ADF.

Mental health research

Mental health research forms the basis of our understanding of the mental health issues affecting ADF personnel, and the use of the best evidence ensures we make the right decisions to best support our service men and women. To provide the best support, we need to fully understand the type and range of mental health needs of ADF personnel. To know this, we have undertaken, and continue to undertake, the research to help us be informed. But let us be clear: while we are informed by research and empirical evidence, we will always remain focused on achieving outcomes for individuals and their support networks.

In 2010 the publication of the ADF Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the supporting action plan set the direction on mental health through to the end of 2015, whilst also ensuring the recommendations of the Dunt review were actioned. The initial 2010 study revealed a number of facets to the mental health challenges facing the modern ADF. Some of those findings are:
• that one in five ADF personnel had a mental health disorder in the previous 12 months, yet this was not necessarily caused by operational service;
• the estimated prevalence of PTSD amongst ADF members is around 8.3 per cent;
• that exposure to trauma through military service can increase an individual’s risk of developing a mental disorder; however, most ADF members will not go on to develop PTSD;
• that deployment alone—whilst a significant factor—is not necessarily the sole determinant in the development of mental illness;

• that the vast majority of ADF members who deploy do not report any disorder either before or after deployment; however, for some, the experiences of deployment and in particular those related to combat can be extremely traumatic; and

• finally, the 2010 study showed that there is no increased prevalence of mental disorders in members who have deployed on operations compared to those who have not.

On the surface this seems counterintuitive, and at times at odds with the experience of some of our service men and women. It may be explained by variations in demographics, life experience and the relative resilience of the two groups in the study. Clearly, though, more work and research is required, which is why the next study the government has announced will explore this critical subject in greater detail.

I am determined to ensure we fully understand the needs of our ADF personnel and it is clear to the government that additional research would be beneficial; indeed it is required. The fact is we are interested in the mental health and wellbeing of our people throughout their entire career—from recruitment, through their service life and during transition out of the ADF and into civilian life.

Transition and Wellbeing Research Program

To meet this ongoing research requirement, in June of 2014 the government launched the Transition and Wellbeing Research Program. This multimillion-dollar program is the largest and most comprehensive program of study undertaken in Australia to examine the impact of military service on the mental, physical and social health of serving and ex-serving personnel, and their families, who have deployed to contemporary conflicts.

The Transition and Wellbeing Research Program will consist of three components: firstly, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Study; secondly, the Impact of Combat Study; and, thirdly, the Family Wellbeing Study. The program will, for the first time, provide a comprehensive picture of the mental health and wellbeing status of members transitioning from full-time service. It will specifically investigate how individuals previously diagnosed with a psychological disorder access care, how mental health issues change over time, the mental health status of our reservists, as well as examining the experiences and needs of families of serving and ex-serving members.

Up to 50,000 serving and ex-serving ADF members, including reservists, and up to 35,000 family members will be invited to participate in different components of this research. Defence and DVA have now commenced the recruitment phase of this very important project and are utilising the Military and Veteran Research Study Roll, another extremely worthwhile initiative, to this end.

Suicide

Defence is also acutely aware of the association between mental health conditions and suicide risk, particularly depression and PTSD. Any death of a defence member or veteran is a tragedy and the factors that lead a person to die by suicide are often complex. It is important to note, however, that suicide of serving ADF personnel is lower than the national average and does not compare to the high rates reported in other military forces such as those of the United States.
The facts are that since 1 January 2000 there have been 106 full-time serving defence members who are suspected or confirmed to have died by suicide (as at 19 March 2015). Of the 106 serving defence members, 61 had not deployed and of the 45 defence members who had deployed, only 17 had one or more deployments to the Middle East Area of Operations. And while Defence has no ongoing visibility of ex-serving defence members, DVA and others are seeking to confirm these numbers. More work needs to be done on this. We all agree that one death by suicide is too many.

Stigma
It is also important to make a statement about the stigma that some people attach to a mental health condition. This is known worldwide as a significant obstacle to seeking treatment. Just as there is within the broader Australian community, there is still reluctance from some ADF members to seek help for mental health issues. My strong message to defence members, veterans and their families is that whatever the cause of an individual’s mental health challenge or illness, whether deployment related or not, this does not prevent you from having access to the full range of mental health care available. We will support you and your family. There will not be a detriment to your career by putting your hand up to say 'I'm struggling.' Defence members continue to be employed during their treatment and rehabilitation and are given support and the opportunity to recover and return to their previous work, or undertake new work within the ADF.

I can only repeat that one of the most important factors in treating mental disorders, including PTSD, is for members and/or their families to seek support and treatment as soon as possible. The earlier someone seeks treatment, the more likely the condition can be successfully treated. The longer it is before treatment is received, the greater the likelihood the treatment will not be effective and that a medical discharge may occur. We know there is more to be done and this government will do all that it can to seek to normalise mental health in the ADF so that it is seen in the same light as a physical injury.

Programs and Actions
There is an ongoing need for research into the mental health of ADF personnel, of that there can be no argument. Yet the outcomes of this research are what translate into better mental health for individual ADF members. To this end, it is important to highlight some of the key programs government and Defence are delivering in support of ADF personnel.

In terms of strict numbers, since 2009 Defence has invested more than $140 million in mental health services and support, while the Department of Veterans' Affairs spends over $179 million annually. An extra 91 positions have also been created in the mental health workforce over the last six years. But the numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Defence continues efforts to reduce stigmas and barriers to care, improve access to treatment and encourage defence members and their families to seek help as early as possible. If an ADF member does experience mental health problems they have access to a comprehensive range of mental health programs, services and support and they receive treatment and rehabilitation whilst still in service.

Some of the programs and initiatives developed to support ADF personnel include:
A number of mental health, alcohol and suicide awareness programs designed to improve mental health literacy and to address the perception that a mental health condition will negatively affect a member's career in the ADF;

The annual ADF Mental Health Day;

The establishment of the ADF Centre for Mental Health to provide training and upskilling of the mental health workforce and to provide expert advice to Commanders and ADF members;

The establishment of the ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal on the Defence Restricted Network (the DRN) to improve access to information on mental health issues, services and support;

It is important that this information is kept up to date.

In an innovative approach, the joint Defence and Sydney Theatre Company production The Long Way Home helped to breakdown the stigma associated with mental disorders and increase the community's understanding of PTSD;

In the same light, the government has launched the ADF Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills program;

Defence also has a comprehensive mental health screening program that identifies and provides assistance to individuals who have been exposed to potentially traumatic events through activities such as deployments, border protection operations, humanitarian and disaster relief missions and training accidents.

The ADF Separation Health Examination is a key component of this screening process and a member's transition from military to civilian life. It baselines the defence member's health status at the time of separation and ensures that all illnesses or injuries sustained during service are recorded. In addition, it provides the member with a clinical summary that assists their new civilian health care providers to understand and address their ongoing healthcare needs.

What has been introduced includes:

Self Management and Resilience Training (SMART) that is designed to develop and enhance the coping skills of personnel and their families;

The government has implemented the Reserve Assistance Program to provide mental health support to reservists rendering less than continuous full-time service;

The government is also fully committed to the Soldier Recovery Centres as a key vehicle to assist with physical and mental illnesses within the Army Brigades, as we are to the Simpson Assistance Program, and we are committed to their continued retention as a key component in managing physical and mental injuries; and

From 1 July 2014, eligible veterans with diagnosed PTSD, anxiety, depression, alcohol use disorder or substance use disorder have been reimbursed for medical expenses without the need to establish that their mental health condition is related to their military service.

These are just a number of the specific programs available to ADF members.

Throughout their careers, ADF members receive a wide range of training in mental health from annual training, deployment-specific training and targeted programs regarding suicide
awareness and prevention, alcohol management and early recognition and treatment of emerging mental health issues.

**DVA and transition**

I must stress the government's commitment to meeting the mental health needs of our people does not end when they separate from the ADF. Minister Ronaldson, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and I are committed to working together to ensure transition out of the ADF is as seamless as possible, and our service men and women receive the health care they need and benefits to which they are entitled when they leave the ADF.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs spends almost $179 million per year on comprehensive mental health service systems for clients, which include online mental health information and support, GP services, psychiatric, psychological and social work services, trauma recovery programs, and in-patient hospital treatment for those who need it. The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, or VVCS, is also available to provide support for war and service-related mental health conditions. It is important to note that this spending is demand driven. It is not capped. If a veteran needs a mental health service, they can access it.

On 1 July 2014, new initiatives, in addition to those I have mentioned, also started providing greater access to mental health support. These include:

- Expansion of eligibility to access counselling services provided through the VVCS;
- Development of a range of significant online resources to support serving and ex-serving military personnel with health conditions and provide support for families—particularly younger veterans.
- For example, the High Res smart phone app, which I recently launched with Minister Ronaldson, is designed to assist serving and ex-serving ADF members, and their families, manage immediate responses to stress and help build resilience;
- Implementation of an accredited training module for GPs called the Working with Veterans with Mental Health Problems e-Learning program that helps GPs to gain a better understanding of how military service can affect the mental health of serving and ex-serving personnel; and
- As part of the overall collaboration between Defence and DVA to enable ADF members to access information and submit claims to DVA, we have established the On Base Advisory Service (OBAS) at 35 Defence bases across Australia.

Minister Ronaldson and I share the view that the more seamless a transition, the better the mental health outcomes for service and ex-service personnel, and we are committed to continue to work together to make improvements in this area. Defence is committed to ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach across welfare, rehabilitation, compensation and transition programs to improve outcomes for ADF members and their families and better support commanders in meeting their responsibilities. A lot has been done but we recognise more is needed.

**What are the next steps?**

The Chief of the Defence Force and I both agree that more can be done and that we must continue to destigmatise mental health disorders so our ADF personnel are as comfortable
seeking help for a mental injury as they are for a physical injury. We will continue to identify those leaving the service who may be developing mental health challenges, monitor and improve the transition of those leaving the service and try and keep in contact with those who have left.

In striving for best-practice mental health management within the ADF, Defence has now fully rolled out its ADF electronic health record system, the first of its kind of any agency or group in the country. This will allow for real-time detailed reporting and data analysis in a way not possible with paper records. It will also facilitate the seamless transfer of health information to an ADF member's civilian practitioner once they separate from the ADF, as Defence's electronic health record is compatible with the national Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record system. Where required, Veterans' Affairs will also be automatically sent a member's electronic record on discharge.

With regard to continuing and future initiatives, the government is committed to expediting the $22 million development and roll out of ForceNet, one of the key communication tools for ADF personnel, their families and soon the ex-service community. ForceNet will help the senior leadership to communicate with all members and their families in a secure, trusted manner and help veterans who have left the service to stay connected.

The Chief of the Defence Force and I have also agreed to rapidly expand the current mental health screening process for ADF personnel. It will soon apply to all personnel, including those who leave the ADF, not just those who have deployed on operational service. Work is also being done to ensure that the Defence Community Organisation information packs reach every single family that deploys. There will be no excuse for this information not reaching families.

The government is also committed to supporting new, innovative and proven ways to help our personnel, such as the emerging Arts for Recovery, Resilience Teamwork and Skills Program. Further collaboration with non-Defence service providers are being and will be considered if they can meet current needs.

Importantly, the ongoing research program for the next five years covering the Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Study, the Impact of Combat Study and the Family and Wellbeing Study will further guide and shape Defence and Veterans' Affairs responses to the challenges in dealing with mental health. We will respond to any and all research outcomes that make a difference in the lives of our service men and women.

Finally, more needs to be done to destigmatise mental health so that our ADF personnel and families are comfortable seeking help. I do not think anyone has all the answers on the best approach to make this happen; however, it is a priority action to explore ways to expedite this outcome. Likewise, once Defence personnel seeking mental health treatment have finished this treatment, all haste must be pursued in medically upgrading personnel back to their original status so they can continue with their careers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are absolutely committed to the care of ADF personnel and to the continual promotion of developing and living lives of good mental health.

Defence has excellent programs in place to assist our service men and women and we will continue to work closely with the DVA to provide a smoother transition for those leaving the
ADF. We are particularly focused on improving our understanding of mental health conditions, particularly PTSD, as well as preventing and treating such conditions. We are consistently engaged in the development and refinement of the continuum of care to ensure the seamless transition and support of our service personnel from Defence to the DVA. We do this in full and open collaboration with all stakeholders.

Mental health conditions such as PTSD can be successfully treated. Early identification, diagnosis and intervention by trained mental health professionals provide the best outcome for those affected. We continually strive to learn from past experiences and use the best scientific evidence to support our ADF, their families and friends.

We as a government are fully committed to providing the best possible care to our service men and women, whatever their injury or ailment. Yes there is more to do, and we will do it, for our personnel are our most important capability and their health and wellbeing is my number one priority.

I ask leave of the House to move a motion to enable the member for Canberra to speak for 21 minutes.

Leave granted.

Mr ROBERT: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Ms Brodtmann from speaking in reply to the ministerial statement for a period not exceeding 21 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:38): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a statement on this critical issue and I thank, welcome and commend the assistant minister on his statement this afternoon. Like the assistant minister, over the weekend I too commemorated the end of Operation Slipper. It was an honour to welcome home the 34,500 personnel who served in Afghanistan and the Middle East. It was a time to remember the dedication, courage and sacrifice of those who served. It was also a time to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice—those 41 Australians—and to provide support to their families and friends. It was also a time to pledge our support to the wounded and to all those who have come back to Australia forever changed by what they have experienced. That is why I am standing here today, pledging our support once again.

The mental health of our serving and ex-serving Defence Force members must be a top priority for both government and the ADF. It is impossible to exaggerate what we owe to our service personnel and their families. In thanking them for their sacrifices and showing our gratitude for the work they do in securing our nation and preserving our precious democracy, we must ensure that we provide the highest standard of care for them upon their return. We must do all we can to achieve the best mental health management within the ADF to reduce the risk of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and, ultimately, suicide.

As the assistant minister has said, since January 2000 there have been 106 full-time serving Defence members who are suspected or confirmed to have died by suicide. While there are no accurate statistics about how many former members have committed suicide, recent reports claim that almost 200 Afghanistan war veterans have taken their own lives, and another 2,600 have been confirmed as suffering from PTSD. More needs to be done to address this lack of information. As the assistant minister said, one death by suicide is too many.
PTSD is one of the most common psychiatric disorders in Australia. The Australian Centre for the Posttraumatic Mental Health says that five to 10 per cent of Australians are likely to experience PTSD in their lives, while up to 12 per cent of serving and ex-serving members will be affected by PTSD in any given year. The Department of Veterans' Affairs says that 1,713 veterans of recent conflicts are suffering from PTSD. Of those, 955 are veterans of either Afghanistan or Iraq. However, in reality, this number is likely to be much higher. Many sufferers often develop symptoms years after their service, and many more remain undetected because they never seek the help they need to treat their PTSD. Major General John Cantwell, the former commander of the Australian forces in the Middle East says of Australia's withdrawal from Afghanistan:

There is a wave of sadness coming away, and the system—DVA and Defence—needs to be ready for it. As the problem grows, so must our response. That is why I welcomed the assistant minister's strong commitment to providing the best possible care to our servicemen and women, and I commend him again for that. His commitment builds on the work Labor did in government to reform mental health services for current and former members of the ADF and their families. Our 2013-14 budget contained a record $12.5 billion investment in the veterans affairs portfolio. Part of this record investment was $26.4 million for new mental health initiatives, which have been outlined in our 2013 white paper. These initiatives included extending non-liability health cover for certain conditions to former members of the ADF, and expanding access to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service to veterans involved in high risk peacetime service and their families, as well as to families of veterans killed in operational service.

In 2009, we also commissioned Professor David Dunt to conduct an independent review to benchmark current ADF mental health support services against best practice, including the transition process to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and to determine the extent to which mental health services met the needs of serving and transitioning ADF members. Professor Dunt made 52 recommendations to reform and improve ADF mental health programs, as well as the transition services of both Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Department of Defence states that as of 18 March this year, nearly half of the recommendations have been implemented, including completion of the 2010 Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study, and the development of the 2011 ADF Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

As you can see, positive steps have been taken to understand and support those with mental health issues. In particular, progress has been made in terms of streamlining the DVA and Defence processes, and streamlining the information on injured soldiers. I was involved in the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Defence Subcommittee review into wounded soldiers. One of the major issues that came from that inquiry, and the hearings that we had, was the lack of seamlessness between DVA and Defence, so it is great to hear that progress is being made in that area, but more needs to be done. As policy makers, we have to do more, and we have to do better.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the government on its $5 million Transition and Wellbeing Research Program, which was launched in June last year. A vital part of improving mental health services for our serving and ex-serving personnel is understanding their mental health needs. The program will, for the first time,
provide a comprehensive picture of the mental health and wellbeing status of members transitioning from full-time service.

I would also like to acknowledge the minister's and the Chief of the Defence Force's efforts to rapidly expand the current mental health screening process to include all personnel, including those leaving and not just those who have been deployed. It is pleasing to see the minister and assistant minister have acknowledged the important role that families play in recognising the early signs of mental illness. We commend the work of the Defence Community Organisation, because I know that they have been playing a very important role in this in addition to Defence Families Association.

Labor also supports the government's work in supporting new initiatives like the ADF Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills Program. While it is important to acknowledge government-run programs and commend government-run programs aimed at improving the mental health of our personnel, it is also important to recognise the non-government organisations working in this space. Last week, I was honoured to attend Soldier On's official reopening of the Robert Poate Reintegration and Recovery Centre. Soldier On is a Canberra based organisation that supports our physically and psychologically wounded soldiers. The new facilities in Crace, unfortunately not in my electorate, allow Soldier On to continue its vitally important work, particularly in helping our wounded soldiers transition from the ADF and into the next stage of their career.

Another community organisation doing great work in this space is Young Diggers. Young Diggers is working to change the culture of stigma and shame that still exists in the ADF and that sadly results in returning soldiers ignoring the signs of mental health issues and other injuries. This stigma is a significant cultural problem within the ADF, and it is pleasing to see the assistant minister listing this as a top priority. There must be clear direction from government, the minister, the assistant minister, the Chief of the Defence Force and all the way down the chain of command that there will be no detrimental impact on your career if you are seeking mental health treatment. We know that early identification, diagnosis and intervention by trained professionals provide the best outcome for those dealing with mental illness. The ADF needs to shift the stigma around mental health, as does the Australian population more broadly.

As I said, on the weekend I attended the Operation Slipper parade and the memorial service at the War Memorial. It was a wonderful event. It was wonderful to see so many—I think it was 2,000 plus—of our service personnel from the Navy, Army and Air Force, and members of the AFP. What was particularly touching for me was to see the civilians, those from a range of government agencies who served in a range of capacities over many years, marching as well in the parade. It just underscored the fact that operations like Defence have integrated workforces. Civilian Defence staff are critical to the frontline operations of the ADF. They provide high-level technical skills. Those who served also need mental health to be a priority for them as well and a support and assistance to them.

The government plays a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the wellbeing—physical, financial and emotional—of current and former ADF members and their families. It is pleasing that in recent years there has been an increased awareness of the effects of depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse and PTSD, and an increased awareness of issues surrounding suicide rates amongst current and former servicemen and women. It is also
pleasing to see the ADF has put an enormous amount of effort into improving the understanding of and screening for mental health conditions, particularly PTSD, as well as in preventing and treating such conditions. It has been particularly over the last six years. But as the assistant minister has said, and as I say, there is more work to be done. There is much more work to be done.

We must ensure that the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Defence are adequately funded to provide the rollout of their many excellent programs. And, as we have both discussed today, we must ensure that the systems that they have are talking to each other, are working together and are working seamlessly. We must also acknowledge and support the great work of community organisations like the RSLs, Soldier On, Young Diggers, the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, the Vietnam Veterans Association and Mates4Mates, as well as the DCI and the DFA. We must constantly work to reduce the stigma and normalise mental health issues within our Defence Force, because it is a shared national mission to provide our serving and ex-serving personnel, and those who have served our nation in a military and a civilian capacity with the best possible care. Again, I commend the assistant minister for his statement this afternoon.

COMMITTEES

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (16:50): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Human Rights, I present the committee's Twenty-first report of the 44th Parliament, entitled Human rights scrutiny report, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

I rise to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' Twenty-first report of the 44th Parliament. This report provides the committee's view on the compatibility with human rights, as defined in the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011, of the bills introduced during the period 16-19 March 2015 and the legislative instruments received during the period 27 February to 5 March 2015. The report also includes consideration of legislation previously deferred by the committee, as well as one response to issues raised by the committee in a previous report. Of the seven bills considered in this report, six are assessed as not raising human rights concerns and one raises matters requiring further correspondence. The committee has deferred its consideration of the remaining two bills introduced during this period and a number of instruments.

This short report outlines the committee's examination of the compatibility of these bills and instruments with our human rights obligations. The committee seeks to engage in a dialogue with relevant ministers both to help the committee better understand the intent of the legislation before it and to help relevant ministers and officials to identify and explore questions of human rights compatibility.

The committee has approached its consideration of human rights implications of legislation before it using the same analytical framework that is consistently applied to the assessment of limitations of rights. When examining legislation, the committee assesses whether the legislation engages human rights and, if so, whether it limits or promotes rights. The majority
of legislation, as can be seen in this report, either does not engage human rights or, if it does engage rights, either promotes rights or does not limit them. Where legislation does limit human rights, the committee's analytical framework allows it to focus on three key questions: (1) whether the measures are aimed at achieving a legitimate objective; (2) whether there is a rational connection between the measures and that objective; and (3) whether the measures are proportionate to that objective. These questions are the first stage of the committee's analysis. It is only on this basis that in the present report the committee has sought the advice of ministers in relation to a small number of bills and instruments.

Also in this report, the committee has examined the Criminal Code (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment—Declared Areas) Declaration 2015—Mosul District, Ninewa Province, Iraq. This regulation makes it an offence under the Criminal Code Act 1995 to enter or remain in the Mosul district in Iraq. The declared area offence provision was included in the Criminal Code as part of the government's foreign fighters bill in late 2014.

The committee has previously examined this offence provision and, after conducting substantial dialogue with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, found that it is incompatible with a number of human rights. As this regulation implements that offence provision with respect to the Mosul district in Iraq, the committee has concluded that the regulation is also incompatible with a number of human rights. Notwithstanding this conclusion, the committee agrees that there is a public interest argument in declaring areas under the Criminal Code as no-go zones to pursue the legitimate objective of national security, particularly the threat of returning foreign fighters.

I encourage my colleagues and others to examine the committee's report to better inform their consideration of proposed legislation. With these comments, I commend the Twenty-first report of the 44th Parliament to the House.

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

**BILLS**

**Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr HARTSUYKER** (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (16:54): As I was saying before the adjournment, before the Aucote decision the Seacare scheme was understood to apply to around 330 ships. Following the decision, the Seacare scheme could cover as many as 11,000 ships or perhaps more. Whereas the Commonwealth was responsible for regulating workers compensation and work health and safety for a small proportion of the maritime industry before the decision, it now has responsibility for the vast majority of the industry. This represents a massive cost shift from the states to the Commonwealth. The bill therefore seeks to restore the balance of Commonwealth and state coverage of workers compensation and work health and safety for seafarers that has existed since 1911. To effectively achieve this, the bill applies retrospectively to any injury, loss or damage suffered by any employee on or after the
commencement of the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act in 1993. Past claims will not be disturbed.

This approach ensures that there is certainty as to what a seafarer's appropriate workers compensation rights are and have been. The bill does not seek to change what has been believed to be the workers compensation entitlements and work health and safety protections of seafarers. Let me make it clear: it is not about interfering with the ability of seafarers to make a workers compensation claim or to receive workers compensation entitlements. This bill is about providing certainty and ensuring seafarers have proper protections in the short term to deal with the Federal Court decision.

More broadly, governments over an extended period have not brought forward reform in this space. The government is giving urgent but careful consideration to the recommendations of the Stewart-Crompton review of the Seacare scheme, including those to clarify the coverage of the scheme or delink the scheme from the Navigation Act. The government will consult with all industry participants on the nature of the reforms ahead of the introduction of any legislation.

It is important that we have a strong and effective Seacare scheme and the government will seek to bring forward legislation later this year to achieve this aim. With the passage of this bill, seafarers will have the workers compensation rights and work health and safety protections that they were widely understood to have had prior to the handing down of the Federal Court's Aucote decision. It is imperative that certainty is restored to the maritime industry, a vital part of the Australian economy. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (16:57): For the benefit of the House, the opposition remain opposed to this legislation. We want to see the legislation fixed and believe there are some opportunities to do that in the other place. Because of events that will occur in the other place very soon—that is, Senator Lundy's final speech—we will not be calling a division on the second reading, but we do want to indicate to the government we think the legislation is unsatisfactory at this stage and reaffirm that that is our position.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [17:02]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Goodenough)

Ayes ...................... 82
Noes ...................... 51
Majority ................. 31

AYES

Alexander, JG  Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC  Billson, BF
Bishop, JI  Briggs, JE
Broad, AJ  Broadbent, RE
Brough, MT  Buchholz, S
Chester, D  Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM  Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB  Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG  Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA  Gambaro, T
AYES

Gillespie, DA
Hartseyker, 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
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

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)
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC AS
Byrne, AM
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Griffin, AP
Hayes, LDT
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (17:10): I present the supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill, and I ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) and (2), as circulated together.

Leave granted.

Mr HARTSUYKER: I move government amendments (1) and (2) together, as circulated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendment</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Schedule 1, item 5, page 4 (line 20), omit &quot;subitems (2) and (3)&quot;, substitute &quot;subitem (2)&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Schedule 1, item 5, page 4 (lines 24 to 31), omit subitems (2) and (3), substitute:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amendments made by this Part do not apply in relation to any injury, loss or damage for which a claim was made, under section 63 of the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992, before the day the Bill that became this Act was introduced into the House of Representatives (whether or not the claim was determined before that day).

The government amendments to the bill are necessary to confine the operation of the application of a provision in item 5 to achieve its intended effect. The current application provisions operate by reference to an employee giving notice of an injury. However, giving notice of an injury is often not specific to the seafarers act or to state and territory workers compensation laws. An employee who has given notice of an injury, even with the intention of lodging a claim under the state and territory workers compensation scheme and with no intention to make a claim under the seafarers act, could be exempted from the amendments. This undermines the intent of the retrospective application of the coverage provisions and threatens the financial viability of the Seacare Scheme. Seafarers who are covered by state workers compensation schemes could also make claims under the Seafarers Act as long as they had given notice of injury to a state or territory scheme. The amendments would provide that a person who has commenced making a claim under the seafarers act, rather than just giving notice of injury, is not affected by this bill. The making of a claim for compensation is generally done under either the seafarers act or a state and territory workers compensation laws system. The amendments provide certainty in the operation of the bill while ensuring that past and ongoing seafarers act claims are not disturbed. In all other respects, the amendments will not affect the bill.

Amendment (1) concerns schedule 1, item 5, page 4, line 20—this item removes the cross-reference consequential on amendment (2). Amendment (2) concerns schedule 1, item 5, page
4, lines 24 to 31—this amendment omits subitems 5(2) and 5(3) and substitutes a new subitem 5(2). The new subitem 5(2) provides that the amendments made to the coverage provisions of the seafarers act do not apply in relation to any injury, loss or damage for which a claim was made under section 63 of the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992 before this bill was introduced in to the House of Representatives.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (17:13): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (17:14): I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this bill, the Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015, because it means that, after 18 months of dithering, delays and cuts, the government has finally come to the same conclusion that we have always held on the Labor side of the House, which is that tourism is important. Labor has always understood the enormous potential of our tourism industry and the need to ensure that we remain a competitive destination for visitors and maintain momentum toward our Tourism 2020 goals. But what we have seen from those opposite since they were elected is funding being withdrawn, arbitrary cuts to tourism programs and research, on-the-run election promises which have crumbled—such as for the Cadbury factory in Tasmania—and a slowdown of visitor growth from China of almost half.

So this legislation to ensure that Austrade has the power to develop tourism policies to benefit Australia and share vital information and statistics could not come soon enough.

While we will be supporting this legislation, Labor nonetheless has some reservations about the wording which ensures that tourism will never be a priority under this government. We would also like to see this legislation followed up with concrete action from the government—not just rhetoric but action which results in growth in the tourism sector and jobs growth. I note that the trade minister was at the Destination Australia Conference last week talking about the potential of tourism as our biggest growth sector over the next decade. Labor agrees with the minister, but he needs to do more than shift responsibility for delivering that growth entirely to industry while government withdraws from active engagement. The Commonwealth must pull its weight by supporting and investing in our industry to realise its full potential. This bill gives Austrade the power to develop and administer policies relating to tourism, including domestic tourism, and also gives Austrade the power to collect, use, disseminate and share statistics.
What is extraordinary is that we are now halfway into the term of this government—a
government that forgot to appoint a tourism minister after the last election; a government that
did not allocate tourism to any particular department; a government that gave confused
answers before the Senate estimates process as to whether it would be a part of the
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or a part of the Department of Industry and exactly
who in the bureaucracy was in charge of tourism. I think that stated mistake began what has
been a litany of failure in the tourism sector which is regarded by industry itself as a real
problem that is resulting in a lack of confidence in this government from the tourism sector.

This bill legislates to make tourism the last priority. The bill states that tourism will
essentially only get a look-in if the CEO has time. The bill says:
… if the provision of the service utilises the CEO's spare capacity and does not impede the CEO's
capacity to perform his or her other functions.

So once the person responsible in Austrade, with all the responsibilities that are there, has
performed his or her other functions—once they have got on the phone or engaged with our
global trading partners; once all of that is done—they can give some consideration to tourism.
It is a footnote, and tourism should not be a footnote. Tourism should be central to the
government's actions in terms of driving jobs and economic growth, particularly in regional
Australia, where the tourism sector is so important.

We on this side certainly recognise the importance of tourism. As shadow tourism minister
I have had a series of roundtables right around the country with the sector. Last Friday, in
Hobart, we had a very good engagement with the tourism industry in Tasmania about
investment, about future growth and about opportunities and how we seize those opportunities
to maximise economic growth. There, at the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, people
were particularly concerned to talk about the next steps to boost jobs in the region, given the
Cadbury grant collapse. That was a farcical situation where a promise was made on the run by
the Prime Minister during the last election campaign, and then had no paperwork to back it up. Then, after months and months of the Prime Minister and other senior ministers saying,
'This grant will happen,' it completely collapsed. Of course, what you should do is make
promises after some level of due diligence—not make a promise, have it collapse and then
have the circumstance where, 18 months later, you are in a farcical situation.

At a time when unemployment is at a 12-year high and tourism offers unprecedented job-
creating activities, Australia cannot afford to not have Commonwealth engagement right
across the industry, coupled with sound policies, to ensure that we can capture the growth
presented by the Asian Century. In government, Labor recognised this, which is why we
conceived, funded and implemented Australia's first national strategy for tourism growth,
Tourism 2020. This ensured that all states and territories, along with the Commonwealth and
industry, were pulling in the same direction towards our goals for growth and jobs in
tourism—and it paid off.

When Labor left office, we were well on track to achieve Tourism 2020's aims of doubling
overnight expenditure to between $120 billion and $140 billion by the year 2020. We also
made tourism a national investment priority and provided tourism operators, 95 per cent of
whom are small businesses, with access to our Enterprise Connect advice scheme.

I am particularly pleased to see that domestic tourism has been specifically mentioned in
this bill, because it is not just an economic issue. It is part of the Australian experience.
Whether it is visiting friends and relatives at Christmas, a side trip during a conference, sports trips, which are increasingly common around the country, a long weekend away, summer by the beach, or the great Australian dream of caravanning around Australia, it all adds up to an $86 billion domestic tourism industry that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and local economies—and that is before you add spending by overseas visitors, which adds about $27 billion.

Just this morning I met with Stuart Lamont from the Caravan Industry Association of Australia. He was telling me of the upsurge of young families with parents aged between 35 and 49 increasingly hitting the road. This surge is contributing to record visitor numbers in caravan parks where, for every $100 of caravan park revenue, $138 worth of direct economic benefit flows through the local economy. Much of this is in regional Australia. That trend was confirmed in the latest National Visitor Survey released on 11 March, which showed that domestic overnight trips reached a record high of 81 million in the year ending December 2014.

However, since being elected, there are signs that we could struggle to meet our domestic tourism growth targets under this Prime Minister and this government. One of the first acts of the government was the cuts made to all domestic tourism funding, which left the states and territories to fend for themselves. The problem with this analysis of leaving it to the states and the territories is that it implies that the states and territories are just competing for the domestic tourism market with each other. The fact is that the states and territories are not competing just with each other. They are also competing with international destinations—be it Bali, Malaysia, the Philippines or other potential destinations in our region. That is why it is a very short-sighted view.

The slide in visitor numbers that we have seen in Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT are a direct result of that. It is a predictable outcome of cutting all domestic tourism funding—an immediate cut turning the tap off—without having any transition plan to the states. The government also abolished the Survey of Tourist Accommodation, which left industry, investors and the state and territory governments providing guesswork when it comes to critical business planning and investment decisions.

In Queensland, instead of increasing tourism funding to compensate for the austerity measures of his good friend the current Prime Minister, former Premier Campbell Newman followed suit by cutting $20 million out of tourism in Queensland. We saw how that turned out: falling visitation and expenditure in Queensland, including a two per cent reduction in domestic overnight expenditure last year. I am pleased that the newly elected Queensland government has a clear plan to turn that around while also protecting our Great Barrier Reef. It is not surprising that they are the new Queensland government. They won all four seats in Far North Queensland around Cairns up to Cape York. They won all the seats around Townsville as well—and the Whitsundays and Bundaberg. These tourism destinations voted Labor because they understood that Queensland Labor understood the importance of the tourism sector.

Regional tourism grants were abolished. As a result, the government's on-the-run promise to create the grant at Cadbury stood out at a time when they cut other regional tourism grants. The project at Cadbury was supposed to draw 400,000 visitors per year. Now the whole plan has just melted away. There is no response to that. The government did play favourites—and
there is a whole story around how that promise came to be made to Cadbury. In the end it was
too hot for the government, which is why the melting of that promise occurred.
My Tasmanian colleagues—I was with them last week—and I are still waiting to hear what
will occur to replace the jobs that were supposed to be created by the Cadbury grant. I have a
suggestion: go back to the applications that were submitted by the 38 tourism operators for
quality projects with ready-to-go matching capital—and fund them. Our tourism industry
deserves better than a haphazard approach and the announce-and-defend model of cuts that
we have seen under this government. Labor believe that we can do a lot better—and I want to
talk about our plan for tourism and how we would build on this legislation to grow our
industry.
Deloitte has nominated tourism as one of our supergrowth sectors that is set to surge more
than 10 per cent a year—well ahead of global gross domestic product at 3.4 per cent over the
next 20 years. That will offer unprecedented opportunities for our workforce, for investors
and for our economy—but we do have to get the settings right. Those settings include not just
talking about appropriate taxation levels, about aviation or about visas—although those things
are important. It is about having a cohesive vision for the tourism sector for Australia.
If Australia can get it right—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): Order! the honourable member's time has expired. I know he was in-depth there, but the shadow minister's time has expired.

Mr ALBANESE: Mr Deputy Speaker, you cannot change the clock halfway through. When I looked up it said 16 minutes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. After conferring with the clerk I can say that I am a very generous Deputy Speaker and we are going to restart the clock at 15 minutes for the
shadow minister. I apologise for that confusion.

Mr ALBANESE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I did think, when I looked up at the
clock a minute ago and it said 17 minutes, that there was something going on.

Mr Hutchinson: I thought my prayers had been answered!

Mr ALBANESE: I know that people want this government to be over and done with as quickly as possible, but that is ridiculous!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I suggest that the speaker moves on.

Mr ALBANESE: If Australia can get it right, we have a huge competitive advantage for
the future in our region. With the growing middle class in China, India, Vietnam and
Indonesia, the opportunities for job creation are so critical. So let me suggest seven things that
the government could do that are practical, to supplement what is in this legislation.

The first thing it could do is to have a tourism minister. It is pretty simple. It matters—titles
matter when you engage in the international community. John Key in New Zealand—let me
give him as an example—is the Prime Minister and the Minister for Tourism. He recognises
how important tourism is in New Zealand, and I think that the government could have regard
to that.

The second thing that they could do is to invest in public transport. Public transport is so
critical for tourists who arrive in major cities. Those of us who have been to places like
London, with the Tube, Paris, with the Metro, or New York City, with the subway, know that
those cities simply could not function, particularly for visitors, without those. Public transport is absolutely critical for the federal government to be engaged in if it is not going to distort the market and lead not just to zero investment in public transport by the federal government but a reduced investment by state governments as well over a period of time.

The third thing that it can do, in a related area, is to engage in cities policy—to develop productive, livable and sustainable cities. Just a couple of weeks ago the Queen Mary 2 docked in Sydney Harbour. It brought with it thousands of tourists, ready to spend an average of $370 per day in our shops and on our services. That is about job creation.

Action on climate change: so many of our iconic tourist destinations will be impacted if dangerous climate change is allowed to occur. I think of the Kakadu National Park and the Australian Alps, as well as the Great Barrier Reef.

The fifth is to have a vision for high-speed rail. Last Monday I was in Albury with the candidate for the state election, Ross Jackson, talking with him and others in the community about the potential for this project. I was talking just yesterday with the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, a strong advocate for high-speed rail and someone who I appointed to the High Speed Rail Advisory Group. If we have the connecting up of our eastern seaboard capitals—Sydney to Melbourne and Sydney to Brisbane in three hours—as well as regional centres—including Canberra, of course, in under an hour, Albury-Wodonga in under an hour and Newcastle in under an hour from major capital cities—then that transforms economic opportunity in those regional centres, and tourism would be a major beneficiary of a high-speed rail line.

No-one these days who goes from Rome to Milan goes by air; they all go by train—just like from Paris to London. It has transformed travel in Europe between those cities. All the research that we did showed that rail is more than competitive for journeys of under three hours and, of course, it is also safer, better for the environment and a better travelling experience in terms of the time wasted in going to and from an airport. Indeed, one of the stops is envisaged to be at Wagga Wagga. It would transform the opportunity for international visitors to visit a great regional city like Wagga Wagga. It would be a very positive experience, and the opportunity for businesses that would flow there would no doubt flow through the economy.

The sixth issue is respect for research, institutions and evidence based policy. We believe in best practice, evidence based policy. That cannot happen if the Commonwealth does not provide adequate services through Tourism Research Australia and Tourism Australia. The abolition of the Survey of Tourist Accommodation last year came without notice, and the government still has not found funding for next year. That has a real impact: businesses tell me that they cannot plan and investors do not have the decision-making tools they need to feel confident about investing here.

And, lastly, there is international engagement. International engagement is absolutely critical. We started, in government, the Asia Marketing Fund to target new growth markets like China, India and Malaysia. We also conceived and funded the first Australia Week in China to take tourism, trade and investment to Shanghai. The current government is not having that in 2015. The current government is not having Australia represented at the World Expo in Milan this year. That is so important. There are over 950,000 people in Australia who have Italian heritage, I being one of them, and for Australia not to be positioned there is a real
lost opportunity in terms of the market. It is good enough for places like Kiribati and Tuvalu, island states in the Pacific that are a lot poorer than Australia, to be represented at the World Expo, but we will not be. This is seen as a slight by the Italian government and also by the European Community, which is such a critical tourism market for Australia, and that is very much a lost opportunity, particularly given that we obviously have an embassy in Rome and, indeed, we have a trade commissioner in Milan.

So Labor sees a large number of areas, and I have put forward seven practical suggestions to assist the government, because I am always here to help the government with positive suggestions on a way forward. We do welcome the very small step that has been taken through today's bill to at least assist Austrade to increase its capacity to focus on this tourism industry. Tourism is vital for Australia. It is important that it be not a footnote but central to economic strategy moving forward. In terms of job creation and economic growth, it is a vital sector for our economy.

Mr GRAY (Brand) (17:39): Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence in allowing me onto the speakers list to make some brief comments. The Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015 is a good bill and a bill which is supported by the opposition.

In particular, I want to draw your attention to the provisions of the bill that affect parliamentarians. Currently parliamentarians are able to hold self-managed superannuation funds, and some do. However, the current legal situation post October 2004 is that parliamentarians who come into this place, although they can hold their superannuation in self-managed funds, may not place their 15.4 per cent superannuation into those funds. That is simply not fair, inconsistent and not reasonable. This is a good amendment which brings that situation into line with the situation for public servants and for any other worker around the country. It is therefore a good way of normalising arrangements for parliamentarians. It is supported by the Remuneration Tribunal. We should never make changes to any aspect of parliamentary remuneration or salary-like entitlements that are not either recommended by the Remuneration Tribunal or strongly supported by the Remuneration Tribunal, and I am pleased to say the Remuneration Tribunal was very keen to support these amendments, since they were required effectively because of an oversight by successive governments. I include myself, since I was the minister for this part of members’ entitlements for three years. I have remarked that, if I had been aware that this particular flaw existed, I would have moved quickly to rectify it myself, since it is a gap in members’ entitlements that should be fixed, and the change costs the taxpayer absolutely nothing. Labor always believes, and this parliament has always believed, that the issues that affect the conditions of members of parliament should always be determined independently by the Remuneration Tribunal.

There are two other matters which I will just bring to your attention and which I believe should also be attended to as a matter of urgency. They are simple and they involve no cost or a very low cost. It remains the case that members of parliament do not have any occupational health and safety insurance. This is a very low-cost measure and is simply something that brings parliamentarians into line with every other worker in the country. There is also the improvement of the redundancy condition so that it is in fact paid as a redundancy instead of being regarded as being in the nature of a redundancy, which it currently is, therefore carrying a tax burden which is then reimbursed later. There is no cost to the taxpayer from regularising
the redundancy arrangement. There is no cost to the taxpayer from this measure and, with the support of the Remuneration Tribunal, I believe that we can attend to matters that are outstanding and that affect parliamentarians and our quiet enjoyment of this role, knowing full well that our superannuation and those other conditions that should be looked after properly can be looked after properly.

I make a final note that these provisions that we have made today are completely consistent with the probity rules that are enforced from time to time by the Prime Minister of the day. There are no probity rules that ought to see these changes, which are proper and appropriate, operating in anything other than public interest. I am very pleased the government have brought these forward, and I am very pleased to be supporting them.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (17:42): I would like to thank all members who have contributed to the debate on the Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015. I look forward tonight to speaking after the member for Grayndler at the Bus Industry Confederation annual dinner. Of course, buses play such an important part in tourism, particularly regional tourism.

I would like to take the member for Grayndler up on a few of the points that he made in his final remarks on this bill about tourism. I would like to quote from the Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, who on 29 October 2014 announced record expenditure of $30 billion—that is up seven per cent—by international visitors to Australia in 2013-14. He announced that at the fourth annual Tourism and Transport Forum leadership summit. The member for Grayndler made a fair few accusations about tourism and our level of interest in it, but rest assured, Member for Grayndler, that we are very much engaged with tourism and very much aware of the great role that it plays in driving not just investment in Australia but recognition of our great role globally. As the member for Goldstein said at that summit:

"This is a major vote of confidence in Australia's tourism sector which is extremely well placed to experience strong continued growth," …

Total overnight visitor expenditure — the measure used to track industry progress— and I will admit that the member for Grayndler talked about this in his speech— grew five per cent for the year— that is, 2013-14— to $83.4 billion, meaning the industry is well positioned to reach the Tourism 2020 goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure to between $115 and $140 billion.

I need to point out that we have made tourism one of five national investment priorities. The minister responsible has ‘welcomed the record value of international investment in tourism infrastructure achieved’ during 2013-14. The report of Tourism Research Australia showed:

... the tourism investment pipeline is now worth almost $50 billion across the accommodation, transport (aviation) and attractions sectors.

It is certainly hardly an industry that the coalition government would be ignoring. This is really important, and this is the clincher. I quote Minister Robb here:

Having scrapped the carbon tax, frozen the Passenger Movement Charge for the current term of parliament and by providing additional funding for Tourism Australia, it is clear that Australian tourism is open for visitors and investment—
and that is important.

I note that the shadow minister did not talk about the two New South Wales tourism ministers, because he is well aware that the member for Dubbo, the Nationals leader, Troy Grant, who is the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and his offsider, the member for Monaro, John Barilaro, who is the Minister for Regional Tourism, are doing such a good job. They are doing such a good job, and I look forward to them continuing to do that job in a strengthened Baird government after this Saturday.

The Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015 represents a further step in the journey towards more streamlined and simplified resource management and governance arrangements right across the Commonwealth. It forms part of the ongoing Public Management Reform Agenda, which is intended to support the government’s deregulation agenda and the active management of risk by Commonwealth entities. This bill involves a range of technical amendments that would further improve the operation of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, the PGPA Act, including a provision to support the administration of goods and services tax obligations by non-corporate Commonwealth entities. The amendments contained in this bill will provide greater certainty in relation to the operation of the PGPA Act.

The volume and variety of enabling legislation that Commonwealth entities are subject to mean that the process of harmonising and streamlining arrangements with the PGPA Act is an ongoing process, notwithstanding the inroads made to date. The bill would, if enacted, amend a further 33 acts across the Commonwealth. It is another small but very important step towards a better governance and resource management framework for the Commonwealth.

The government has circulated amendments that I will move shortly that will amend two further acts in relation to parliamentarians’ superannuation, and I thank the member for Brand for his comments in relation to that. The amendments will enable parliamentarians to direct their superannuation contributions and make salary sacrifice contributions to a self-managed superannuation fund.

Once again, I thank all members for their contributions, and I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (17:48): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill, and I ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) to (8), as circulated, together.

Leave granted.

Mr McCORMACK: I move government amendments (1) to (8), as circulated, together:

(1) Schedule 6, page 47 (after line 6), after item 27, insert:
Parliamentary Superannuation Act 2004

27A Paragraph 11(2)(a)
Omit ",, other than a self managed superannuation fund".

(2) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27A, insert:

27B Paragraph 13(e)
Omit "RSA; or", substitute "RSA.".

27C Paragraph 13(f)
Repeal the paragraph.

(3) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27C, insert:

27D Subparagraph 14(2)(a)(i)
Omit ",, other than a self managed superannuation fund".

(4) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27D, insert:

27E Paragraph 16(1)(a)
Omit "(other than a self managed superannuation fund)".

(5) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27E, insert:

Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990

27F Clause 1A of Schedule 3 (definition of self-managed superannuation fund)
Repeal the definition.

(6) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27F, insert:

27G Paragraph 1D(2)(a) of Schedule 3
Omit "that is not a self managed superannuation fund".

(7) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27G, insert:

27H Subparagraph 1G(5)(a)(iv) of Schedule 3
Repeal the subparagraph.

(8) Schedule 6, page 47, after proposed item 27H, insert:

27J Subparagraph 1H(2)(a)(i) of Schedule 3
Omit "that is not a self managed superannuation fund".

As foreshadowed in my summing-up on the second reading debate for this bill, these amendments allow parliamentarians to direct contributions into self-managed superannuation funds where they are in the accumulation scheme established by the Parliamentary Superannuation Act 2004. Amendments are also made to the Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990 to remove the restriction on salary sacrificing to self-managed superannuation funds.

The amendments will allow parliamentarians to have the same opportunity to manage their retirement savings through a self-managed superannuation fund as is currently available to Commonwealth public servants in equivalent accumulation schemes. Any member or senator elected since and including 9 October 2004 receives a monthly employer contribution during their parliamentary service. The vast majority of parliamentarians, some 70 per cent of the current parliament, are covered by these accumulation style arrangements, which better align with community standards and expectations. Importantly, these amendments are about how
parliamentarians can direct their superannuation contributions, not how much they receive. The amendments will take effect after royal assent.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (17:50): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian Border Force Bill 2015

Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Thistlethwaite (Kingsford Smith) (17:52): I rise to speak on the Australian Border Force Bill 2015 and the Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015. Labor supports this reform, which delivers on a commitment that was made by the member for Blaxland as the justice minister in the former Labor government to establish the Australian Border Force. A single, integrated front-line operational border entity, the Australian Border Force will be charged with enforcing customs and immigration laws and protecting Australia's borders.

In 2013, on the advice of the Customs Reform Board established by Labor to provide recommendations about action needed to oversee the implementation of customs and border protection reform, Labor announced its blueprint for reform, flagging major structural and cultural renewal within Customs and Border Protection. It has been described as a milestone in the Customs and Border Protection Service's reform journey. The blueprint sets out a vision for the future, with an eye to it bolstering the protection of trade and travel.

Labour foresaw the difficulties in store for our border protection team and worked to alleviate the pressure through sensible changes and a stronger focus on the needs of the future. To do this, we set about modernising our business systems, our processes and our intelligence capability so that they were more suited to handling a greater load of responsibility. The challenge was not just more work; the work of Customs was also to become more complicated. This meant that we had to get the operating model right and make sure that Customs people received the right training and skills in order to do this important work. Strong leadership was, and remains, vitally important if we are to continue to meet the community's expectations of our borders, which is why Labor conducted the Capability Review of Customs and Border Protection. In 2013, this review identified areas where change was needed. They included leadership, workforce, the business model and enabling technology and innovation.
Labor's blueprint for reform made groundbreaking progress, with changes through measures such as establishing a Special Integrity Adviser to manage complex cases of serious misconduct. We ensured that Strategic Border Command was supported by a string of regional commands which managed the border through highly focused and effective intervention, while also coordinating national specialised capabilities, such as detector dogs; surveillance; and advanced ship search and border technologies, including X-ray and trace detection, field communications and cyber expertise.

Labor also took steps to strengthen the relationship between Customs and the Australian Federal Police, featuring a new model for undertaking border crime investigations involving joint decision making about investigative referrals for offences under the Customs Act. Labor modernised customs and border protection operations by moving towards full electronic data reporting for all goods arriving and departing our borders. Labor understands that improving our processes at the border requires constant refinement and modification to keep up with best practice. That is why this reform in that vein has been supported by Labor.

The Australian Border Force Bill provides the legislative framework for the ABF to be formed within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection from 1 July this year. This will bring the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Border Force more clearly within the national security sector. The creation of the ABF and its associated enhanced security and integrity measures will allow greater vigour to be applied to the consideration of visa applications. However, importantly, the ABF will have no greater powers than currently exist for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

Specifically, this bill will establish the statutory office and role of the ABF Commissioner, who will have control of the operations of the Australian Border Force. The bill provides that the ABF Commissioner and APS employees in the ABF will be able to exercise powers under the Customs Act, the Migration Act, the Maritime Powers Act and other Commonwealth acts. The bill provides for binding written directions to be issued by the ABF Commissioner and Secretary regarding the administration and control of the ABF and the department respectively, and in relation to the performance of functions or exercise of powers under laws of the Commonwealth.

The bill provides the ability to require immigration and border protection workers to undergo alcohol and prohibited drug testing. It establishes secrecy and disclosure provisions for staff working within the ABF and it provides for the management of serious misconduct, including resignation and termination provisions for employees involved in serious misconduct.

The Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015 is consequential to the ABF Bill. It will repeal the Customs Administration Act upon commencement of the ABF Act and make consequential amendments to other portfolio legislation. Repeal of the Customs Administration Act will abolish the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service as a statutory agency.

The ABF Commissioner will have a dual role as the Comptroller-General of Customs, with responsibility for enforcement of customs law and collection of border-related revenue. The Commissioner will have the same standing as other heads of national-security-related agencies, such as the AFP Commissioner and Chief of Defence Force. The bill allows the
ABF Commissioner to set and vary the essential qualifications for ABF staff only—not those in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection more generally. This is intended to assist in ensuring that the workforce has the necessary skills and attributes relevant to the roles being performed in the ABF.

The bill provides that if the Secretary terminates the employment of an employee of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and the Secretary or the ABF Commissioner reasonably believes that the employee's conduct or behaviour amounts to serious misconduct, the Secretary or the Commissioner may make a declaration to that effect. This provision is already in force for staff of the Australian Crime Commission, the Customs and Border Protection Service and the AFP. It was introduced as part of integrity measures for all law enforcement agencies. Interestingly, this provision has never been used in Customs or in the Crime Commission, and has only twice been called upon in the Australian Federal Police.

The bill contains provisions making it an offence to record or disclose information obtained by a person in their capacity as an entrusted person. An 'entrusted person' is the secretary, the ABF Commissioner and all staff of Department of Immigration and Border Protection. A breach of this provision would be punishable by imprisonment of up to two years. The provisions do not remove any obligations under, and are consistent with, the Privacy Act.

The Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015 contains amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 which acknowledge that IBP workers in the ABF will be engaged in a number of unique and high-risk environments that are necessary for Australia's national security and defence. It is critical these workers can be confident that they are able to perform the tasks required of them professionally and diligently in what can be demanding environments. In this regard, the Customs bill extends the assurance currently provided to Australia's national security agencies and Defence Force to the ABF and its workers, to explicitly enable them to address the unique issues that arise in relation to Australia's border protection.

The department will feature roles and responsibilities in the areas of regulation, enforcement, investigation, facilitation, revenue collection and service delivery. All staff of the department, including those within the ABF, will continue to be employed under the Australian Public Service Act, subject to the same terms and conditions. The decision to bring all Department of Immigration and Border Protection and ABF staff within the same 'integrity framework', regardless of their specific role, is aimed at fostering a common workplace culture within the merged agencies, allowing greater flexibility for staff to move within and between Department of Immigration and Border Protection roles and Australian Border Force roles and will allow all staff to have access to the same information and communication systems. This strengthening of the integrity measures in these departments comes about as a result of Australian Crime Commission and AFP investigations and prosecutions of officers within the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service that have been involved, in the past, in criminal activities. The recommendations were made in the blueprint established by Labor when in government and implemented by the then Minister for Justice, the member for Blaxland.

The new department will operate under the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service drug-testing regime. The opposition expects the Australian Border Force to
implement this regime in consultation with affected staff and, of course, with their relevant union, the Community and Public Sector Union. As should reasonably be expected, the portfolio has zero tolerance for the possession, use or trafficking of prohibited drugs, and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection service are alcohol-free workplaces. This is the same drug and alcohol regime that currently exists for all Customs and Border Protection staff, regardless of which part of Customs they work within. Again, it is intended to reflect the fact that all Department of Immigration and Border Protection staff will have access to sensitive information and be in a position to have influence at a national and international security level. It is vitally important that the Public Service is held to the highest levels of integrity as it seeks to maintain integrity in the procedures and laws necessary in the management of Australia's borders, the integrity of which is of vital importance to the individual freedoms of Australians, the flow of people and the movement of goods.

Australian Customs and Border Protection officials experience many significant challenges at our borders. Economic imperatives mean that importers and exporters expect seamless border processing that meets world's best practice. Security imperatives mean that the need to protect Australia from those attempting to breach the border will not lessen. Substantially increasing volumes of traffic in terms of passengers and cargo, the increasing complexity of travel routes and supply chains, as well as the ongoing threat from criminal infiltration all require constant enhancement to cope with evolving and sophisticated threats and risks at the border.

International air and sea passengers are projected to increase from around 34 million in 2013-14 to 40 million by the final year of the forward estimates, while incoming air cargo is projected to increase by 125 per cent over the same period. The result is more pressure on the border, yet intervention times in which to prevent the illegal movement of people and goods remain limited. For many outside our borders, Australia is an attractive place in which to do business. Australia is home to a dynamic, globalised marketplace the envy of the world, and effective border control plays a central role in maintaining our global competitiveness by fostering rapid movement associated with entry and exit from Australia. But, in the same way that the global economy benefits from greater and more efficient movement of goods between national economies, so too do the passage and trade of illicit goods.

Organised crime groups are constantly seeking to breach our secure borders. Transnational organised crime is now big business. In 2009 it was estimated to have generated US$870 billion—an amount equal to 1.5 per cent of global GDP at the time. Unsurprisingly, those engaged in organised crime energetically, aggressively and innovatively compete for their share of illicit markets. They are profit driven and employ increasingly complex network structures and ways of concealing their activities and their identities. By ensuring effective border control, we are able to regulate what goes out of the country and under what conditions and, most importantly, what comes in. Of course, to do this effectively and to ensure there are no unnecessary impediments to the movement of people and goods in and out of Australia, oversight must be provided by a competent and well-resourced department.

Labor is keenly aware of the need for reform in the customs and border protection space. That is why we initiated the review process in government, that is why we implemented the blueprint reforms and that is why we support this reform. In government, we began the work
necessary to overcome the pressures we foresaw for our Customs and Border Protection team. Strong leadership of course remains vital to the task, in addition to getting the operating model right and ensuring the people charged with working to maintain the integrity of our borders have the training, skills and abilities necessary to do their job. Labor supports these bills and their continuation of the work we did in government to strengthen the Customs portfolio and maintain the highest levels of integrity at our nation's borders.

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (18:07): I rise to speak on the abolishment of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service as a statutory agency, through the repeal of the Customs Administration Act of 1985, and the merging of its functions with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Today's bill is another important piece of legislation the coalition is recommending to strengthen our border security arrangements. I am proud to say that our government is systematically implementing and reinforcing good policies that will sustain our track record of no lives lost at sea. I would also like to remind the House that no boats have arrived in over 200 days. This can only mean that the coalition has implemented a raft of measures that have deterred people from risking their lives in unsafe passages at sea.

Today's legislation is part and parcel of the important work the coalition is doing to strengthen our operational capability in border security and immigration. Our borders are a national asset that define our democratic and sovereign state. They are our gateway for trade, business and the operation of free markets. They support our strong national security through the prohibition of goods and people who seek to break the law. Whilst our operational framework is currently viable, it cannot guarantee to safeguard the integrity of our border security for the future. As such, operational amendments and streamlining are necessary to ensure our immigration personnel have the right resources to carry on their important tasks, and that our operations are as seamless, efficient and effective as possible. This is essential, given the volume of trade Australia enters into and the increasing population movements across our borders. It is the responsibility of the Australian government to ensure we have a secure platform for all these activities that have contributed enormously to our economy.

The Australian Border Force Bill 2015, and the other border protection reforms being implemented by the coalition, will position our nation to confront the challenges posed by increased border interactions. The Australian Border Force Bill 2015 will include the establishment of the Australian Border Force within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection with a specific Australian Border Force Commissioner. It will enforce customs and immigration law to better protect our national borders.

Australia's coalition government is determined to protect our borders and ensure that national security is always prioritised and carried out with integrity. We need a national security agency that can actively address evolving national security threats with the capacity to better enforce laws. In 2008, the creation of a single Australian border agency was rejected by the Review of Homeland and Border Security. The recommendation given was that, rather than bringing key border functions together in a single border agency, a whole-of-government strategic planning framework would better suit Australia. This framework is exactly what the coalition's formation of the Australian Border Force will offer.

The coalition commenced active discussions on a single, streamlined border security network in May of last year that will see the amalgamation of the Department of Immigration
with the Customs and Border Protection Service as a single federal entity. Thus, today's bill also allows the necessary legislative basis for such an establishment to have control of the operations of the newly formed Australian Border Force.

As part of the plan to consolidate Customs into the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, a series of reforms and capability improvements will be implemented in Customs to further lead to the abolishment of Customs on 1 July 2015. The Australian Border Force will be headed by a commissioner, who will report directly to the minister, and for administrative purposes, there will be a reporting link to the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The commissioner will have the same standing as other heads of key national security related agencies such as the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police and the Chief of the Defence Force. The commissioner will also be the Comptroller-General of Customs, with responsibility for the enforcement of customs law and the collection of border related revenue.

This bill illustrates the important measures that are critical to ensuring our border security is agile and reflective of the changes to the way we conduct business, and the merging transient patterns of human movement. By way of example, recent statistics show that in 2012-13, Australia issued nearly 4,500,000 visitor and temporary resident visas. This figure includes working and student visas. In addition to these, 190,000 migration visas were issued that year. Some 8,308 non-illegal asylum protection visas were lodged, and nearly 20,000 illegal maritime arrivals were screened. With a total of approximately 5,000,000 people entering Australia in 2012-13, the screening, processing and recording of them can prove to be difficult, with various departments having to work on them. As a streamlined department with aligned strategy and goals, the Australian Border Force will have the capacity to act in a timely and efficient manner.

The establishment of the Australian Border Force will remove duplication and it will enable the deployment of greater resources to the front-line operations. Not only will the Australian Border Force bring together front-line staff but it will also be a savings measure. The budget of 2014-15 included $480.5 million over four years to consolidate Customs into the Department for Immigration and Border Protection. Through the removal of duplication significant savings will be made. These savings will then be available to reinvest into the Australian Border Force without having to further strain government spending. Furthermore, today's bill will bring together the people, expertise and systems across the immigration and border protection portfolio into a single department.

We can look to our international partners to see how similar actions have positively impacted those nations. Both the United States and the United Kingdom have adopted similar reforms to those proposed in this bill. From their failures and successes it is clear that the Australian Border Force will benefit our national border security by being a hybrid of the current UK Home Office model. The model proposed is similar to what the United Kingdom now has in place, where its border force, previously part of the troubled UK Border Agency, became a law enforcement command within the Home Office, in 2012.

This coalition government has a successful track record of securing Australia's borders. We promised to stop the boats, and it was done. National security has always been a key focus in our policies, and we believe this needs to be done in a truly integrated and holistic fashion. We on this side have a vision to protect Australia and work effectively towards the national
interest. Working on a whole-of-government strategic framework has continually been in our interest, and has proven to be a successful way to achieve effective reform that will serve our national interest and give the populace peace of mind.

Enforcing our customs and immigration laws are two the issues on which this coalition government was voted in. These two issues are relevant to the reform proposed through this bill today. It is in our national interest to protect the borders and to protect those within our borders from potential national security threats. It is in our national interest to keep a record of who is entering and who is leaving our country, and to put a limit on the expenditure put into screening illegal maritime arrivals.

We were very clear about this in the 2014-15 budgetary allocation of $480.5 million to this reform. Flagged in the Customs Blueprint for reform: 2013-18 are: enforcement of the establishment of a strategic border command; an acquisition of six vessels suitable for inshore and costal operations; reform on trade and travel, including a new ‘trusted trader’ framework; and the consolidation of Customs into the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, as well as the establishment of the Australian Border Force. Of the $480.5 million, $98.9 million, $70.9 million and $53.6 million have been allocated respectively. The further $256.6 million is allocated for intelligence and systems, including new capabilities to support the National Border Targeting Centre. These are bound to be of great assistance to the government, to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and to the Australian Border Force in securing our borders.

We all know that addressing the key concerns identified by the populace and the government is of national interest, and something the coalition is devoted to. Since the coalition government was elected, we have strived to spend responsibly and to ensure that funding is not wasted on maintaining a separate agency that performs the same functions. Having two separate agencies whose services overlap is not sustainable for either the objective of the departments or for taxpayers’ funds.

The Australian Border Force will draw together the operational borders, investigations, compliance, detention and enforcement functions of the two existing agencies—the Department of Immigration and Border Protection with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. This key amalgamation of policy, regulatory and corporate functions with the broader department will create a more effective approach to Australia’s borders. The provisions mentioned in this bill today send a strong signal that misconduct at our national borders will not be tolerated. Strengthening our borders contributes to a safer nation for communities and a better society.

I hope members opposite will join members on this side of the House in supporting this vital bill to ensure the viability and integrity of our border security. This framework is of paramount interest to the government and all the important personnel working across these departments. We must ensure that the framework we have is updated and modified according to new risks imposed by external factors and that we mitigate risk to our citizens appropriately.
The reforms presented through this bill will ensure that this government continues in its approach to ensuring that the economy is drawn back into surplus, whilst ensuring that the protection of our borders and those within them. I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (18:17): I rise to speak on the Australian Border Force Bill 2015 and the Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015. I rise to support these bills. I note that our previous speaker, the member for Kingsford Smith, appropriately outlined Labor's record in government in our commitment to modernising and streamlining our customs and border protection services. The purpose of the bills is to establish the role of Australian Border Force Commissioner. It is also to enable the operation of the Australian Border Force. Also, it introduces provisions to support the management of a professional and disciplined workforce that exercises its powers and functions with the highest standards of integrity, which it certainly does need to have.

The Australian Border Force Commissioner will be a statutory officer who will have control of the operations of the Australian Border Force. The commissioner is directly accountable to the minister in relation to these operations. In fact, the Australian Border Force Commissioner will have a dual role with responsibility for the enforcement of Customs laws and the collection of border related revenue. It is important to note that the commissioner will have the same standing as other heads of national security related agencies, such as the AFP Commissioner. The Australian Border Force will be a single, integrated, frontline, operational border entity within the department that is charged with enforcing customs and immigration laws.

Immigration and Border Protection workers play a vital role as they make very important decisions every day that affect the safety, rights and freedoms of many individuals that they come in contact with. Indeed, due to the very nature of their work, they do hold quite a privileged place when we talk about the access they have to secure environments and, indeed, to law-enforcement databases, as well. They also exercise significant powers under the Customs Act, the Migration Act, the Maritime Powers Act and other Commonwealth law which, of course, relates to other powers they may have in relation to arrest, detention, entry-and-search provisions, the questioning of people, seizure of certain items or, indeed, in relation to the use of force. There is a whole variety of different powers they have in relation to all of those measures.

Because of all that, naturally the government and the community, very importantly, quite rightly have the expectation and trust that Immigration and Border Protection workers will exercise these powers reasonably, impartially, lawfully and, indeed, professionally. Quite rightly, there is that expectation. Because of these very high expectations, the bill does, indeed, contain a number of integrity provisions. If you like, they are in place to increase the resistance of the possibility of infiltration and corruption and to enhance, also, the government and public confidence in those Immigration and Border Protection workers. As a former police officer myself, I support and understand the necessity for the provisions that relate to the high standards required of the protection workers and I understand the reasons for them. Whilst I support these provisions, at the same time I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the great work by the overwhelming vast majority of the border protection workers who are often working in very complex and difficult circumstances. Whilst we always say it is important to be striving for high standards of integrity, which we must always
be aiming for, it is also equally important to be acknowledging many of the high standards in place and the dedication of those who are working in our border protection or national security agencies.

The bill also includes provisions that enable the setting of standards for this highly trained, disciplined and flexible workforce. Labor supports this bill because we understand how important it is to strengthen our border protection framework by improving the capacity, the abilities and the efficiencies of our border protection agency. I understand the bill has been referred to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee and that it is due to report on 7 May 2015. The bill provides a legislative framework for the Australian Border Force, which will be a single, front-line, operational, border control and enforcement entity that will be formed within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection from 1 July 2015.

The Australian Border Force will bring together the people, capability and systems from across a range of different agencies. The capabilities will be enhanced with the breaking down of traditional government department silos—in this case, those of immigration and customs—allowing this Australian Border Force to better focus on their core business and access the capacity that they need. This new department will incorporate roles and responsibilities in the areas of regulation, enforcement, investigation, facilitation, revenue collection and service delivery, and will be staffed from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and some current Department of Immigration and Border Protection staff.

The staff of the Australian Border Force will continue to be employed under the Australian Public Service Act and be subject to the same conditions. Australian Customs and Border Protection Service operational staff will move into the Australian Border Force. Also, departmental staff will transfer to the Australian Border Force, including those working in immigration compliance, enforcement, detention services and other operational functions. The decision to bring all Department of Immigration and Border Protection and ABF staff within the same integrity framework regardless of their specific role will allow greater flexibility for staff to move within departments and also allow staff to have access to the same information and communication systems.

Civilian staff within the new agency will have access to all the same information as the front-line staff and therefore will need to be held to the same integrity standard and framework. All staff will have access to information provided by agencies such as ASIO, ASIS, CIA and the FBI and therefore a baseline security clearance will be required by all. Those baseline security clearances are already in place at the departments of defence and foreign affairs and trade.

A safe and effective working environment is most important and, to maximise anticorruption measures, the bill allows for all staff within Department of Immigration and Border Protection, including the secretary and the ABF commissioner, to be required to undergo drug or alcohol testing. This could include a random test without notice. Currently, Australian Customs and Border Protection Service staff, regardless of where they are employed in Customs, are subjected to the same drug and alcohol regime. This reflects the fact that all Department of Immigration and Border Protection staff will have access to sensitive information and are in a position to have influence at a national and international security level. A similar requirement applies to all Australian Federal Police staff. The bill
also provides for the management of serious misconduct, including resignation and termination provisions for employees involved in serious misconduct. This is also a reflection of the sensitivity of the material that they are dealing with in day-to-day their activities.

The Australian Border Force commissioner's statutory authority will be created under this bill and the commissioner will be in charge of all operations of the Australian Border Force. The bill allows the Australian Border Force commissioner and APS employees to exercise powers under the Customs Act, Migration Act, Maritime Powers Act and other Commonwealth laws. The Australian Border Force commissioner and secretary will be able to give binding directions in writing regarding the administration and control of the ABF and the department in respect to the performance of functions or the exercising of powers under laws of the Commonwealth.

The Australian Border Force staff will require certain relevant skills to carry out their duties. In recognition of this imperative, under this bill the commissioner will set and vary the essential qualifications for staff as per different requirements. To demonstrate the need for a professional and ethical culture and as a mark of the standards and professionalism expected by ABF staff, the ABF commissioner will require staff to make and subscribe an oath or affirmation. This provision will only apply to those ABF staff working within the enforcement or policing areas of ABF and will not impact on the terms and conditions of their employment.

The bill provides that if the secretary terminates the employment of an employee in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the secretary or the ABF commissioner reasonably believe the employee's conduct or behaviour amounts to serious misconduct, the secretary or the commissioner may make a declaration to that effect. Serious misconduct will be defined as 'corrupt conduct engaged in, a serious abuse of power, or a serious dereliction of duty, by the worker; or any other seriously reprehensible act or behaviour by the worker, whether or not acting, or purporting to act, in the course of his or her duties'. This is consistent with the definition within the AFP Act and the Australian Crime Commission Act. The serious misconduct declaration power cannot be delegated by the secretary or ABF commissioner. This provision brings them in line with staff of the Australian Crime Commission and the AFP, and was introduced as part of integrity measures for all law enforcement agencies. A declaration of serious misconduct has been never been made with the Crime Commission or the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service but approximately twice within the AFP. Procedural fairness in the decision to terminate an employee's employment would still apply—that is, the employee could seek damages under common law.

The bill allows the secretary and ABF commissioner to issue directions that would require mandatory reporting of serious misconduct or criminal activity that they become aware of which affects or is likely to affect the operations, responsibilities or reputation of the department. Similar provisions already apply within the AFP, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service as well as to other professionals who become aware of misconduct or criminal activity.

This bill contains provisions making it an offence to record or disclose information obtained by a person in their capacity as an 'entrusted person'. An entrusted person is the secretary, ABF commissioner and all staff of the Department of Immigration and Border
Protection. A breach of this provision would be punishable by imprisonment of up to two years. The provisions do not remove any obligations under and are consistent with the Privacy Act.

The Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015 is consequential to the ABF bill and will repeal the Customs Administration Act upon commencement of the ABF act.

Labor support this bill because we know how important it is to strengthen and streamline our border protection framework. We had that view in government and we certainly support this bill in opposition because we can see how important it is that we have that border protection framework.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (18:29): It is great to have this opportunity to speak on the Australian Border Force Bill 2015. And I do endorse this bill, as I endorse every piece of the coalition government's policy and legislation, particularly with regard to matters to do with national security. Whether it is our fair and effective immigration policy, metadata or—my personal favourite, because it is a bit of a proposal of mine—the revocation of citizenship for dual nationals who participate in terrorist causes, these are all policies and legislation that are ultimately and totally worth supporting, as is, in this case, the Customs and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Border Force) Bill 2015, which will repeal the Customs Administration Act 1985 and amend a number of other Commonwealth acts, including the Customs Act 1901.

Although I was in the Australian Federal Police for two years before I joined the Army, I did not have much to do with Australian Customs. I do recall that one of the people I went to school with, a guy called Tim Morris, joined Customs not long after I joined the Federal Police, but he later moved on to the Australian Federal Police. I consider Tim Morris one of the stars of our class, now Assistant Commissioner with the Australian Federal Police. He has certainly been doing great work in providing reality checks on the conspiracy theorists who suspect the worst regarding metadata.

But I digress, because even when I was in the AFP I had great confidence in Customs. I used to go to see the Customs officers working at Sydney airport when we would move through their areas, and they seemed to be completely on top of it. In fact, I remember one day a number of us were talking about how Customs had intercepted someone trying to smuggle drugs in the heels of his boots, walking through Customs. I was thinking, how do you possibly work out that the guy had drugs concealed in the heels? I believe it was heroin or cocaine. And it was just because one of the Customs officers had detected that the heels were not right on those boots. So, we are talking about people with great skills and great experience. I guess from that point on I always thought Customs were so very good at their job and completely on top of their game. Whether it was there at that front line of the border or whether it was in what we used to call parcels post, whereby people tried to post drugs into the country, the Customs people were very sharp operators, and it is easy to have great confidence in what they did and what they do.

What has become clearer in the years since I left the AFP is that the circumstances surrounding our borders have become even more complex and more challenging, and of course it will continue to evolve. When I was in the AFP working at Sydney and Perth airports, the threats were less sophisticated and the means to detect the threats were,
unfortunately, also less sophisticated. Now it is a real battle, and we need to make sure that in a broad figurative sense our ‘border soldiers’ are armed with the latest equipment and are ready to fight. It is important to fully understand that the border is complex. It is where the flow of people and the movement of goods are controlled. It is not just a line on a map but, rather, exists offshore and onshore, because it includes overseas, the maritime border and also the domestic dimensions of the border. Clearly it is not a line where there is a stop sign but where those responsible must regulate access and egress and facilitate and enforce the law.

The coalition is committed to building a safe and secure Australia, and this bill is a vital part of maintaining this commitment to the Australian people. By combining the experience of staff who interact with people and goods, the Australian Border Force will be in a better position to deal with threats to Australia’s borders. The integration of Immigration and Customs functions is also an essential part of improving efficiency. The Australian Border Force is required to control who comes and goes and also what comes and goes. Through this process, the safety and security of Australia and our people is protected.

We must also remember that, practically, there is a significant effort in the maritime area to identify and act on illegal arrivals and to conduct surveillance in our exclusive economic zone for illegal fishing and other maritime threats. To demonstrate the increasing demand for effective border protection, interestingly in the 2012-13 financial year air cargo constituted 28 million tons, and in 2016-17 an 85 per cent increase is expected, and it will rise to 52 million tons. In the case of sea cargo, the increase is 20 per cent—therefore, 2.7 million tons up to 3.4 million tons. Over the same period, the number of international travellers is expected to increase by 25 per cent, going from 34 million up to 43 million a year.

This bill therefore is the delivery of the May 2014 announcement that we intended to consolidate the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection service into a single department, with the Australian Border Force established within the department. This bill will effectively bring all existing Customs and Immigration functions of an operational nature together whilst leaving policy, regulation and corporate matters to the department. As part of the Australian Border Force there will be a commissioner who will have a dual role as the Comptroller-General of Customs. To meet the challenges of the environment, the ABF will have a number of workforce management process provisions provided, including a professional integrity framework, information secrecy and disclosure, and of course means to deal with serious misconduct.

As a former member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, I am pleased that the commission will have jurisdiction over the whole department on a whole-of-agency basis. There are parts of this bill that include significant administrative detail. I will not go into those just to fill up time, but I would say that this bill will enable this nation to have a better response to the issues of protecting our borders. Not only will we have a better capability, thanks to having the Australian Border Force, but also this sort of significant reform will be more efficient. As has been said, over the forward estimates around $180 million will be achieved in savings measures, and it is likely to achieve $100 million a year after that. These changes should be seen in the context of the challenges now and into the future. Trade and passenger numbers will increase sharply. The supply chains will get more complex, and the ABF, through these changes, will have the
flexibility and the capability to respond to the needs of this nation and to the threat wherever it materializes on our borders.

When I talk of the complex challenges, we can of course expect that organised crime across the borders, around the region and around the world will be looking for chinks in our armour and will take advantage of any weaknesses. The Australian Border Force will be up to the task and will work in concert with other agencies, both here and overseas, to meet and defeat the threats. I know that some people may have trouble with some aspects of this bill, such as the ability to delay resignations for up to 90 days where an officer is being investigated for serious misconduct, but this is nothing new and does already exist in other agencies.

I do also wish to be very specific about the lines of demarcation that will result. Firstly, the Australian Border Force will be responsible for border control and also investigations, compliance and enforcement. Border control includes strategic border command-land; strategic border command-maritime; and immigration border functions, such as the frontline of airports and ports, remote areas and uniformed officers.

With regard to investigation, compliance and enforcement, or ICE, this includes conducting ICE across a scope that includes customs, immigration, onshore detention, removals, offshore processing, operations, and community programs.

The Australian Border Force Bill 2015 acknowledges the unique and developing challenges of law enforcement and immigration and the challenges of the border, and I very much endorse the bill.

Mr GRAY (Brand) (18:38): It is with great pleasure that I follow the member for Cowan in this debate to support the Australian Border Force Bill 2015. It is an important bill. It is an important bill for West Australians. It is important not just because our state, as we know Deputy Speaker Randall, is the state with the longest coastline in the entire Federation—bounded by the Southern Ocean to the south, the Great Australian Bight, past the Indian Ocean to the Arafura Sea, and Bonaparte Gulf in the northern part of the state. So the security of our borders and of our seaways is very important to West Australians. As I will say later in my comments, the technology that we will deploy to give life to the Australian Border Force is technology that has a unique West Australian capability and a unique West Australian edge.

I am particularly pleased to be speaking on this bill because it is a great demonstration of the many things that unite both sides of this House. The idea of this kind of initiative in immigration and border protection is something that grew from a lot of work that was done by the Gillard government and championed very strongly and in a very articulate manner by the then minister Jason Clare. Indeed, so recognisable is this model from the model that was discussed by the former government that it is clearly possible to see a terrific heritage for this bill and a lot of thought that has gone into the construction of the Australian Border Force—how it will work and how it will deploy its effort to protect our national borders in the great interest of our nation and in the interests of safety. Later, I will focus specifically on maritime safety.

The bill provides a legislative framework for the ABF, which is a single frontline operational border control enforcement entity that will be formed within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection from July this year. That is a good thing. It will bring the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Border Force more
clearly within the national security sector. That is an outstanding thing. The creation of ABF, and the associated enhanced security and integrity measures, will allow greater rigor to be applied to the consideration, for instance, of visa applications. The ABF will have no greater powers than currently exist for the department and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, but it will deploy those powers in a better way.

There are many things that make me particularly pleased when I look at this bill, mostly because, as we know, the proper management and control of our borders is critical to the economic interests of our nation. Maintaining our borders as a secure platform for trade, travel and migration is a core responsibility of the Australian government. It is a responsibility that we all, in this place, have taken seriously since the Federation was created. Indeed, it was one of the reasons for the creation of the Federation. There is little point in having planned migration programs or laws around the movement of goods and people if we cannot protect the integrity of our borders. The initiatives in this bill will allow us to do that.

Some of the unique West Australian technologies that will be deployed to help make this border force work are, of course, the Cape Class patrol boats, which are built in Western Australia. They are built I am sure, Deputy Speaker Randall, by many workers from your electorate and from mine—highly skilled workers plying their skill not just in aluminium welding and in the fabrication of sophisticated maritime assets, but also in the design of those assets. They do it out of an outstanding company called Austal, which does its business out of Henderson, just north of my electorate in the southern coastal fringe of Perth. Austal is, globally, a unique company. It is unique not simply because of the intellectual property and design skill that it brings to the unique tasks that it undertakes, but it is unique because it does so on a commercial model. We do not see Austal out campaigning for protection. We see Austal out campaigning for jobs and work on a global scale. We see Austal now, for instance, winning one of the great contracts for the supply of vessels to the US Navy—a contract in the order of some $10 billion that will bring life to vessels built in Alabama from skilled design that grows out of Perth and skilled innovation that has been put together out of the Austal shipbuilding facility in Western Australia. When Austal was awarded the contract for the design, construction and through-life support of the Cape Class patrol boats for Australian Customs and Border Protection, as it was known in 2011, the eight nearly 60-meter aluminium monohulls were due to be delivered by August this year. Each and every one of them has been delivered on time and on budget. Each and every one of them has performed to its original specification, and each and every one of them is to be deployed, as was intended, in the protection of our borders. The support contract is to extend for a minimum period of eight years and encompass the full range of intermediate and depot level maintenance activities.

The Cape class patrol boat is both innovative and a terrific piece of technology. It brings greater range, endurance and flexibility in responding to a whole range of maritime security threats. It brings greater flexibility than the old fleet and it brings greater capacity than the old fleet. The vessels have enhanced capability to operate in higher sea states and to survive in more severe conditions. As we know, the Indian Ocean can bring with it at certain times of the year severe sea conditions that would test most vessels and most crews.

The Cape class patrol boats are able to undertake 28-day patrols—remain at sea for 28 days—and are able to sail 4,000 nautical miles before needing to refuel. They have the
capacity to combat the full range of maritime security threats. They have a larger crew to more effectively and safely manage boarding operations. They can identify, track and intercept an extended range of threats in the maritime domain and gather intelligence and store evidence for matters that may proceed to the courts in our own country. They are also able while at sea in difficult sea conditions to launch two tender response vessels simultaneously. The capacity of these vessels is prodigious.

As all West Australians would agree, the work that Austel do at Austel ships makes us proud. I would encourage anyone who has not yet had the pleasure, to go to Austel and see not just the quality of what they build and design and the quality of their workmanship but also the work that they do to train their staff and their team. It is another great thing about the Kwinana industrial strip and, in particular, one of the great defining elements of this company, Austel.

These ships will also be used to counter people, drug and weapons smuggling. They will be used to apprehend foreign fishing vessels. They will be used to gather information and intelligence, monitor environmental pollution and assist management of offshore nature reserves and marine parks. These assets are about so many things and, working with the newly constructed Border Force, they bring to the Australian government the capacity to ensure that our borders are not only kept safe for people movements and trade and commerce but also kept safe for the people of Australia.

I began my comments by making an observation about the sheer size and length of the Western Australian coastal corridor and by making the point that, in so many ways, our Federation was created due to the need of the original colonies to create that safety for the original colonisers of our country. The development of the Australian Border Force and the capacity we have will allow our nation to carry out its responsibilities to itself and, in the complex world of maritime protection, in a way that will make us all proud. With Australian technology and careers and jobs developing through the Australian Border Force itself valuable work can be done in the protection of human life and the protection of our Australian way of life. I commend this bill to the parliament.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (18:48): I am very proud to stand here tonight to speak on this important bill, the Australian Border Force Bill 2015, which builds on the government's significant achievements around border protection over the past almost 18 months. As a regular participant in the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program, I have seen the results first-hand. Last year, I spent a profound week on operations out of Darwin with the military and Customs personnel who protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests. These dedicated men and women are relieved to no longer be plucking the bodies of perished children, parents and grandparents from the ocean. I was moved as they recounted horrors that have taken a huge professional and personal toll. That the former Labor government put them in that position struck me as abhorrent. Indeed, those on the Left who claim to represent a humanitarian viewpoint have overlooked, ignored or forgotten that under the policies of the Labor and Greens government, more than 1100 people drowned while trying to reach Australia in leaky boats.

This government's border protection policies have not only save lives but have already saved $2.5 billion, which could, once the budget improves and the detention burden further reduces, be reinvested in our humanitarian program. So, clearly, the first border task of this
coalition government has been—with the utmost efficiency—accomplished. We have stopped the boats. We have saved potentially thousands of lives—and certainly billions of dollars. However, border protection does not start and finish with nullifying illegal boat arrivals. We must now apply the lessons of our success with Operation Sovereign Borders to our broader border picture.

Ahead on the horizon for Australia's borders are some significant challenges. Over the next three years, air cargo consignments are expected to grow by 85 per cent, sea cargo will increase by 20 per cent and 25 per cent more international travellers will be headed to our shores. These additional movements come at a time when the threat of serious, organised transnational crime is bearing down like never before. Faced with these looming pressures, we are again determined to take the steps necessary to secure the integrity of our borders and, in so doing, protect the Australian people from those who seek to do us harm—protect them from all but legitimate trade, travel and migration factors critical to our diversity and the free market opportunities for which our economy is built. With this bill, we establish the new framework.

The key spoke in the reform is embedding the role of an Australian Border Force Commissioner, who will command a new, front-line operational border control and enforcement entity to be known as the Australian Border Force. In effect, we are consolidating and strengthening our border protection services into a single unit. This unit will in turn fit inside the merging of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The single, newly-integrated Department of Immigration and Border Protection will assume responsibility across customs controls, immigration laws and border protection.

The Australian Border Force Commissioner will be our most senior border law enforcement officer charged with leading our many highly-trained and field-proven officers in protecting and maintaining our borders. The wide-ranging team will encompass not only those who staff the air and sea borders at airports and ports, but also those who are involved in investigations, compliance and enforcement in respect of illicit goods and illegal visitors. This includes the management of detention facilities and the removal of noncitizens who do not have a right to stay in Australia. The commissioner will be afforded the same standing as other heads of key national security related agencies, such as the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police and the Chief of the Australian Defence Force. The Australian Border Force Commissioner will also be the Comptroller-General of Customs, with responsibility for the enforcement of customs law and the collection of border-related revenue.

As I stated earlier, this bill will facilitate the full integration of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection into a single department. By removing the traditional silos of immigration and customs, the Australian Border Force takes a common sense approach that will improve capability and pull together border policies, strategy and operations to bring cohesion and focus. The concept of an integrated border authority is not a new one. We have seen successful applications of this in the United States and in the United Kingdom. With this bill, our modelling seeks to adopt the best of these experiences while remaining attuned to our unique geopolitical circumstances and challenges.
The Australian Border Force will also include staff serving beyond our borders. It is important to maintain these strategic operational roles with our regional partners to help secure Australia’s maritime zone, to continue to prevent and deter illegal arrivals and to stop any influx of prohibited goods. The Australian Border Force will also work collaboratively with law enforcement and intelligence partners in jurisdictions both here and abroad. The success of Operation Sovereign Borders, which triggered the collapse in illegal boat arrivals and people no longer dying at sea, could not have occurred without the mutual sense of purpose, trust and information sharing between government agencies.

All of this enhanced capacity to meet the challenges of the future to secure our borders for future generations of Australians represents a considerable saving to the taxpayer. This is a once-in-a-generation reform in which the consolidation of the department of immigration with Customs and the establishment of the Australian Border Force is expected to generate $180 million in efficiencies over the forward estimates, increasing to $100 million each year after that.

We have a responsibility to the Australian community to deal with eventualities on our borders now. While border agencies perform an invaluable role today, current operations simply will not be sufficient to protect our border beyond 2020. Current separate agency arrangements will not deliver the most cost-efficient and sustainable approach into the future. These changes will ensure the right balance is achieved in maintaining the integrity of the Australian border while fostering legitimate trade and travel movements. The measures will also allow us to effectively deal with the speed and complexity of the future border protection environment. With this bill, the government is once again demonstrating our commitment to national security operations while building on our track record in regard to illegal boat arrivals.

Without this legislation, immigration and customs officers will not be in the best position to tackle the risks posed by mounting volumes of travellers, business entities and migrants in a world increasingly and tragically beset by insidious threats to our national security. As the government of the Australian people, we must do everything we can to stay ahead of crime syndicates and terror threats which would seek to penetrate our borders and weaken our harmonious and diverse culture. We are a society that promotes freedom and treasures the safety of communities.

When we came to government, we inherited what—it would be fair to say—was a very big mess on our borders. The process of bringing together government agencies and of developing an effective solution to deal with the challenges we face on our borders was not an easy journey to go on. I am somebody who has spent time serving with our customs and border force agencies in the north and seen the professional and personal toll that has been taken on individuals that have gone through this process. The bill that we have before us here tonight will make a very significant difference. It builds on the lessons that we have learnt throughout that important process. We owe it to the Australian people—and I want to thank the Labor members who spoke in support of this bill tonight—to implement the best possible reforms, so that we can ensure that the Australian border is protected for many years to come and that future generations of Australians can have trust in the security and integrity of the Australian border. For those reasons, I commend this bill to House.

Debate interrupted.
PETITIONS

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (19:00): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

**Islamic Halal Certification**
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of The House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House; that Islamic halal fees attributed, coerced upon any product sold or produced in Australia is an imposition which is un-Australian, not for the benefit of Australia, is counter productive to Australia, is undemocratic, in that the proceeds are segregationalist and benefits only Islamics. Especially in the case of foods or products not needing halal certification-implying extortion.

We therefore ask the house to, not recognise halal certification and ban that application/practice. That the application of a fee upon any person or company for the purpose of halal implied products forth-with cease.

from one citizen

**Melville Amnesty Group**
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of members of Melville Amnesty Group draws to the attention of the house a Commonwealth Legislative or administrative matter which we understand the house has power to act on.

Dileer Mezori, Kurd and Moslem, became a covert Christian in 2010. In 2011 word reached him that some family members were coming to kill him. He fled to Jordan, obtained a visitor visa, flew here and applied for permanent visa on 6/10/2011.

Visa Review Tribunal on August 10 2012, upheld his appeal, indicated visa would be issued within 3 months.

His Visa Status Letter enabled him to obtain Tax File number, medicare card, and allows work rights.

Three and a half years after arrival his visa is still pending.

Medicare card renewal has been straightforward. Medicare now require a current letter from Immigration Department stating that his visa is in process.

He has to contact his legal representative every 3 months to obtain such letter.

He has been unable to obtain regular work with just the VEVO printout, as it has no expiry date.

We therefore ask the house to direct the Minister for Immigration to ensure that the department expedite the process of his permanent Protection Visa so that he may obtain regular work, and to direct the Minister for Health to ensure that the medicare renewal is made straightforward unless the visa is cancelled by the immigration department.

from 79 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (19:00): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:
Norfolk Island

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 1 December 2014 about a petition on the governance of Norfolk Island submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions. I apologise for the delay in responding.

In November 2014 I asked the Hon Gary Hardgrave, the Administrator of Norfolk Island, to lead community consultation following the release of the report on Norfolk Island by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (JSCNCET). The report makes significant recommendations for the future of Norfolk Island, including that the Norfolk Island Act 1979 be repealed and a local government type body be established on Norfolk Island to ensure ongoing local representation. The Administrator has now reported to me on the outcomes of the consultation process and I am considering his report.

Given the consultation that has already occurred, it is not my intention to call a referendum or plebiscite on the governance arrangements on Norfolk Island. I note the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly may pass a resolution to direct a referendum and does not require the approval of the Australian Government (the Government). However, on 11 February 2015 the Hon Lisle Snell MLA, the Chief Minister of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly, withdrew his intention to call a referendum at this time.

Addressing the fundamental challenges facing the Norfolk Island economy is key to preserving Norfolk Island's culture and ensuring families can remain on the Island. The Government is committed to reforms to strengthen the Norfolk Island economy, preserve its culture and heritage and improve the Island's sustainability.

The Government is currently considering its response to the JSCNCET report and it is encouraging that so many in the Norfolk Island community have taken the time to contribute to the consultation process.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Mr Briggs

Abbot Point Coal Terminal

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 12 February 2015 (reference 987/1466) on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding the Abbot Point Coal Terminal expansion.

The Government is balancing carefully the need to protect the Great Barrier Reef while allowing sustainable development for the nation. The Government does this taking into account our international environmental obligations and in accordance with national environmental law. Public participation and judicial review are important to the effective operation of environmental impact assessment under national environmental law. I do not consider that any changes to the current provisions are necessary.

In regards to the proposed expansion of the Port of Abbot Point, I am acutely aware of the level of public interest in this matter and am committed to applying a rigorous and thorough environmental impact assessment process to these projects. I must assess each controlled action in a way that will efficiently address all relevant impacts.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

from the Minister for the Environment, Mr Hunt
Unicorn Foundation: Neuroendocrine Cancer Funding

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 December 2014 to my predecessor, the Hon Peter Dutton MP, regarding a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding the Unicorn Foundation’s Neuroendocrine Cancer Nurse Support Service. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Australian Government recognises that cancer has a significant impact on the Australian community and is committed to improving outcomes for those affected by the disease through prevention, early detection, treatment and care.

I am aware of the work of the Unicorn Foundation in providing support to people with neuroendocrine cancer. The request for support for the Neuroendocrine Cancer Nurse Support Service will be considered by the Government in the context of the Government's health priorities and overall fiscal situation.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

from the Minister for Health, Ms Ley

Morayfield Medicare Office

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 December 2014 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions about the then pending one-stop shop implementation of the Morayfield Medicare Service Centre with the Caboolture Centrelink Service Centre scheduled for 15 December 2014.

The Caboolture One-stop Shop has joined 170 other locations around Australia that offer the full range of Medicare and Centrelink services in one location. The Department of Human Services (the department) is committed to improving the way people deal with the Australian Government by providing convenient, easy-to-access, coordinated services from a single point of contact. This will enhance access to services and reduce the need for customers to visit two locations.

Currently, over 85 per cent of patient claims for GP services are lodged electronically at the doctor's practice, meaning most people can save a trip to Medicare by having their rebate transferred into their bank account directly while at the doctor's surgery. Over the past two years, the number of people coming into the Morayfield Medicare shopfront has reduced by almost one third.

The department provides a range of convenient options for people to access Medicare services without visiting a service centre. The range of routine Medicare transactions available online include:

- claiming a Medicare benefit for some items;
- updating personal information including bank account details;
- requesting a replacement or duplicate Medicare card; and
- viewing a range of other information without needing to visit a service centre or telephone the department.

The department's Express Plus Medicare Mobile app can be used by people to access a range of Medicare services at their convenience. This mobile app is available for both Apple and Android devices and can be downloaded from the Human Services website.

The department will continue to offer face-to-face services at service centres for customers who require more personalised or intensive support. We are making changes to our service offer because we realise the needs of Australians have changed. People expect government services to be personalised, tailored and targeted to their needs. The department will continue to do that through various channels, including face-to-face.
Parking and accessibility are always taken into consideration prior to the creation of a one-stop shop. The Caboolture One-stop Shop is located across the road from the closest bus stop and 600 metres from the railway station which also provides a taxi rank.

Thirty five public parking bays are available for customers on-site including one dedicated disabled car bay. There are an additional 12 unmetered parking bays on both sides of the road in front of the service centre and timed two hour parking in the surrounding streets.

A comprehensive community engagement strategy was initiated prior to the one-stop shop implementation on 15 December 2014. This included discussions with the Member for Longman, Mr Wyatt Roy MP, pre-move posters in the service centres providing Medicare and Centrelink services, presentations to the Moreton Bay Community Services group and advertisements in the local newspaper on 5 and 12 December 2014. Mr Wyatt also had an article in the Caboolture newspaper on the colocation.

The main driver for these changes is providing quality service to the community. There will be modest savings achieved through efficiencies resulting from working in a shared environment and a reduction in ongoing property operating expenses. These savings initiatives were committed in response to the efficiency dividend announced in the Economic Statement of August 2013.

Thank you again for writing on behalf of Standing Committee on Petitions.

from the Minister for Human Services, Senator Payne

PETITIONS

Statements

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (19:01): In my statement today as Chair of the Petitions Committee, I would like to focus on some of the rules for petitioning the House, in particular the rules around signatures.

The most important rule regarding signatures is the requirement for all petitions to have a principal petitioner. The principal petitioner, usually the person responsible for organising the petition, must provide their full name, postal address and signature on the front page of the petition. This information is not published on the committee website or in Hansard. It is used by the committee to communicate with the petitioner to keep them informed of the progress of their petition. They are notified when their petition is presented, referred to the responsible minister and when the minister responds. Additionally, when the committee holds public hearings to discuss petitioners' experiences, it is the principal petitioner who is invited to appear.

I would also like to remind my colleagues in this House that they cannot be either principal petitioners or signatories to petitions. While there are many roles for members to play with regard to petitions, signing them in any capacity is not one of them. If a member were to sign a petition, that signature would simply not be counted. If a member is acting as the principal petitioner, the entire petition would be deemed to be noncompliant.

Another very important rule for signatures is that they must be handwritten originals. No copied, pasted or electronic signatures can be accepted. Of course, this means that petitioners must send their original documents to the committee by mail, rather than faxing or emailing scanned copies. This also rules out the use of electronic or e-petitions when petitioning the House. Other chambers around Australia and, indeed, around the world have moved towards accepting e-petitions, but at this stage the House standing orders do not allow for e-petitions.
People signing e-petitions should be aware of this fact. The committee has considered many e-petitions signed exclusively online by, at times, tens of thousands of Australians, and has had no choice but to find them noncompliant and thus unable to be presented in the House. This is always disappointing, as it means that despite the efforts of the principal petitioner, not to mention all those who have signed the petition electronically, they are not able to access the benefits of petitioning the House.

Signatures must also appear on pages which contain at least the request, in exactly the same wording as appears on the front page of the petition. Another issue the committee commonly encounters with petitions is that pages of signatures cannot be included in the final count as they appear on pages which do not contain the request, or which contain a version of the request which does not appear on the front page of the petition. Again, this is very disappointing for the committee, as it means that the House cannot be made fully aware of the level of support in the community for a particular request.

I would encourage anyone seeking to petition the House to consult the committee's web page and to contact the committee secretariat, before they start gathering signatures, for guidance on how to make sure that every signature gathered will count. The secretariat can provide detailed advice for drafting petitions that meets the House's requirements, thus helping petitioners to successfully access all of the benefits that petitioning the House can bring.

COMMITEES
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Report

Mrs Markus (Macquarie) (19:05): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, I present the committee's report on the inquiry into the Business Innovation and Investment Program.

For over 200 years, Australia has been a destination for migrants, who have often travelled vast distances and overcome significant challenges in the hopes of establishing a better life for themselves and their families—and, indeed, generations to follow. Migrants provide a substantial contribution across all facets of Australian life: economic, social and cultural.

The goal of Australia's migration program is to meet Australia's economic and social needs through building the economy, shaping society, supporting the labour market and reuniting families. The Business Innovation and Investment Program is designed to meet those needs by attracting high-quality investors and entrepreneurs to invest in Australia. It is important to encourage the creation of genuine and sustainable business opportunities that will generate economic growth, benefiting both the Australian economy and the workforce.

With an increasingly important economic objective, the committee held the view that it would be beneficial to inquire into the program and assess its effectiveness.

However, the committee faced a number of challenges during the course of its inquiry which impacted on its ability to address its terms of reference as completely as we would have liked.

Most notable was the distinct lack of empirical evidence.
As the program is administered by the federal Department of Immigration and Border Protection and each state and territory government, the committee invited the governments to provide submissions and attend public hearings.

However, the information, and in particular the data provided by the governments, was limited and furnished little evidence that the program was actually meeting any of its objectives.

The committee also faced a number of other challenges including:

- the exclusion of a key component of the program, the Significant Investor Visa stream;
- the contradictory nature of the recommendations made by the various stakeholders;
- the relatively short time frame from when the program commenced in its current form to the commencement of this inquiry.

It is also important to note that the government announced that it would expand the Significant Investor Visa, task Austrade to become a nominating entity for the visa and conduct a survey on the 2015-16 migration program as well as undertake a review of the skilled migration and temporary activity visa programs.

The committee therefore recommends that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection examine extensively the program as part of the 2015-16 migration program survey and in its reviews of the skilled migration and temporary activity visa programs.

The committee recommends that the examination focus specifically on the:

- suitability and attainability of the objectives set for the program;
- role that states and territories have in administering the program and, specifically, the accountability of these jurisdictions and whether the program should instead be solely administered by the Commonwealth;
- means of collecting data at the state and territory level, its dissemination to the department and evaluation;
- promotion and marketing of the program;
- application processing and service standards;
- removal of the ability for the secondary applicant to become the primary applicant;
- English language requirements;
- innovation points test; and
- attracting investment in regional Australia, graduates, early-stage entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the stakeholders, peak bodies, organisations and individuals for their time and in preparing submissions and appearing at public hearings.

I would also like to thank my hardworking committee colleagues for participating in this inquiry.

I commend this report to the House.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).
Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:10): I would like to join the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. As deputy chair, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the committee's report on the inquiry into the Business and Innovation and Investment scheme.

Attracting business and investment from overseas is a very important component of our immigration program. Indeed, at a time when most Western countries are competing with each other for business and investment, it is important for us here in Australia to provide the best possible incentives and opportunities in order to attract the type of investment and business skills that will enhance and develop our economic growth and create jobs here in Australia. So having a robust and effective investment visa program is key to realising and enhancing our economic growth and prosperity.

It is for this reason that the Joint Standing Committee on Migration held the view that it would be beneficial to inquire into the existing Business Innovation and Investment Programme in order to assess its effectiveness and also to assess whether it was meeting its objectives. I am very pleased to be able to speak to this report and to join the chair in saying that the report found that further details are required in this program because, as the chair so well articulated to the chamber, there were many impediments in the type of information that was available to us and the quality of the information.

Our inquiry officially began on 18 March 2014, and the committee received 23 submissions and five exhibits from a range of federal, state and territory government departments, peak bodies, migration lawyers and migration agents. The committee also took evidence from 20 organisations and individuals at seven public hearings held in Canberra and Sydney over the course of the inquiry.

Some of the challenges the committee faced went to the nature of the evidence. In fact, limitations on the data that was provided to us by federal, state and territory governments meant that we were not able to actually fulfil the objectives of the inquiry. The committee also faced a number of other challenges that have already been stated to the chamber by the chair. The exclusion of a key component of the program, the Significant Investor Visa stream, meant that our inquiry was hampered to a certain extent in its full ability to examine the business innovation component of the program.

But, despite the obstacles, the findings of the report we are tabling today aim at attracting investors and company owners who have demonstrated a history of success in investment, innovation and management of a business, to work and live here in Australia. Australia's migration program has a good business innovation program, but it can be improved. Therefore the committee has recommended that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection further examine the program, with a focus on the suitability and attainability of the program's objectives.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the committee secretariat. In particular, I would like to thank our secretary, Mr Jerome Brown, the inquiry secretary, Mr Paul Zinkel, our research officers, Mr Nathan Fewkes and Ms Vanessa Wong, and our administrative officers, Mrs Dorota Cooley and Ms Karen Underwood, for their incredible support—in particular the support that they gave to the committee during its inquiry. I commend the report to the chamber.
Standing Committee on Health
Report

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:14): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Health, I present the committee's report entitled *Skin cancer in Australia: our national cancer*, together with the minutes of the proceedings.

Skin cancer is often referred to as Australia's 'national cancer' as Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, with 2 in 3 Australians expected to be diagnosed with skin cancer before the age of 70. Yet 95 to 99 per cent of all skin cancers are preventable.

Since the iconic Slip! Slop! Slap! campaign of the 1980s, primary prevention campaigns have promoted the use of sunscreen, protective clothing and limiting the skin's exposure to the sun. Statistics show that primary skin protection campaigns are working and I commend all those who made previous campaigns possible.

The committee heard that there is still progress to be made to embed sun-wise behaviours in some sectors of the Australian population. Two notable examples are the outdoor workforce and young Australians, which, although aware of the risk of skin cancer, have not translated this awareness into behavioural change. To encourage behavioural change, the committee has recommended specific strategies be developed to better educate the outdoor workforce and young Australians at high schools on how to be sun wise.

Early diagnosis is critical for survival rates for skin cancer. Australia engages in population-based screening programs for breast, cervical, and bowel cancers, but relies on opportunistic screening for skin cancer. The committee therefore recommended that information about skin cancer checks be included as part of the notification process for bowel cancer, as well as for the health assessments for people aged 75 years and over—the latter a high category risk group.

The inquiry also highlighted the debate on how best to provide diagnosis and treatment services for skin cancer, whether through referrals to dermatologists or through skin cancer clinics. Skin cancer clinics have developed in response to the increased demand for skin checks, long waiting times to see dermatologists, as well as cost, distance and time constraints.

The committee found that greater assurance should be provided to the public that skin cancer clinics are staffed by GPs with a high level of relevant skills and experience. To achieve this, the committee recommended skin cancer clinics be properly accredited and staffed by a minimum number of suitably qualified and experienced staff including dermatologists.

Indeed, despite the central role of GPs in diagnosing and treating skin cancer, the committee was concerned that only 2 hours of an undergraduate medical degree is dedicated to dermatology. The committee therefore recommended that the dermatology component of undergraduate medical degrees be expanded. Treatment and management of skin cancer involves any number of clinicians and specialists as well as a range of psychosocial and non-medical support services. For patients, navigating the multitude of clinicians and specialists can add to an already challenging and uncertain time in their lives. This is where multidisciplinary patient management becomes particularly important. Taking the value of multidisciplinary management into consideration the committee recommended that these
services be adopted nationally. While Australia has earned a global reputation for its medical research, particularly in the area of cancer research, it is vital that Australia continue to lead global research in this area.

Although an overall increase in the incidence of skin cancer in Australia’s ageing population is likely, current trends indicate that mortality rates are likely to decrease. Australia has made great advances in preventing and treating skin cancers, but there is always more that can be done.

Referring back to the mention of the two hours of undergraduate training, we also heard in the evidence that doctors are likely to have two weeks of cardiac arrest or heart training and they might only have five instances of dealing with a heart attack in their whole time as a GP, whereas they get two hours of undergraduate training on dermatology and they might have a melanoma experience once every year. So there is a good reason to increase the undergraduate hours.

In closing, I thank the organisations and government agencies who contributed to this inquiry and the individuals who generously spoke about their experiences with skin cancer and seeking treatment. I also thank the committee members. I see the member for Gellibrand here, who came in as the deputy chair halfway through the inquiry, took over for the previous member and did a fantastic job. His support was appreciated. So the contribution by the committee members has been fantastic, and their participation to the inquiry is also appreciated.

I would also like to thank the secretariat, who have put the report together and done a fantastic job supporting the members of the committee. I commend the report to the House.

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

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (19:20): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Standing Committee on Health report on the inquiry into skin cancer in Australia. As the committee chair has just stated, skin cancer is often referred to as Australia’s ‘national cancer’. Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world, perhaps unsurprisingly. Current statistics indicate that two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer before the age of 70. It very much is a cancer that will touch many of us in this room.

More Australians will die from this disease this year than will die from transport accidents. Early diagnosis of skin cancer can be critical for survival. If melanoma is found early and if it is removed completely then the chance of cure is high; but, if melanoma spreads to other organs and tissues, if it has reached stage 3 or 4 and is classified as advanced melanoma, the prognosis is much less favourable. If someone is diagnosed with advanced melanoma, the average time for survival is just eight to nine months. This is why public awareness of this type of skin cancer in particular is so important. Catching it early can save your life.

Skin cancer costs Australians hundreds of millions of dollars a year, yet in almost all cases skin cancer is preventable. Thankfully, statistics show that primary prevention campaigns in Australia are working. We all remember the great success of the Slip! Slop! Slap! campaign. People are wearing sunscreen and protective clothing and are limiting their exposure to damaging ultraviolet rays. People are getting new moles checked and are looking out for existing moles that have changed shape. We have also developed a number of life-saving treatments.
Australia has made great advances in preventing and treating skin cancers, but there is certainly room for improvement, and that is why this is inquiry is important. The inquiry highlighted that there is still progress to be made in some pockets of society in particular. We still need to raise awareness of sun smart behaviours, particularly with the outdoor workforce and with young Australians at the secondary school level—those who have grown up after the Slip Slop Slap! campaign. Not all Australians are being sun smart. The committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training work with the states and territories to encourage secondary schools to adopt SunSmart policies. Targeting young people is important because reducing exposure to UV rays at a younger age reduces the risk of skin cancer later in life.

The inquiry also highlighted that skin cancer is a particular problem for Australians in rural and remote areas, particularly those that work outdoors. People in these areas are at greater risk of skin cancer yet are less likely to have access to specialist dermatologists. The committee recommends the use of new and emerging technologies in the diagnosis of skin cancer to overcome some of these hurdles; for example, the use of teledermatology allows rural doctors to submit digital images of affected skin and history to an experienced dermatologist. The dermatologist can then report back with diagnosis and treatment options. The committee further recommends that the Department of Health work with state and territory counterparts to establish a virtual platform that will allow for multidisciplinary treatment of skin cancer for patients in regional and remote areas.

The committee also recommends that teledermatology be included on the Medicare Benefits Scheme. It is important for Australia to continue to lead global research into skin cancer. We need to work toward discovering new and improved treatments. Skin cancer can be treated by a range of therapies including surgery, radiation therapy, biological therapy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy. However, when the most deadly form of skin cancer, advanced melanoma, reaches stage 3 or 4 treatment is relatively ineffective at present. Fortunately, new treatments are being developed that boost the immune system and that target the genes that are involved in melanoma occurrence and growth.

New technologies have been developed such as the dermatoscope, which is key to the early detection of skin cancers. Accuracy of diagnosis is particularly important in the screening of skin cancer. The dermatoscope is a technological instrument that can be used to examine suspicious skin lesions. Significant improvements in diagnostic accuracy result from the use of a dermatoscope. The committee recommends improved and expanded education and training in dermatology for medical students, as well as providing training for nurses in rural areas. Raising awareness of skin cancer to increase prevention and improving treatments is critical to saving the lives of Australians.

I, too, would like to thank the many organisations and private submitters who gave their time to assist the committee in its inquiry. I would also like to thank the committee members. As the chair indicated, I joined this committee when it was already well underway, and they welcomed me with open arms. So I pass on my personal thanks in that respect. As always, when talking about a new committee report, we should thank the committee secretariat who worked diligently throughout this process and assisted us to get to where we are tonight.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): I thank the member for Gellibrand. The time allotted for the statement on this report has expired. Does the honourable member for Swan
wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:25): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:25): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Charter of Budget Honesty Amendment (Regional Australia Statements) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms McGowan

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (19:26): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to present a bill for an act to amend the Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998. This bill is to be known as the Charter of Budget Honesty Amendment (Regional Australia Statements) Bill 2015.

When I stood on my feet for the first time in this chamber on 2 Dec 2013, I committed to listening to my community. I said that I would go anywhere in Indi to listen to people's concerns, I have listened and I am here to deliver the message from Indi. The message is simple. The government must demonstrate that it is listening to the people who live in regional Australia.

This amendment bill answers the call from my community. It calls on the government, when formulating policy, to ensure that regional impact statements are prepared and accompany every budget, every year.

I also said that I would focus especially on those who live in the more isolated rural areas—people who are disadvantaged because of poor public transport, patchy mobile phone coverage, terrible internet connections, and fewer employment and educational opportunities.

This amendment bill addresses this commitment; it gives voice to those who live in regional Australia and it goes to the very heart of regional living.

In regional Australia, government initiatives often have a disproportionate impact on communities due to the lack of infrastructure. This is clearly evident when patchy and nonexistent mobile phone coverage or internet connections and little or no access to public transport limit the day-to-day life of communities.
The purpose of this bill is to call for regional Australia statements to provide information to allow the assessment of the impact of government policy decisions on regional Australia to be understood.

The absence of a Rural and Regional Ministerial Statement in the 2014-15 budget caused great concern in my electorate and throughout regional Australia. To my knowledge, this statement has been included in every budget since 1996-97, except for the one year of 2006-07. It has been sorely missed.

Without this statement in the budget, people who live in regional Australia in communities in Indi such as Wodonga, Wangaratta, Benalla and Alexandra can't be sure that their needs have been taken into account in the creation of the budget.

Using the 2014-15 budget as an illustration: co-payments for doctors' visits, changes to the funding for the higher education, changes to pensions, changes to allowances for young people and changes to the price of petrol—to name just a few—all had significant negative impacts on people who live in regional Australia.

It is the intention of this legislation to avoid repetition of these circumstances in the future and to ensure that the people who live in regional Australia can have full confidence that the government has taken into account all the circumstances relevant to their lives when it makes important decisions.

And so to the bill before us tonight.

In summary: the purpose of the amendments is to ensure that the framework for the conduct of government fiscal policy, which includes obligations on the government to provide regular financial reporting, should include an obligation to publicly release and table a Regional Australia Statement with each budget economic and fiscal outlook report and with each Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook report.

The major elements of the bill are as follows.

Item 1 proposes an obligation upon the Treasurer to publicly release and table Regional Australia Statements together with each budget and MYEFO.

Item 2 inserts a new part 5A—Regional Australia Statements.

Section 19B outlines the purpose of Regional Australia Statements, this being to provide information to allow the assessment of the impact of government decisions on regional Australia.

Section 19C details the contents of the statements, including the likely economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts on regional Australia of key government initiatives. Specifically, it requires coverage of:

- the likely impacts on regional Australia of key government initiatives, or significant changes to such initiatives, since the last Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook report was released or in connection with the budget; and
- progress made in implementing key government initiatives that are likely to have an impact on regional Australia.

It calls for Regional Australia Statements to be prepared having regard to the following:

- the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of government initiatives;
• the economic drivers of regional communities;
• the disproportionate effect that government initiatives may have in regional communities due to a lack of infrastructure, including:
  (i) mobile phone coverage;
  (ii) reliable internet connections; and
  (iii) access to public transport;
• the lack of access that people living in regional communities have to government services due to cost and long travel distances and times;
• the effect that lack of competition in regional communities has on:
  (i) the cost of living and doing business in regional communities; and
  (ii) the cost and difficulty involved in complying with regulatory requirements for people and businesses in regional communities.

Section 19D allows for the Treasurer to request Commonwealth bodies to provide information to help in the preparation of Regional Australia Statements.

There has been extensive consultation on this proposed legislation, including with colleagues in this place—on both sides of the House. Stakeholder groups in the telecommunications, transport, health, education, agriculture, environment and human services areas are strongly supportive of this initiative.

At this point I would like to acknowledge and thank my staff, the volunteers in my office and the Clerk of the House for their help in preparing this legislation.

My voice is the voice of regional Australia.

In this bill, the voice of regional Australia is loud and clear to the government.

I call on the government to acknowledge the impact that government decisions have on regional Australia and I call on the government to commit to this bill by publicly releasing and tabling Regional Australia Statements with every budget and MYEFO.

Intended results of this legislation are that it improves knowledge and understanding of the impact of fiscal and budgetary measures upon the community; that, as a result of greater information and understanding, there is more confidence and trust in government and in government's ability and willingness to govern for all Australians; and that, with greater trust and confidence, there will be increased participation in our democracy and a willingness to take on leadership positions necessary to advance this great nation of ours.

I commend this bill to the House.

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

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (19:34): I second the honourable member for Indi's most excellent bill. I commend her for her refreshing commitment to regional Australia and I reserve my right to speak.

Debate adjourned.
Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (19:35): I move:

That this House notes that:

(1) Melanoma March takes place this month and will involve hundreds of Australians around the country participating in community walks to raise awareness of melanoma;
(2) 12,500 Australians are diagnosed with melanoma each year and 1,650 of those are diagnosed with advanced melanoma;
(3) advanced melanoma kills more than 1,500 Australians each year—this is one death every six hours;
(4) melanoma is:
   (a) the most common cancer in young Australians aged 15 to 39 and those diagnosed with advanced melanoma have a median survival of only 8 to 9 months;
   (b) estimated to be the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian males in 2014 (7,440 cases), after prostate and colorectal cancer; and
   (c) also estimated to be the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian females (5,210 cases), after breast and colorectal cancer; and
(5) advanced melanoma costs hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

This motion relating to melanoma is very important and very timely. We have just heard from the member for Swan. In a very significant speech, he tabled the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, *Skin cancer in Australia: our national cancer*. It details what we are dealing with when it comes to melanoma. As the report’s title shows, melanoma is Australia’s national cancer.

Overexposure to ultraviolet light causes 95 per cent of melanoma, which is fairly clear proof that prevention is the key to avoiding it. The best way to prevent melanoma is to prevent your skin from the sun. Despite one of the most successful health campaigns in Australia’s history, it is important that Australians always remember: slip, slop, slap. We have to make sure that we continue to remind them to do so. And that is why Melanoma March is such an important event in this nation. From 22 February until 29 March, participants across the nation are uniting to take action by being part of Melanoma March. Now in its fourth year, Melanoma March is an Australia-wide fundraising and awareness campaign which brings communities around Australia together to march for a cure.

Melanoma March started in 2012, by a Sydney man who lost his 18-year-old son to melanoma. In 2014, over 6,000 people marched for a cure in 16 locations across Australia. Last year they raised $550,000 and this year their goal is to raise $1 million. This year, 23 events will be held, and already over $600,000 has been raised. Over the time that it has been running, Melanoma March has now raised over $1.3 million for research projects that help us towards the goal of lessening the impact of melanoma on the community and ultimately creating a future free of melanoma.

Each year melanoma kills more Australians than the national road toll. That is what we are dealing with here. With Australia having the highest incidence of melanoma in the world, awareness campaigns like Melanoma March are vital in spreading awareness and educating all Australians about the risks associated with melanoma. Funds raised from this year’s Melanoma March will assist melanoma researchers around Australia to develop the next
generation of treatment options. This new initiative is phase 2 of the genome project, and it is this type of project that we need to accelerate the development of cures within Australia.

I commend this motion to the House, and I encourage every member to support it.

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

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (19:40): I second the motion. This is a timely motion, because it comes on the back of the tabling of a report of the Standing Committee on Health, Skin cancer in Australia: our national cancer. It is worth recounting some of the principal findings of this report, because melanoma is, indeed, known as Australia's national cancer.

Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma in the world. One Australian dies from advanced melanoma every six hours. Melanoma is the most deadly type of skin cancer. Current statistics indicate that two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer before the age of 70. More Australians will die from this disease this year than will die from transport accidents.

Despite its prevalence, melanoma is often misunderstood. There is a common misunderstanding that skin cancer is caused by all exposure to sunlight. It is actually caused by excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation. It usually occurs on parts of the body that have been overexposed to UV rays, but it can occur on any part of the body. People with fair skin, a high mole count, a family history of melanoma and a pattern of getting sunburnt throughout life, are at greater risk of getting melanomas.

Early signs of melanoma are changes to the shape, colour or appearance of a new lump anywhere on the skin. There is a significant difference between early-stage melanoma and the far more deadly, advanced melanoma. Early-stage melanoma consists of a malignant tumour that has not spread. If melanoma is found early, and if it is removed completely, then the chance of cure is high. If melanoma spreads to other organs and tissues it has reached stage 3 or 4 and is classified as advanced melanoma. Once someone is diagnosed with advanced melanoma the average time of survival is just eight to nine months. That is why public awareness of this type of skin cancer is so important. Catching it early can save lives. Early diagnosis is critical for survival.

Advanced melanoma costs Australians hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Yet, almost all cases of skin cancer are preventable. Thankfully, statistics show that primary prevention campaigns in Australia are working. People are wearing sunscreen and protective clothing, and are limiting their exposure to damaging ultraviolet rays. People are getting new moles checked, and are looking out for existing moles that have changed shape.

We have also developed a number of life-saving treatments. Advanced melanoma can be treated by a range of therapies, including surgery, radiation therapy, biological therapy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy. New treatments are being developed that boost the immune system, and that target the genes that are involved in melanoma occurrence and growth. Australia has made great advances in preventing, and treating skin cancers, but there is definitely room for improvement. It is important for Australia to continue to lead global research into skin cancer. We need to work towards discovering new and improved treatments.

But the core of the motion before us today is Melanoma March. Once a year, Australians unite to take action against Australia's national cancer. People in the community can play a
crucial role in raising awareness and funds to support the fight against this disease by getting involved with Melanoma March. The Melanoma March is an initiative of Melanoma Institute Australia. It was first established in 2012 by a man from Sydney who, tragically, lost his 18-year-old son to melanoma. He first held a local event to honour the memory of those that have died from melanoma.

The Melanoma March now takes place across Australia to raise awareness and funding for melanoma research. Sixteen locations around Australia participate in the campaign. Last year over 6,000 people marched and raised $550,000 for melanoma research. Funds raised from Melanoma March contribute to projects of national significance. Importantly, funds raised have gone towards a world-first clinical trial led by Melanoma Institute Australia that may benefit patients with advanced melanoma—specifically, melanoma brain tumours. Half of all patients diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma will develop brain tumours at some point during their illness, so research is clearly crucial.

Sadly, most patients with brain tumours will die within four months and there are limited treatments currently available. The clinical trial will investigate an exciting new avenue of research for the treatment of brain tumours that are caused by advanced melanoma. Its results may offer hope for patients around the world and clearly shows the importance of the Melanoma March in Australia. I thank the member for Wannon for this motion and I commend it to the House.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (19:45): I associate myself with the comments of the members for Wannon and Gellibrand. I commend my colleague the member for Wannon for this motion on the Melanoma March, which takes place this month. We are a sunburnt country— that is the affectionate term we use to describe the rusted earth of the outback, as well as our sun-worshipping culture.

When I grew up in the 1950s and sixties, we did not know of the dangers of sun exposure that we know now about. I was just one of the lucky ones, and my school peers often suffered the harsh consequences of serious dermal trauma due to an excess of UV exposure. Peeling the skin off one’s back, we would take delight in knowing that we were making the most of the Perth summer. But with that, what we did not know, that the we now know about, is the causes of cancer and that the damage the sun can do to our skin leaves long term consequences. It should be enough of a deterrent to sunbaking for all Australians. We hear the same message again and again loud and clear in the media: there is truly nothing healthy about a tan. Nevertheless, the message obviously is not loud enough. According to Cancer Australia, cancer is estimated to be the most prominent disease in Australia. In fact, one death from melanoma occurs every six hours, and melanoma is truly the health cancer of our society.

Most Australians know someone who has been touched by cancer at some point in their lives, or have experienced cancer themselves. I currently know, personally, of six people, including a former staff member, who have been diagnosed with a melanoma and received treatment. I grew up with a further five people who have sadly lost their lives to this disease. Melanoma is a vicious, traumatising disease and it takes no prisoners. Melanoma does not discriminate with age, nor gender, nor race, nor ethnicity. We are all susceptible.

Melanoma is one of the most deadly cancers, and is most likely to affect 15 to 39 year olds. It has the fastest-growing incidence rate of any form of cancer, and now ranks as the third
most common form of cancer in Australia. Australia experiences one of the highest rates of melanoma in the world, and this puts it in a unique position. Western Australia is second only to Queensland in incidence rates. There are over 1,000 new cases of melanoma diagnosed in Western Australia each year, and of those 1,000 patients it is estimated that approximately 180 will lose their life to the disease.

My local Lions Club in WA, who do a tremendous job as volunteers, regularly run cancer screening drives. In fact, they recently conducted one in my electorate, at Guildford. But the challenge is in the cure and the prevention, and I want my community to get behind fighting this insidious disease. Together, we can raise the money to fund melanoma research and to help those who already suffer from the disease.

I am pleased that there was, under tragic circumstances, the establishment of the Melanoma March, because the march and does two things. Not only does it raise money for research but it heightens the community's awareness of the prevalence and nature of melanoma, because any parent who loses a son or a daughter to melanoma is affected. It was tremendous to see this businessman in Sydney establish the Melanoma March because it has now grown into a national initiative. Last year, with 6,000 people marching nationwide for a cure, and raising the amount that they did for melanoma research, it heightened the community's awareness of a particular cancer that is challenging to recover from, although, if it is caught early, you can recover from melanoma.

This year the goal is to raise $1 million. I invite the Perth community to take part as Australia unites to fight this devastating disease and to raise awareness of Australia's national cancer: melanoma. The march was held on Sunday, 22 March, and was open for everyone, as participants could pace themselves at different speeds.

The Melanoma March in Perth commenced at McCallum Park, and at the end of the event marchers enjoyed light refreshments and entertainment suitable for the whole family. With Perth having the second highest rate of melanoma in the nation, I was glad to see the great turnout for this year's march in my home state. Just remember: don't forget your sunscreen and slip, slop, slap. I commend this motion to the House.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (19:50): I would like to congratulate the previous speakers, and the member for Wannon for bringing this motion to the House. It is a very important motion and obviously a very important issue. The previous member talked about a sunburnt country and the changing attitudes to the sun. I think we can all remember being sunburnt at one time or another. I remember getting my shins terribly burnt one swimming carnival when I was at Kapunda High, and I was not all that keen on replicating that experience. It always sticks in my mind, and I think that most Australians at one time or another have been badly sunburnt. I suppose that is a lesson for us all.

This motion brings a pretty important issue, the march for melanoma. Getting the community out there and bringing up awareness is a very, very important issue, and having people participate in that and raise money raises community awareness and it also means that governments of all persuasions have a slightly easier job in partnering with community organisations, particularly on research.

The critical thing for South Australians to remember here is that the march is held in Henley Beach. It is a small four kilometre walk, something that the community can get
involved with, for what is a very, very good cause. In 2011—and these are the most recent figures we have—there were 702 new melanoma cases in South Australia identified and 102 deaths, tragically. We know that it is responsible for eight per cent of all youth deaths in Australia and that it is the most common form of cancer in Australians aged 15 to 39.

So it is a terrible burden on those individuals and a very important issue for our health system. It is interesting to note that men are twice as likely as women to die from melanoma. That is probably down to accessing general practitioners; men are notorious for letting things slide, in terms of their own health. That is something we all have to be cognisant of, because, in terms of skin cancer, leaving it—letting it slide not getting it checked—is actually one of the worst things you can do. That is why when we have debates on other things—access to general practitioners, making sure people do not have barriers in the way of them seeing a general practitioner are important things for all of us to be cognisant of.

The key messages are the same ones of my youth. I remember the ads coming on—slip, slop, slap—and they had some sort of cartoon bird, I think, singing a song. That has got a lot more sophisticated; it is now, 'Slip, slop, slap, seek and slide'—seeking shade and sliding on sunglasses are the important additions. They are important measures to make sure that people do not get skin cancers.

If moles look different—if they change colour, if there is a new mole after you are 25—you really do need to get that checked quickly. Obviously, we are not always as individuals in the best position to judge what is dangerous and what is not. And seeing a GP is the best course of action.

These events, as with so many other events in the health sector, are basically formed around personal experience. In this case it is a man losing his 18-year-old son to melanoma. It is important that that initial act of care and love does not get lost. It is important that we continue these events. With should all contribute as best we can to the goal, which is to raise $1 million in 2015 to fund a research project of national importance to help find better cures and better treatments for what is a very debilitating set of cancers that Australians in particular face, and South Australians particularly, because we do live indeed in a sunburnt country.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:55): I rise to support the member for Wannon's motion on melanoma. As we know, the word 'cancer' is such a simple word but one that will change people's lives forever. It is a word that gives you that dreaded sinking feeling right in the pit of your stomach and often an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness. It is Australia's leading cause of the total burden of disease and, unfortunately it has become more of an inevitability in our society. It has perhaps become the rule rather than the exception that you or someone you know will be diagnosed with cancer.

I do not often discuss my family's personal life in this place but I can say that my wife Cheryle has experienced inconceivable heartbreak from cancer. It goes against nature that a parent buries their child. That is an experience that no family wants to go through. It is the most heart-wrenching loss that I do not pretend to understand; I can only empathise. I believe it is simply incomparable to any other loss.

Today the motion before the House focuses on a particular form of cancer, melanoma, which I am also very familiar with because I have just finished conducting an inquiry into its
prevalence and treatment, with my committee colleagues, as the chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health. I note that four of my committee colleagues are speaking on this motion.

The member for Wannon must have been watching the movements closely on that committee because I am pleased to inform members that the inquiry is now complete, and I just tabled it in this chamber about half an hour ago. It is an important report which details a number of recommendations for future preventative efforts. I encourage all members in this place to not only endorse it but to play their part in implementing its recommendations through the parliamentary processes and in their own communities.

It is this concept of raising awareness of melanoma that I believe is the most important step each one of us can take, because prevention and early treatment is the No. 1 thing I believe will assist in reversing this concept of cancer being the rule rather than the exception in Australian society, and I encourage all members to encourage their constituents in the melanoma march if they are able to.

I would like to take a moment to read my chair's forward for this report, as I believe it succinctly outlines what skin cancer means to Australia. As members know, there are two broad types of skin cancers that can occur in humans, melanoma and non-melanoma. In this forward I state:

Skin cancer is often referred to as Australia's 'national cancer'. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world and current statistics indicate that two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer before the age of 70, yet 95 per cent of all skin cancers are preventable.

That is a staggering number of people who could be saved from hearing that frightening word 'cancer', particularly given that, as the member for Wannon's motion states, '12,500 Australians are diagnosed with melanoma each year and 1,650 of those are diagnosed with advanced melanoma', which 'kills more than 1,500 Australians each year'—or one death every six hours.

I also highlight that as identified in the committee's report, 'in 2010 there were 11,405 new cases of melanoma reported and it is estimated that in 2020 there will be 17,570 new cases of melanoma, which represents a 54 per cent increase'.

As I previously said, prevention is vital in reducing this rate of melanoma incidence. With this in mind, I would like to highlight the work of Cancer Council Australia in implementing sun-smart campaigns such as 'Slip, Slop, Slap!' and their financial contribution toward research for new treatments.

Clinical trials are also an important part of this process, and a close friend of mine was recently part of one. I would like to briefly tell members her story. Dianne Richardson was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma and had a mutant gene called BRAF V600. Because she had this mutant gene, she was able to be included in a trial by GlaxoSmithKline, or GSK, using a range of treatments, which I am pleased to inform the House saw Dianne's melanomas disappear after 23 weeks, according to her husband Colin.

Unfortunately, approximately a year after starting this trial, one of the melanomas in Dianne's chest region regrew, and this eventually spread to her brain. I am very saddened to say that in December last year Dianne passed away from this disease, and I once again send my condolences to Colin and his family.
Colin was Dianne's rock during the process. He came before the committee and presented his evidence to the committee in Perth to share Dianne's story and highlight the lack of awareness of this disease within the community and the need for regular screenings to ensure early detection. Colin also made a grand plea for new medicines to be listed on the PBS. I thank Colin once again for his contribution to this inquiry process and reiterate his call for greater awareness. This month melanoma marches, which aim to do just that, will be taking place all across Australia. I encourage all members to promote this initiative and support this motion.

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (20:00): I thank the member for Wannon for reminding us that this month is dedicated to melanoma awareness. Melanoma is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers and certainly one of the most dangerous cancers occurring in this country. In fact, amongst young people, this is the most common cancer, and overall it is about the third most diagnosed, as I understand it. But, importantly, this is one of the most preventable cancers.

In Australia, I guess we have plenty to be proud about, particularly with our climate and our natural environment and surrounds. And, with all-round temperate weather in many parts of the land, I suppose we are pretty well exposed to the prospect of overinvolvement with the sun. As a matter of fact, our geographic position and the state of the ozone layer above us does not exactly help. In fact, July is the only month, as I understand it, where the UV levels in Australia are below the level that puts us at risk of skin cancers. Therefore, we should not think we are safe now just because we are approaching autumn.

Contrary to what has been previously believed, avoiding the beach does not provide protection against melanoma, as we are finding an increasing number of people being diagnosed in non-coastal areas. As a matter of fact, where I live, in Western Sydney—and where you live, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, in your electorate of Hughes—has one of the highest diagnosis rates of skin cancer. As I understand it, in Western Sydney alone there are 10 people diagnosed each week.

For many years, I guess that I, as well as many others, was not that aware of skin cancers or the problems of being exposed to the sun. I do not know about you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but going to the beach always involved using coconut oil—the fry to get a good tan. When I played cricket, it was uncool to wear a hat, and I do not think there was any requirement for caps or hats when I went to school. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, we grew up in a life that was very much out there and under the sun. These days, let me tell you, I am very much more cautious about the persistence of melanoma not just for the young generation but by now making sure that I slip, slop, slap myself. I can assure you that I have more knife marks in my back than the average politician, and that comes from all those years of being out there on surfboards and using Reef oil for a tan.

I have had the opportunity for many years now to meet up with Associate Professor Cains, from the dermatology department at Liverpool Hospital. For a long time Dr Cains has fulfilled the role of medical specialist, not only seeing to patients and their consultations but being highly involved in the training of staff and, importantly, training GPs and future specialists in dermatology. Liverpool Hospital, as you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, is now just about the largest hospital in the Southern Hemisphere and has a very important role in teaching and research, particularly for the University of New South Wales and the School of
Medicine at the University of Western Sydney. It has needed to have a full-time specialist in order to fill these split requirements for teaching and patient care.

Regrettably, as I understand it, it has been difficult to attract people not only to be full-time teachers but to be available to assist GPs in their ability to properly diagnose skin cancers. I am advised by Dr Cains that in excess of 25 per cent of all GP consultations in Western Sydney involve some skin related disease, so it is something that is particularly prevalent in Western Sydney. We need to ensure not only that trainee people in the medical profession are equipped to diagnose skin cancers properly but also that GPs, who see the first and foremost presentations of people with skin related conditions, are sufficiently seized with knowledge in this area as well.

We are no doubt in an epidemic of melanoma. It is something that is not necessarily peculiar to but very highly prevalent in Australia. We need to do something, and particularly—Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope you share this with me—we need to do something in Western Sydney.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): I thank my neighbour the member for Fowler.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (20:05): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Wannon because indeed I am one of the fortunate ones. I am one of those people who were diagnosed with a melanoma many years ago. I was fortunate in that my wife is a pharmacist and noticed an unusual spot on the back of my leg, somewhere that I would not have noticed it otherwise. It is not somewhere you would normally look when you are having a shower or bath or whatever it might be. I thank her, and I will be thankful till the day I move on, for her identifying this as something that she thought was worth getting somebody more qualified to inspect. Indeed, that person was my father's former GP partner, Neville Ludbey, who had a particular interest in dermatology. I will be eternally grateful for the fact that he said, 'I don't like that,' immediately did a biopsy and sent it away. Indeed, it was a live unit, and in the next few days I had a plastic surgeon remove a larger area of that melanoma from the back of my leg. It was quite an innocuous thing. It was a small, red spot, slightly raised on the skin, but with a darker red centre. My wife identified that. Like so many here—I note the member for Fowler's comments—we all played cricket; we all got sunburnt. I played cricket in a regular, competitive fashion until well into my mid-30s. It just was not the thing. Yes, it is true, even in Tasmania we go to the beach. It was a different time, when we did not think of those consequences. We were the products of our parents, I guess. It does make you realise—and I am one of the fortunate ones—that life is short.

It was not so much the process: once it had been identified and was a live unit, it was taken out. I am a pretty take-it-as-it-comes type of person, but always, in the back of your mind, there is the risk that you will find another melanoma at some other point. I was one of the fortunate ones, because that was 12 years ago and, touch wood, that is not the case anymore. I look at my sons, I look at my boys, and I look at the way my wife and I now deal with them. They are both fair skinned, and they have been brought up in a very different place in terms of the way they look after themselves in relation to their exposure to the sun. So I would just say, if you see a strange new mole on your skin, or an old mole that has started to change, be sure to see your doctor and have it checked. Find out what to look for and, particularly, do a self-examination or have somebody that you are close to look for suspicious things.
I would also like to mention Di Mason. There is not a Melanoma March that I am aware of in Tasmania this month, but late last year Di Mason established Melanoma Tasmania. That was as a result of her mother passing away from the disease about 10 years ago. Annually, between 200 and 300 Tasmanians are diagnosed with melanoma and between 30 and 50 people die. Melanoma is the fourth most common cancer diagnosed in Australia. On average 30 Australians will be diagnosed with melanoma every day, and more than 1,200 will die from the disease each year. It is a serious disease. It has a higher prevalence in men, and the reasons for that have been discussed by others here. I think we all understand today that prevention is absolutely better than cure and the things that we should do in terms of wearing hats, covering our skin and, if it is uncovered, using an appropriate type of sunscreen. These are the things that we do understand.

I think no-one in the debate here has mentioned solariums. Why would you do it? Why on earth would you do it? I thank the member for Wannon for bringing this important subject to the attention of the House and this important month that is Melanoma March.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (20:10): I join with all the previous speakers in this debate in adding my thanks to the member for Wannon for encouraging people to become involved in Melanoma March. It is a really apt time to remember and think about the impact that melanoma has in our country. It is also very timely that this motion is being debated today, as we have already had tabled this evening the Standing Committee on Health's latest report Skin Cancer in Australia: our National Cancer.

As a member of the health committee, I have heard a lot about melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers. I think it is really important to put on the record the background in relation to melanoma. Stage 4 melanoma has a very, very low survival rate. In 2009 the one-year survival rate was only 30 per cent. With advances in medical research today, the survival rate is going up to 80 per cent. There are new drugs, new research coming into play all the time. Australia is actually a leader in the research into melanoma. Half the patients diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma will develop brain metastases at some point during their illness; 20-25 per cent will already have those when they are first diagnosed.

The highest incidence of melanoma in the world is in Australia. As with the name of the report that was tabled earlier today, it is often called our national cancer. There are around 12,500 new cases diagnosed each year, and one person will die from melanoma every six hours. Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians, affecting more individuals aged 15-39 than any other cancer. While 90 per cent of people with melanoma and skin cancers are able to be cured by having the primary melanoma removed, the cancer spread is in the other 10 per cent.

It is really important to put on the record that the best protection, as members in this House have already said, is to stay covered, to use sunscreen and to limit your exposure to the sun. In addition to that, it is really important that you know your body. Check your body regularly to see if you have any changes to your skin, anything that could possibly be melanoma, and if you are worried go and see your doctor. It is important, vitally important, that you have early diagnosis of any melanoma. If the melanoma is diagnosed early then you have a very good chance of avoiding the more sinister consequences. It was really pleasing to hear the member for Lyne talking about his experience with melanoma—the fact that his wife encouraged him to go along and have that melanoma looked at and have it removed and the fact that he has
made a full recovery. That was because of early intervention, early diagnosis. It is vitally important that that happens.

In our inquiry into skin cancer, a number of really good initiatives were recommended. We recognised models throughout the country. Organisations such as Cricket Australia and Surf Life Saving Australia are not only making changes but are leading the change. Eighteen months ago I held a skin cancer check in my electorate, and four cases of melanoma were detected. It is one of those cancers that people do not notice, but, on the other hand, it is a cancer from which, if you take the right action at the right time, you can ensure recovery. With the research that is taking place at the moment, I believe there are going to be more and more successes in the area of melanoma recovery.

Debate adjourned.

**Cyclone Pam**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (20:16): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the devastation caused by Cyclone Pam on the people of Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati;

(2) recognises the enormous destructive force of Cyclone Pam and notes the loss of life and destruction caused including:

(a) damage to 90 per cent of Port Vila homes and entire villages across the archipelago;

(b) displacement of 45 per cent of Tuvalu's population and significant destruction of the outer islands of Tuvalu; and

(c) severe damage on three of Kiribati's southern islands:

(3) recognises the:

(a) enormous effort that will be required by governments and non-government emergency teams to find those missing from the disaster; and

(b) huge task now facing our friends in the Pacific to rebuild and repair following the devastation of Cyclone Pam;

(4) acknowledges the international effort to provide assistance to Vanuatu; and

(5) calls on the Australian Government to monitor the situation closely and to work with the governments of Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati to provide timely and appropriate further assistance as needed.

On 13 March Cyclone Pam wreaked havoc on one of our closest neighbours, the archipelago of Vanuatu. A category 5 storm with winds of more than 300 kilometres an hour, Pam smashed into the string of 83 tropical islands home to 270,000 of our nearest neighbours. Trees were toppled, boats and ships whipped from their moorings, hospitals and schools damaged—some destroyed—and homes obliterated. Cyclone Pam was a natural disaster unlike anything Vanuatu had seen before. As a result, up to 70 per cent of Vanuatu's population has been displaced and, tragically, the latest UN death toll stands at 16. The nearby island nations of Tuvalu and Kiribati also could not escape the cyclone's fury, with 45 per cent of Tuvalu's population displaced as well.

Vanuatu and the Pacific islands are our neighbourhood. They are our close friends. In difficult times such as this, Australia stands with our neighbours in their time of need. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Ni-Vanuatu and those affected by this devastating natural
disaster as they begin the long and arduous task of rebuilding their homes and their lives. Labor supports the government's assistance through $10 million worth of aid, and we thank the more than 450 Australian Defence Force members, 56 search-and-rescue personnel, 26 medical staff, including doctors and nurses, and the wonderful 22 members of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who have been working with Vanuatu officials to help those most in need. We also commend Vanuatu's Prime Minister, Joe Natuman, and the Vanuatu government on the terrific job that they are doing in assessing the needs of the people and ensuring the worst-affected regions are receiving food, water, shelter and medicine.

Typically, many Australians are also digging deep to generously offer their support through financial donations. I ask Australians, however, to be wary. Unfortunately there are those who would seek to take advantage of this generosity. People should be wary of Cyclone Pam fundraising scams on social media, door to door and at their local shopping centres. The best way to identify a scam is to ask the person for their identification and to check the charity on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website.

Tragically for the tropical islands of the Pacific, weather events such as Cyclone Pam are becoming more and more violent. For these people, climate change is not just something to think about down the track; it is occurring now. Whenever I meet with Pacific leaders, their No. 1 concern for their future is climate change. For Australians, climate change is something that we think about in 20 or 30 years. For the Pacific, it is a present danger. As the world continues to warm and sea levels rise, the relatively small and vulnerable Pacific island nations are the globe's canary down the mine, and already they are noticing changes. In the wake of Vanuatu's storm, the President of Vanuatu, Baldwin Lonsdale, made an emotional plea to the international community to do more on climate change. The Premier of Niue, Toke Talagi, said this week:

We keep talking and talking about climate change. We keep talking about actions on climate change. But the consequences to the inaction is what's happened in Vanuatu, in Tuvalu and in Kiribati. Homes are being inundated, the acidification of the ocean continues to threaten fish stocks, and the very existence of many small island states hangs in the balance. More must be done by countries that are able to alleviate the effects of climate change, particularly on our regional neighbours in the Pacific. I thank all of those Australians who have been working in Vanuatu with Vanuatu government officials, with Ni-Vanuatu communities, to repair the damage, to get those communities back on their feet. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those—our neighbours, our friends—who are suffering from this horrendous natural disaster.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (20:21): I second the motion. Mr Deputy Speaker, as a North Queenslander, I can assure you that severe tropical cyclones can have a huge impact on a community. They are both frightening and devastating. Cyclone Pam was no different when it slammed into our neighbours in the Pacific. While the winds howled around homes in Vanuatu, North Queensland held its breath. When the terror had passed, and thousands of families started picking up the pieces of their broken homes and shattered lives, North Queensland felt the grief.

North Queensland shares a special bond with the people of Vanuatu for one simple reason—they are family. The Mackay region is home to the largest Australian South Sea Islander community in the country. They are the Australian born descendants of Pacific
island labourers brought to Australia to work in the sugarcane fields in the early days of the industry in the 1800s and 1900s. While some came of their own free will, many were tricked or kidnapped under the practice of blackbirding. So while Cyclone Pam was wreaking havoc in the Pacific Islands, the thoughts of many in Mackay were with family and friends.

North Queenslanders understand, as well as anyone, the frightening nature of severe tropical cyclones and the destruction that they can cause. In Vanuatu, the havoc was extensive. Most homes in Port Vila are damaged or destroyed. Across the 80 islands of the archipelago, villages are flattened, power lines are down, phones are out, and families are left without food, water, or shelter.

The Australian Government has responded quickly with the arrival in Port Vila of HMAS Tobruk, having departed Townsville in North Queensland with 335 personnel on board, carrying troops and equipment from the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment and additional Australian aid supplies.

The Australian Defence Force, through Operation Pacific Assist, has delivered tools and equipment for the repair of homes, water purification, and shelter, as well as health and hygiene products. More than 500 defence personnel are now deployed to Vanuatu. Given the difficult topography of the region, HMAS Tobruk will be a valuable asset, allowing delivery of supplies, equipment and reconstruction teams by landing craft, helicopter, and crane.

In the immediate aftermath, the government sent an Australian Medical Assistance Team—otherwise known as AUSMAT—of 28 people to provide lifesaving medical support. An Urban Search and Rescue Team of 56 people was dispatched to help with the immediate clean-up and early reconstruction, focusing initially on Port Vila hospital.

Over 16 and 17 March, the Australian Government assisted 242 people to return to Australia via Australian Defence Force military aircraft, including 208 Australians and 34 foreign nationals. Today, the government continues to work closely with our counterparts in New Zealand to coordinate medical assistance, including support for the New Zealand NGO health specialists. We are also working closely with international NGOs and the UN to coordinate additional support.

While the government has coordinated a swift and comprehensive response, non-government organisations have also been quick to react, and the public has responded to calls for donations. In Mackay, the community has launched its own coordinated response. A team of Australian South Sea Islander community members and organisations met in Mackay last week. The appointed chair of the local response team, Mr Greg Sutherland, has provided me with an update from that meeting, and I thank him and his colleagues for the professional and thorough manner in which they have undertaken this task. They recognise the recovery process will be long and arduous and, consequently, they are working on short, medium, and long-term strategies to assist Vanuatu. Fundraising began immediately with the organising of a luncheon, market day and cent sale, with further plans for a concert and dinner.

I make special mention of organisations like MADASSIA and MARABISDA, Frangipani Art and Culture Group, and Yamadi HACC, who have joined forces for this united cause. I note also that the Queensland Police liaison officers are lending a hand with Rotary collection cans. The Rotary Club of Mackay has established the Rotary Australia World Community Service project, which will assist with donations. As I said, the group recognises the need for
ongoing support, which will be required beyond the emergency of the first few days. Yamadi HACC already has received donations from Moranbah and will continue their collection for a shipping container. Meanwhile, they are seeking support for transporting the shipping container to Vanuatu.

The Australian Government and the South Sea Islander communities in North Queensland are deeply concerned for the welfare of our neighbours and family in the Pacific, and will provide whatever assistance we can to help them through the recovery process.

On behalf of those who desperately need our help, I offer thanks and support to our local community lending a hand, ably led by Greg Sutherland and Erryn Tomarra. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Vanuatu, Kiribati, and Tuvalu. We wish them a safe and speedy recovery. In the brief seconds I have left, I also mention Dr Graeme Cumming who has gone over there to assist those people. When he was asked why he said that he was going to help his family. That sums up the North Queensland attitude when it comes to this.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (20:26): On 13 March Vanuatu experienced one of the most significant natural disasters in its history, with a category five cyclone, Cyclone Pam. Prior to the cyclone reaching Vanuatu, on 10 and 11 March king tides were experienced in the country of Tuvalu. On the island of Nukufetau and Nui significant flooding occurred, which has had an enormous impact and has given rise to significant health concerns in terms of infections, and a lot of concern in respect of respiratory illnesses and diarrhoea. In Kiribati the storms had an enormous impact, and in South Tarawa, which is the main population centre of Kiribati, the key causeway from the main islet of South Tarawa to the islet of Betio has had to be closed down because of the storm surges. I have gone over this causeway on many occasions. It connects the major population centres of South Tarawa.

This weather event has had an enormous impact across the Pacific. Its biggest impact has been in Vanuatu. It is one of the worst storms recorded in the history of the country. Perhaps it is summed up by the fact that a trade school on the island Tanna, which had been opened only 10 days prior to the storm, was completely destroyed by the storm.

One positive that has come out of the events of Cyclone Pam is that Vanuatu was very evidently a country and a community that was prepared. It says a lot about the progress and development of the Pacific, and in particular Vanuatu, that they were. Given the size of this storm, to date we see comparatively few lives lost—11 across the country. This is a tragedy of course, but it could have been so much worse. That is in part a tribute to much of the traditional knowledge possessed by the people of Vanuatu. There are stories of traditional cyclone shelters, which people were utilising during the storm itself, and the buildings in Vanuatu are built from the perspective of experiencing cyclones every year, albeit not of the size and scale of Cyclone Pam. It is a tribute to the Vanuatu government. And I want to pay tribute to Prime Minister Joe Natuman, a person I know well who has done a tremendous job in leading his government through this disaster. It is also a tribute to new communications. Most of Vanuatu, in a remarkable achievement, has had access to mobile phone technology. Both Digicel and Telecom Vanuatu were really important in sending emergency SMSs in the lead-up to the cyclone. And so we saw a country that was prepared.

We have now seen, as a result of the cyclone, two dozen islands affected and almost half the population—who live in a country with very lush vegetation, which has been flattened—now face significant and serious food shortages. The Pacific Institute of Public Policy—again,
run by a good friend of mine, Derek Brien, whom my thoughts are with—has spoken and published a fair bit on this since Cyclone Pam. Dan McGarry described this as now representing the biggest logistical challenge for Vanuatu since the Second World War.

Australia has much to be proud of—a $5 million assistance from the Australian government, humanitarian supplies, medical teams, crisis response teams, urban search and rescue teams. But I also want to make mention of the FRANZ agreement, which dates back to 1992. It is a disaster response agreement between France, New Zealand and Australia, and it has been very important in the days since Cyclone Pam. Of course, people will be aware that Vanuatu has a unique colonial history. From 1906 through 1980, it was a condominium run jointly by France and Britain. And so both countries have a role in Vanuatu. Britain has been involved in the disaster recovery; we have seen France play an important role, as well.

I send my best wishes to Prime Minister Joe Natuman, Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu and President Anote Tong of Kiribati—all of whom I know and who are doing an incredible job at this time.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (20:32): I thank the member for Kingsford Smith for proposing this motion. I thank the member for Dawson who seconded it to give it its bipartisan character. I thank him for acknowledging the devastation caused by Cyclone Pam on the people of Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati and for acknowledging the enormous destructive force of Cyclone Pam and its loss of life, as well as the damage to 90 per cent of Port Vila and 45 per cent of Tuvalu’s population and the destruction of its outer islands.

The motion recognises the enormous effort that will be required and the huge task our friends in the Pacific face. It is appropriate to acknowledge the international effort that is being provided. But the motion also goes on to call on the Australian government to monitor the situation closely and to work with the governments to provide timely and appropriate assistance as needed. Let me just assure the honourable member that that is exactly what has been happening.

It is important to recognise that this cyclone has been quite devastating. We have seen in Australia cyclones and we know the very significant impact they can have upon communities—the destruction of the means of support, so much housing and the like. This tragedy has cost lives. The number was not, as I understand it, as suggested by the member for Corio. I am told that the official death toll stands at 16 and not 11. Australia has pledged support. It put in place quickly an emergency response. I commend the Foreign Minister, who travelled to Vanuatu on Sunday to see first-hand what was happening. She met with Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister and assured them of our continuing support.

Australia does remain committed to working in partnership with Vanuatu, in coordination with regional and humanitarian partners to meet their needs. As at 23 March, we have committed over $10 million in response beyond the $5 million that the member for Corio mentioned. It included $5 million to assist the efforts of Australian non-government organisations such as Red Cross and the United Nations, including the world health program, as well as UNICEF. They have been providing, particularly, urgent food aid. Also, it provided: $50,000 for emergency sexual and reproductive health services for women in Vanuatu; additional humanitarian supplies for up to 7,500 people, including sanitation and shelter kits; the deployment of a crisis response team to provide consular assistance to Australians; the deployment of an Australian Urban Search and Rescue personnel team; the
deployment of Australian Medical Assistance Teams, AUSMAT, as well as the Australian
disaster expert to monitor the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination. In
addition, the Australian Defence Force has delivered emergency relief supplies, equipment
and personnel in support of the ongoing consular and humanitarian response.

We have been assisting Australians. And there were some 1,798 Australians in Vanuatu as
at the 23rd, and we have made contact with all of those. We have identified seven Australians
in need of assistance. All Australians are believed to be accounted for. The government has
assisted people to return to Australia, and this has been particularly important. It is important,
also, in the context of Tuvalu that we provided up to A$1 million for humanitarian assistance
and that we are working closely with the government of Tuvalu and partners to make
available more relief supplies and personnel. I think it is important to recognise that Australia
has seen something of the disastrous devastation that has occurred and has, as I have outlined,
actively supported the governments that have been so very much affected, along with their
people, and provided assistance—as you would expect.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (20:37): I rise today to speak about the devastating impact
that Cyclone Pam has had on Vanuatu, after the country was hit by a category 5 system on 13
and 14 March, and I thank the member for Kingsford Smith for moving this motion.

Cyclone Pam descended upon Vanuatu, Tuvalu and a number of other Pacific islands,
battering them with 250 kilometre per hour winds and 320 kilometre per hour gusts, which
caused widespread damage to infrastructure, impacting services such as electricity. There is a
range of figures around at the moment of the tragic death toll. The latest I have heard is that
16 people have died as a result of Cyclone Pam. That is absolutely tragic.

The cyclone has affected more than 166,000 people, including 82,000 children across 22
islands in Vanuatu. And one of those affected is from Canberra. Canberra teenager Zoe
Marshall was volunteering on Pentecost Island, working as a teacher for her gap year. During
the cyclone, she took shelter with another volunteer and 11 children from the family she had
been living with on the island. For days after the cyclone, Zoe and seven other Australian
volunteers were unaccounted for, losing all contact with the outside world. The whole
Canberra community was hoping and praying for her safety. In an interview with The
Canberra Times, Zoe said, 'Running to the village during the storm was the most terrifying 20
minutes of my life' and:

'We walked back up the hill from the village where we'd been sheltering and it was just silent,' she said.

'There were trees through houses, there were trees everywhere, coconuts and branches just all over
the ground.'

This gives us just some insight into what the people in Vanuatu experienced during Cyclone
Pam. Across the country, 50 to 90 per cent of homes have been damaged, leaving 65,000
people in need of shelter. Food, water and health services are also urgently needed.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the
lack of shelter remains a key factor, as infants are falling sick because of overexposure to the
sun. Aid organisations such as Care, Red Cross, UNICEF and World Vision are all
responding to the disaster. I would like to acknowledge and commend those organisations and
others who are working to assist those in need, including our wonderful AEF. I would also
like to acknowledge and commend the volunteers, who are tirelessly giving up their time to
help the situation in Vanuatu.
The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has said that, as of Sunday, its financial tracking service had recorded a total of US$10 million in contributions from foreign donors, including Australia, Britain, New Zealand and the European Commission. Labor support any efforts by the Australian government to give greater assistance to the people of Vanuatu. Australia has now provided more than $10 million to non-government organisations for Vanuatu. We are Vanuatu's biggest aid donor. The foreign minister has pledged long-term support, which I welcome. However, I would like to use this opportunity to talk about foreign aid more broadly.

It is events like Cyclone Pam that remind us of the critical need for aid funding. Australia is now at its lowest level of aid in modern history. We have fallen to 0.2 per cent of our national income and just in this last week we have seen further speculation that there could be more cuts to the aid budget that would embarrass Australia internationally. So we have to remember that while of course we are now providing aid to Vanuatu, it comes after very substantial cuts at the hands of this government, and those aid programs help the people of Vanuatu prepare for these sorts of disasters.

In closing, Vanuatu now has a huge task ahead of it to rebuild and repair following the devastation of Cyclone Pam. Vanuatu is a close friend and a close neighbour for us. We have got a strong history of providing support to Vanuatu for economic development and for disaster preparedness. While we commend the government for the aid it has given to date, it may be necessary to do more and we will be monitoring the situation in Vanuatu. I also call on the government to rule out more cuts to foreign aid. All Australians are still very concerned for the people of Vanuatu and what they have suffered after Cyclone Pam, and our thoughts and condolences are with those who have lost a family member or friend.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (20:42): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Kingsford Smith. Australians are a caring and compassionate people. We come together in times of disaster and hardship, and our generous spirit never hesitates when a neighbour is in need. As news of the destruction and devastation brought about by Cyclone Pam filtered through to Australia, I was overwhelmed by the very kind and generous offers of support from constituents and friends. The compassion and generosity of the Australian spirit always shines in difficult times. Through liaison with the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have been glad to play my part in ensuring that offers of support were accepted and targeted to areas of most need.

Among the many, I place on record my appreciation to Gwen Braga OAM and Connected, who volunteered emergency supplies and food to assist the relief effort in Vanuatu, as well as Ron English, who is coordinating provisions of food and water. I also commend the work of Allen Cox and Churches of Christ Queensland, who through their medical aid program, Churches of Christ Medical Santo, have organised for the provision of seven medical staff to assist in Vanuatu in addition to their two staff currently in Port Vila. I would also like to mention the Murphy family of Canstruct constructions, who in conjunction with the Australian Defence Force, are working to relocate a surplus force-10 medical centre, designed to withstand cyclones, to Vanuatu. I also welcome the announcement from the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. Peter O'Neill, that his government has very generously committed five million kina to support Vanuatu's recovery effort.
On Friday, 13 March, Vanuatu was savaged by Cyclone Pam, a severe tropical cyclone of a category-5 intensity. From early reports, it has been estimated that 90 per cent of Port Vila homes as well as entire villages across the archipelago have been affected. While much remains unclear as the damage and harm caused by Cyclone Pam continues to be assessed, it is clear from reports that a significant portion of the country has been impacted by this catastrophic event, which has brought extremely damaging winds, very heavy rainfall, storm surges and flooding. Australian reconnaissance missions, which are focusing in the south, have advised that on Tanna Island 80 per cent of homes appear to have been destroyed.

If members need any indication as to the likely human toll inflicted by Cyclone Pam, it has been estimated that 45 per cent of Tuvalu residents have already been displaced from their homes. Plainly, Cyclone Pam's impact on Vanuatu has been savage, and the recovery effort that will take place will be a long and challenging process for the nation and its people. However, they will not go it alone. Australia, as both a regional partner in the Pacific and a close friend of Vanuatu, has and will continue to provide significant humanitarian and logistical support in both assessment and recovery missions following this disaster. Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs has pledged $5 million in support to be administered by Australia's non-government organisations, the Red Cross and United Nations authorities, which includes the provision of emergency temporary shelter, essential supplies and support personnel.

With the assistance of the Australian Defence Force, supplies and personnel have arrived at Port Vila, and these missions will continue on an ongoing basis. Between Sunday and Wednesday of last week a total of nine Australian Defence Force planes departed Australia for Vanuatu carrying personnel and humanitarian supplies in addition to a number of aircraft continuing to perform reconnaissance missions. The Australian government also committed to assisting the government of Vanuatu to get the Port Vila hospital operational again, which involves the deployment of an Australian Medical Assistance Team, which will work to establish a temporary hospital ward and boost hospital capacity, which has been severely impacted by the cyclone.

The recovery task that is before the people of Vanuatu is immense, and it may take years before life returns to normal for many of these residents, whose homes and possessions have been destroyed by an absolute freak of nature. The Australian government understands the scale of the recovery task and the human impact this disaster has had and will continue to provide assistance to the government of Vanuatu now and into the future until the job is done. I commend this motion to the House.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (20:47): I am very grateful that the member for Kingsford Smith placed this motion on Cyclone Pam before the House. I am also particularly grateful for the depth of feeling that has been expressed by members across both sides of the chamber in relation to this matter, because from time to time our friends in the Pacific may mistakenly believe that their concerns and the fate they experience from these terrible events go unnoticed. But clearly the debate today demonstrates otherwise.

One of the things I am most grateful for in representing the seat of Chifley in this place is the diversity of the people who make up the seat, but in particular the members of the Pacific Islander community, who form a very strong community within Chifley. Their community and other nations within the Pacific experience these horrific events from time to time. I have
members from the Australian-Fijian community who have had to respond to the terrible aftermath of cyclones through their area, as well as the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Tonga. And obviously I have some residents who are originally from Vanuatu. They all experience these things, and while they may in their own way deal with these things as a fact of life in the Pacific, it does not make it any easier.

There are two things that stand out. One is the immediate aftermath. A number of members have reflected on the types of challenges that confront Vanuatu in the aftermath of Cyclone Pam. There is not just the aftermath itself but also the ongoing reconstruction process. I was very moved by some of the things the member for Corio indicated in his contribution tonight. And it was not just Vanuatu that was affected. Tuvalu and Kiribati have also had to deal with the effects of Cyclone Pam. In Tuvalu, for instance, not only has water supply been damaged and buildings affected by flooding, but the human impact is of great concern. In some cases skin infection in children under 12, trauma cases and respiratory illnesses have been reported, and there are also people in need of psychosocial support. The Ministry of Health has asked for health professionals to support the central hospital there to allow medical staff to go to affected islands and backstop clinics. There has been an additional request for medicines, mainly intravenous fluids and oral rehydration salts, in addition to 1.3 tonnes of medical supplies that New Zealand kindly offered and sent.

It is also disturbing to hear reports from the Red Cross that 50 people are now living in a school and assessments are required to determine whether they can rebuild or whether more shelter materials are required. In Kiribati 107 houses are reported to be destroyed on one island alone, and the response there has been hampered by disruptions to communications and damage to infrastructure that has made access to those areas to reach people and provide assistance exceptionally difficult. The other challenges in reaching the affected islands in the north include the fact that only one ferry is able to be used to reach that remote location. And obviously a storm with such impact will affect communications, and that has been experienced there. It may be the case that after further assessments are undertaken a call will be made that greater support will be required than what is being provided up to this point.

We know that coordination and logistics support will also be of benefit. We on the opposition side welcome the assistance that has been provided by the Australian government and stand shoulder to shoulder with the government on that. It was also enormously pleasing to see the foreign minister visit Vanuatu and express the well wishes of the Australian people towards our friends who have been affected by this across a number of countries in the Pacific. We hope that Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati will be able to get back on their feet relatively quickly, knowing not only that there will be resources support but the support of our well wishes towards them, and we do wish them all the best in their recovery.

Dr STONE (Murray) (20:52): On Friday the 13th the small island nation of Vanuatu and its near neighbours were flattened by a category 5 cyclone named Pam. The cyclone left a path of destruction behind it and the people of Vanuatu, in particular, have a long gruelling task ahead of them in rebuilding their small island nation.

In Australia we know all too well the devastation that natural disasters can cause. Cyclone Marcia recently damaged over 3,300 homes, 1,000 had structural damage and 350 of them can never be reoccupied. We are currently experiencing other cyclonic weather at the top of the country, across the Northern Territory and in Far North Queensland. But at least in our
country we have a huge population of many millions of fellow Australians who are ready to give a hand, and who can.

This is quite different in a very small island nation where people are often subsistence agricultural workers or have only very recently managed to build up their infrastructure for their education, health and transport needs. Australia is deeply concerned for the safety of the people of Vanuatu and its near neighbours as their homes, their infrastructure, their crops and their food supplies have been destroyed.

As soon as we knew of the destruction, Australia sprang into action to deliver important services to help as many people as we could. The sum of $10 million has been given to partners who are on the ground, including the Red Cross and United Nations agencies such as UNICEF. Australia has also provided humanitarian supplies for up to 7,500 people, including water and sanitation, shelter kits and $50,000 for emergency sexual and the reproductive health services for women. At this point, Australia has sent 28 people to Vanuatu as part of the Australian Medical Assistance Team. I have seen them in action in PNG, and I know they are stunning in the work that they do and how they manage. They are providing life-saving medical support for those most in need. We have also sent an Urban Search and Rescue team of 56 people to help with the clean-up and reconstruction. The first priority, of course, is to help the people of the Port Villa hospital community. The hospital had supplies delivered during last week by Australian Defence Force aircraft. Together with New Zealand and our NGOs, we are working hard to help the people of Vanuatu, and so we should.

In my electorate of Murray we too have experienced tragic effects from natural disasters. Although we do not have tropical cyclones we have floods, bushfires and drought. So we know the importance of resilience in tough times, and natural disasters are unfortunately a more common occurrence now throughout the world, so it is imperative that we learn how best to help one another on a scale and in ways never before needed.

When Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu there were Australians visiting the country. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade made contact with them and also those working there. Over 1,700 Australians have been offered consular assistance, in the way that we usually do. I commend our consular support for the excellent work they have undertaken.

It is a miracle that the cyclone's peak winds were up 320 kilometres an hour but so far only 16 people appear to have lost their lives. That is a miracle, given the devastation that was caused. We also acknowledge that there has been enormous damage done to Tuvalu and Kiribati. We have been supplying dollars to help provide support there, and the royal Australian Air Force is providing aerial surveillance to help—as particularly requested by the Solomon Islands.

Australia and Vanuatu have a long and intertwined history, not all of it good. It dates back to the mid-19th century, before Federation. As the convict ships, with cheap or free labour on board, began to slow from the United Kingdom, our farmers, particular those in the sugarcane industry in Queensland, looked to other places for sources of cheap, hardworking labour. They looked to the South Pacific Islands, and the vast majority of the new and often forced and unpaid workers were from Vanuatu. Some were promised good pay, good work and a good life. Occasionally that occurred, but, for most, it was quite different. They were forced into slavery and indenture.
At the end of that period, which fortunately came in 1901 with Federation, more than 39,900 people had come from Vanuatu to work in the cane fields of Queensland. We acknowledge that past, and we acknowledge that that gives us a special sense of needing to support Vanuatu and other nearby South Sea islands in ways that perhaps are special. I commend very much the efforts of all Australians and of our government, which has leapt into action, as it should and as it wants to. I commend are own Minister for Foreign Affairs, who has been on the ground making sure all is well. On behalf of the people of Murray, I commend our actions and give our thoughts and condolences to those who have been badly affected.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (20:57): I did not expect to contribute to this debate, but in the few minutes we have left I am very pleased to do so, because I think it is important that Australia acknowledges that a friend of ours, a very good friend of ours, Vanuatu, has been very severely affected by what is a very significant natural disaster—a category 5 cyclone. Last week I was representing Australia in Japan at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and when the news hit of such a severe disaster hitting Vanuatu it really focused everybody’s minds about how important it is that the world work together to reduce the risk that disasters pose.

I sought out the President of Vanuatu, who was representing Vanuatu at the conference, and I had a meeting with him and his ministers. The President, Baldwin Lonsdale, and the whole Vanuatu delegation were very shell-shocked. It was very difficult for them to be in contact with their home country, because communications were down, and the information they were getting about what was going on was relatively patchy. I was able to explain to the president and his ministers what Australia was doing in response to the difficult circumstances. It is a terrible situation that Vanuatu and some of their neighbours are in. I explained that we were sending in RAAF aircraft, C-17s and C-130s, full of supplies. We have deployed Australian Urban Search and Rescue personnel. We deployed and AUSMAT team that provides medical assistance and can set up a hospital very quickly. The foreign minister has spoken very eloquently about how important that hospital has been to the people of Vanuatu. We also diverted HMAS Tobruk, a heavy landing craft, which was actually on its way down from Townsville to a more southerly port, to Vanuatu. I understand it has arrived.

The president was very grateful for the assistance that Australia was providing. It reminded me of what a great friend Australia is when our friends find themselves in need. Others in the international community were certainly contributing to the effort, but I must say that I think the extraordinary heavy-lifting that Australia was doing, in doing everything we can to assist our friend, shows what a big-hearted country this is.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Education

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (21:00): There is no more important role of government than providing young Australians with access to a decent education. Education is the great enabler. It is the springboard to a decent job and security in life. It ensures
Australians have higher living standards and our economy is more productive. In the past, Australia has had one of the best technical and further education systems in the world. TAFE has provided equitable, affordable access to trades and further education for millions of Australian kids to give them the skills to get a good, secure job—skills that boost our economy and increase our living standards. Unfortunately, the Liberals have changed that. The Abbott and Baird governments have smashed the New South Wales TAFE system. They have made it harder for our kids to access TAFE training to get a decent education—a springboard into a good job. This is not just a view that I hold; it is also the view of many in our community.

I wish to quote some examples of the letters that people have written to me outlining their issues with TAFE. Maggie of Kingsford writes:

I am a person living with multiple disabilities. However, in the right job, I believe I can work, and I want to work. I very much want to earn an income. But even though I have tried very hard to find a job, I have not been successful. When I went to TAFE to enrol in certificate III in jewellery trade at Enmore, I discovered that the cost was $11,070. In 2014, under the current system before Smart and Skilled, I would have been able to enrol in this course for free under fee exemption for people with a disability. Even without fee exemption, certificate III courses cost $419 in 2014. So the cost has gone up by $10,651 in one year.

Christine, of Maroubra—a 50-year-old woman who has had to leave work due to ill health—writes:

To regain employment I have enrolled in a certificate III in travel and tourism, which was to cost me an affordable $580 or near to. As I will never be able to return to the type of job that I've held within the aviation industry for nearly 26 years, I need to obtain a diploma to start a small business up. I've been absolutely floored to find out that I will have to pay up to $6,000 to complete a six-month diploma and that the certificate III course is approximately $4,000 to $5,000.

They are the views of people in our community.

The New South Wales Liberal government, the Baird government, have deregulated TAFE through their Smart and Skilled program. They have cut $1.7 billion from the TAFE system and 1,100 TAFE teachers and support staff have been sacked—and we have just heard the result. This gives us an insight into what will occur if universities in Australia are deregulated, as the Abbott government wish to do. Fees will go through the roof, as they have in TAFE. In the 2014-15 budget, the Abbott government cut $2 billion from technical and further education support in this country—$66 billion cut from the adult apprentice program; 10,000 training places cut in the skills for education and employment program; $43.8 million cut from the skills for education and employment program; and the Tools for Your Trade program was wiped out.

This has led to thousands of members of our community returning a petition to my electorate opposing the Abbott and Baird governments' TAFE cuts and supporting TAFE in New South Wales, and I thank those members of our community who have returned that petition. I will present it to the parliament in the coming weeks as it is still returning to the office.

The result of all these reforms is that it makes it harder for our kids to access a quality education. A good education is the key to a decent job, to starting a family, to buying a home and to security in a person's life. All this is being undermined by the Abbott and Baird
governments. It says everything about how the Liberal governments in New South Wales and federally value education in this country. I am opposed to these TAFE cuts, and I thank the members of our community who are supporting the campaign to restore funding for TAFE in New South Wales.

Petition: Fuel Prices

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (21:05): Australians everywhere have rightfully been relieved at the recent break in the increase in petrol prices over the end of last year and into January. However, in parts of regional Australia these drops in prices have not fully been felt by consumers. At the end of last year, the Minister for Small Business gave powers to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to investigate fuel markets by ‘deep diving’ into regional areas to find irregularities or dysfunction affecting consumers at the bowser. In this announcement, the minister outlined the issue of regional petrol prices. He said:

The new direction provides for the ACCC to produce more timely reports than its current annual fuel market review publication that contains detailed information on the petroleum industry and to target specific aspects of concern for closer examination.

Monitoring reports will now be produced quarterly to be more informative, responsive and able to identify areas of market concern or heightened interest for the community.

In addition, the new direction also empowers the Commission to undertake a ‘deep dive’ into specific markets or aspects of the fuel industry requiring closer and more specific examination. These reviews will target perceived irregularities in the fuel market or market dysfunction with potential detriment to motorists.

In some regional centres that are about the same distance out from our capital cities and the same distance from terminals, there is no great variation in the volume sold but there is a lot of difference in the price that motorists are charged.

On 26 February 2015 the ACCC released the first quarterly report into the Australian petroleum industry for 2015. The report showed a large decrease in petrol prices in the five largest cities in the period from June 2014 to January 2015 consistent with the fall in international prices. However, the fall in international prices has not fully flowed through to regional locations. The report also found that in June 2014 monthly average retail prices of petrol across regional locations in Australia were 5.4c per litre higher than prices in the five largest cities—close to the average for 2013-14. By December 2014 this differential had increased to 17.5c per litre. The differential remained at this level at the end of January. During January this differential increased in some of the 180 regional locations monitored by the ACCC and decreased in others.

On 10 March 2015 the ACCC announced that Darwin would be the first regional location to be studied under the new petrol monitoring arrangements. The aims of the regional market studies are to get to the bottom of why prices are higher in certain regional locations and to identify and explain each component of the prices paid at the bowser. The ACCC will examine petrol markets in at least a further two regional locations by the end of the year. The ACCC will announce the next two regional locations to be selected for a market study over the coming months.

I have here tonight a petition with 2,068 signatures from the people of Hamilton and its surrounds which was presented to the House Standing Committee on Petitions and found to
be in order. It draws the House's attention to the disparity in fuel prices between Hamilton and other regions, which leads to motorists in Hamilton and its surrounds paying markedly more for their fuel. The people of Hamilton and the surrounding towns have asked that the House call on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to use its new powers to 'deep dive' into the fuel market in south-west Victoria in order to examine any irregularities or market dysfunction which are having a detrimental impact on consumers.

It is with honour and privilege that I present this petition on behalf of my constituents. It is a petition which, given the number of signatures, clearly shows the level of concern in my community for the disparity in prices between city and country areas. I hereby present the petition to the House.

The petition read as follows—
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of residents of Hamilton and surrounding towns draws to the attention of the House the disparity in fuel prices between Hamilton and other regions, which leads to motorists paying markedly more for their fuel.

We therefore ask the House to call on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to use its new powers to "deep dive" into the Hamilton fuel market to examine any perceived irregularities in the fuel market or market dysfunction which are having a detrimental impact on motorists.

from 2,068 citizens

Petition received.

Economy

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (21:10): I rise tonight to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Treasurer on the recent announcement that Australia does not have a debt problem, and that we will not have a debt problem in the foreseeable future. This is an important admission by the government. For a long time it has been pushing policies based on the assumption that we have a debt problem. The question now must be: if we do not have a debt problem, what do we do with all the government policies? All the government policies are based on the assumption that we do have a debt problem. The admission is much more serious than would appear on first examination.

We need to have new policies from the government, and the budget is a great opportunity to set a new agenda for Australia—for growth. We need to look at where we really are in the world and let the truth come to the surface. It is a fact that Australia has the world's highest growth in GDP in the developed world—3.3 per cent up to last December—we have had no years of recession since 1990, and our debt is 350 per cent lower than that of Germany, which is the powerhouse of Europe. We are also number one in the world in the number of Australians going to university. We are also number one in the world in the number of Australians going to secondary school. One wonders what you would seek to get from an education policy if it is not participation and a higher education for the people who live in Australia.

When we look at the fact that we have the highest GDP growth in the developed world, we cannot avoid the obvious conclusion that that is linked with our high rate of participation in university and our high rate of participation in secondary schools. What is more surprising is
our labour productivity. Since 1990 our labour productivity has risen 50 per cent above what it was in 1990, and yet the cost of labour in real terms has gone down to 85 per cent. They are not the perceptions you get from the government in the period of this parliament—but they are the facts. They have been published by the Australian Statistician, the OECD and the International Monetary Fund. They have been brought together in the Australian Trade Commission report released in January this year setting out the achievements of this country and where we are.

The challenge for the future is: what can we achieve? We have looked at the United States and President Obama. We have seen how he has grown the US economy and how quickly jobs have grown. Over $85 billion a month was spent in stimulating the US economy—equivalent to about $6 billion a month for an economy the size of Australia. We see how that has worked. We see now that the European Union is following that example, because they too want to a higher standard of living for their people, a growing and expanding economy, increased stimulus and higher exports.

We also know, at this critical time, that Australia has been invited to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and that Great Britain has become a member already—and so has Switzerland. President Obama last Saturday in the United States instructed the World Bank to enter into projects in collaboration with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Australia has been invited to become a foundation member, but it has not responded—yet this is our region. There are $100 billion of infrastructure funds available to be invested in our economy to create more jobs for our people and a better future for Australia. I would encourage the government to look very seriously and strongly at accepting that invitation to join our allies, such as the United Kingdom and others, in this venture in Asia.

When the budget comes up, we need to have a strategy for growth, for vision, for jobs and for investment. This is a great opportunity for the government to rejig itself, to come to real terms as to what is happening in our economy and to provide real hope for our people. I will be very keen to watch, and I am sure that all members of this House will be, to see what happens on budget night. The Prime Minister has a real opportunity to turn this country around and have all its people from all political parties support a strategy for growth.

Bonner Electorate: Broadband

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (21:15): I rise tonight to speak on one of the most important issues in my electorate of Bonner. This issue is a lack of fast and reliable internet broadband. I am here to update the House on broadband access in Bonner and the progress of the NBN rollout in my electorate. I will also speak on the technology that will help bring high-speed reliable broadband to my constituents sooner, and at less cost.

I have spoken many times in this chamber on this pressing matter. It pains me to stand here today with many fresh stories from residents and businesses who are struggling to access the world-class broadband that is essential for so many things these days. Just the other day I heard the story of a father of two who lives in Mansfield. He tells me that since he moved there 10 years ago, his internet service has gone from bad to worse. Incredibly slow download speeds and regular dropouts are the daily norm, he says.

It has caused untold frustration for the whole household. His wife needs it for work on her PhD and for the days she works from home, his two children need it for their high school
work, not to mention daily activities that need a stable internet connection—like paying bills online or accessing government services.

And that is the thing with internet broadband: it is not a luxury that can wait—it is a must-have in today's increasingly tech-driven world. The coalition understands this. On the other hand, Labor overpromised and underdelivered, as though people could afford just to hold out for years on end. Many suburbs, including those in my electorate lag behind as a result: Carindale, Wishart, Mansfield, Wynnum West, Manly West, Wakerley and Rochedale, to name just a few.

I have contacted telco representatives in my area more times than I would like to, because my constituents cannot even access basic ADSL services. The NBN was supposed to be the cure-all from the start. Instead, Labor let down the people of Bonner on a grand scale.

The coalition could not let the NBN go on the way it was under Labor. It would have cost $73 billion—$29 billion more than claimed. It would have increased prices for consumers by up to 80 per cent, and we would have had to wait until 2024 for it to be finished—almost a decade, when we are already behind much of the world.

Now, under the coalition's plan, the NBN will be completed faster, using a multitechnology mix. I am pleased to report that a large number of residents and businesses in Bonner will benefit from this revised roll-out strategy. It matches the right technology to the right location, making use of existing networks, where possible, to deliver superfast broadband. Under this model, areas with poor broadband will receive upgrades several years sooner.

This is great news for my Bonner constituents, especially considering that around 77 per cent of premises in my electorate are already passed by the existing HFC network, which NBN Co will be utilising to deliver superfast broadband. This means a quicker and more efficient rollout of the NBN in Bonner.

Further to that, NBN Co has announced it will be amongst the first in the world to deploy next-generation HFC technology in 2017. Users will be able to access download speeds of one gigabit per second and upload speeds of 100 megabits per second, where offered by their retail service provider. This will be a huge step up.

Clearly, the coalition has put the NBN back on the right track. Under our plan, all Australians will be receiving first-rate, high-speed, reliable broadband in less time and at less cost to taxpayers. In particular, the coalition has prioritised those who were underserved by the previous government. We recognise that residents and businesses cannot afford to wait for the NBN.

I would also like to thank my colleague the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, for the excellent job that he has done turning the NBN around. He took a project that was way off track and off budget and reshaped it to ensure that more areas in need receive fast, affordable broadband. The NBN will now be completed in a much timelier and cost-effective manner. My Bonner constituents will reap the benefits of the minister's good work. (Time expired)

New South Wales State Election

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (21:20): New South Wales goes to the polls on Saturday and, whilst every election is about choice, few are as defined by a single idea as is the case this
time. On the one hand is the Liberal government's privatisation agenda and on the other is a commitment from Labor to keep public assets and services in public hands.

The premier has called this election a 'referendum' on the privatisation of the electricity network, and has spruiked a suite of projects to be funded by the long-term lease of the poles and wires in New South Wales. Labor would keep these assets in public hands, forgoing the short-term revenue for the longer-term gain, which is used to invest in schools, hospitals and roads, for example.

There are hundreds of people from my area who are employed in the energy sector, and they would be affected—most notably, network designers, engineers and control room workers. The future is also very unclear for those frontline workers who make sure that we have a safe connection to the grid and who respond to outages.

We have already seen what the Liberal's privatisation of the Port of Newcastle has delivered for my area. It has delivered nothing. This is despite the sale presenting a unique opportunity for reinvestment of the proceeds into the number one infrastructure priority in the region, the Glendale transport interchange. With only three days to go, Labor is the only party that has made a funding commitment to this vital project: $39 million to complete the first stage of the project, as well as dedicated funding for the scope and planning of the second stage, including the construction of a train station and public transport interchange.

The vocational education system is also being privatised by stealth, with the deregulation of fees and increased competition in the sector undermining TAFE in a debilitating way. Glendale TAFE, in my electorate, has cut courses in tourism, hospitality, welding and metal fabrication, and course costs for students enrolling this year have also increased massively. This has repercussions not only for the sector itself but for the region's ability to meet the skills needed by industry. With an economy reeling from the downturn in the mining sector, and in the midst of a diversification of our economy, it is imperative that we respond to the needs of local businesses and are able to guarantee that graduates are well trained and properly equipped with the skills they need.

On Saturday there is a clear choice for the people of New South Wales, including the people of the Lake Macquarie region, and I know that the people I represent are best served by the policy approach of Labor. I would like to acknowledge the strong candidates and campaigns of Labor MPs in the region: Clayton Barr in Cessnock, Sonia Hornery in Wallsend, Tim Crakanthorp in Newcastle and Jodie Harrison in Charlestown. It is, however, an infinitely greater challenge to contest elections without the resources and experience that incumbency brings, and I would also like to acknowledge the campaigns of Kate Washington in Port Stephens, Jenny Aitchison in Maitland, Martin Rush in the Upper Hunter, and my friends and colleagues Yasmin Catley in Swansea and Melissa Cleary in Lake Macquarie.

Indeed, the Lake Macquarie campaign deserves special mention, as the seat is fully enclosed in my electorate of Charlton. It is only through the commitment and dedication of some truly inspiring campaigners that Labor's message has been spread far and wide in our area. It starts with a great candidate. Melissa Cleary is a person of immense integrity who I know has worked very hard over the past year to outline Labor's vision for our community. She is backed by a dynamic campaign team led by Amanda Pearce and Liam Dutaillis and supported by Lorre and Bill Manning, Kim Weller, David Belcher and James Blair. I know we are all grateful to Mark Bainbridge for the sea of corflutes that are now dotted around
Lake Macquarie, as only a used car salesman can achieve. Reg Proctor, Stephen Dewar, George Adams, Doug Pye, Des Murphy, Helen Sheehy, Marj Gissane-Clark, James Elliot, Joan Wilson, Greg Newton, Kim Van Koeverden, David Kay, Sharon Pascoe, Madeline and Mark Bishop, John Pritchard, Ryan Dunn, Ernie Bantham, Frank Gregory, Jan Crawford, Toni and Paul Lorentzen, Sue Blackshaw, the Hunters, Rowley James, Jacques and Barbara Hagendyk, Joan and Alan Steele, Samantha Richards, Ron and Leanne Boonstoppel, and Dorothy and Les Cleary have formed a veritable army of campaigners who have hit the phones, gone doorknocking, attended street stalls and delivered flyers throughout the campaign. There are certainly more, and I apologise if I have missed anyone. Thank you for your dedication to the Labor cause and for fighting to ensure that the values we share are not forgotten in this election and into the future.

I wish you all the best of luck on Saturday. I will be with you on the campaign trail on Friday and Saturday, and please be assured that your efforts will not go in vain. We are fighting for the right ideas and the right values, and I am proud to say I am fighting for a great Labor team.

Braddon Electorate

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (21:25): When I went to the people of Braddon to seek their vote at the 2013 federal election, I outlined quite clearly my commitments and goals for the electorate. I made local community based commitments; I outlined regional and state-wide commitments, and of course we as the then opposition made commitments to the nation as a whole. Just over 18 months into the term of this government, I take the opportunity this evening to report back to the voters on the progress of these commitments. Whether it be the $3 million funding for the Burnie indoor pool development, the Devonport Soccer Club redevelopment with $1.1 million, the Devonport Hockey redevelopment with $200,000, the $350,000 for the Smithton hockey centre, the $100,000 for the Smithton Recreation Ground lighting project or the $85,000 for the Cradle Coast Outriggers to build their own facilities—and the list goes on—I am glad to report to the electors in Braddon that each and every one of the local commitments that I made has received funding and is underway or nearly completed. I said I would deliver these projects and I am delivering them to the people of Braddon, and I am proud of that.

I also committed to being a great supporter of the Green Army project. Now, heading towards the third round of Green Army projects to be announced later in the year, I can say that five projects have been announced for my electorate and either are about to commence shortly, have commenced or have been completed. The great news is that not that many but a number of young people have found full-time employment as a result of that program, albeit just a few projects.

As I speak with business throughout the electorate, without a doubt the most pressing issue is freight. Tasmanian businesses have long been disadvantaged by exorbitant freight costs charged for exports. Some people told me horror stories of the costs of this. That is why during the election I committed absolutely to working with a new coalition government to fix the anomaly in the TFES system, which supported shipments to Melbourne only if they were not then exported overseas. We promised a Productivity Commission inquiry into freight and we delivered. And, in response to that report, the Prime Minister and I announced $203 million over four years to boost the TFES to include exports. This is a game changer for my
It will allow exporting businesses for the first time to compete with mainland businesses for export growth following the three landmark free trade agreements delivered by this government last year. This means North-West beef on tables in China, Korea and Japan, it means North-West milk in the major grocery chains in Asia, and it means our local businesses can export their goods to these countries on a level playing field with the mainland.

There are many things we do well in Braddon, and that includes anything to do with agriculture. That is why this government's $60 million commitment to help build five new irrigation schemes in Tasmania, including in Circular Head in my electorate, is so important. It will give farmers year-round access to water and boost production. This means farmers can get a better return on their investments and employ more people.

Above all, voters in Braddon are concerned with employment. Under the previous government, the state ALP-Greens coalition, over 10,000 jobs were lost. In fact, these governments took pride in attempting to destroy whole industries. I am able to report that since the election, since this government has delivered on all of its commitments, we have managed to stop the shedding of jobs and start to repair the economy. This comment is based on fact. Since September 2013, full-time employment in Tasmania has risen by 7,700 and part-time employment by 1,300. That means total employment in Tasmania has risen now to 239,300. This has seen unemployment rates drop by 1.6 per cent, to 6.6 per cent. We are no longer tail-end Charlie in this nation. There is a long way to go to undo the damage done by the previous Labor governments to the Tasmanian economy, but we, together with the Will Hodgman led Liberal government in Tasmania, are doing our absolute best to get the Tasmanian economy, including the North-West economy, back on track.

Every now and again, I see former members of parliament, former members of the then government, calling for a return to their policies. Well, I make the commitment to Braddon that I will never return to their job-destroying policies. I will continue to rebuild the economy and to build on the work we have already done to see over 8,000 people return to paid employment in this state. I thank the House.

The SPEAKER: It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Hartsuyker to present a bill for an act to amend the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, and for other purposes.

Mr Morrison to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to social security, and for related purposes.

Mr Turnbull to present a bill for an act to amend and repeal laws relating to communications, and for related purposes.

Mr McCormack to 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: 17th Construction Squadron Relocation Infrastructure Project.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke) took the chair at 16:02.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Blair Electorate: Sport

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:02): The former federal Labor government left a lasting legacy of improved community infrastructure across the electorate of Blair, from the $500,000 for the Toogoolawah Cultural Precinct, the state-of-the-art arts precinct in the northern part of the electorate, to Studio 188 in the old Baptist Church in the arts precinct in Ipswich central—an area that we call the 'top of town'. In 2013 I was delighted when the then federal Labor government announced funding of $15 million to help create a new community sports and recreation precinct at Springfield adjacent to the south-east corner of Blair for the Brisbane Lions. I fought hard for the funding alongside Bernie Ripoll, the member for Oxley. The Ipswich City Council and Springfield Land Corporation backed the project. The Brisbane Lions' new world-class training and administration facility was to be the heartbeat and centrepiece of the $60 million precinct. I remember standing with Catherine King, the member for Ballarat, who was Labor's minister for regional Australia, and Bernie Ripoll at the funding announcement in Springfield. The funding was announced and budgeted for in the May 2013 budget under Regional Development Australia funding. Unfortunately, in MYEFO in late 2013 the Abbott government ripped away $15 million from Blair and Oxley, and now the Brisbane Lions have had to pull out of that particular project.

However, the Ipswich City Council is backing the bid to bring a Western Corridor rugby league team to our region. In fact, they are calling on the federal and state governments to support a new NRL team in the western corridor. Springfield, with excellent access to Ipswich, Logan and Brisbane, is the perfect location for an elite NRL training facility. It is clear the western corridor deserves a NRL team. With the support of Logan and Toowoomba, Ipswich's bid should be accepted. I say to NRL CEO, David Smith, what I said to his predecessor: it is time for Ipswich's bid. Ipswich was one of the first teams in the Queensland rugby league in 1909. Ipswich won the competition in 1910. Ipswich gave the rugby league world Alfie Langer and the Walters brothers, and, at one stage, the whole of the front row of the Australian rugby league team came from Ipswich.

There are 3,500 juniors playing rugby league in Ipswich, and we have great terms like Brothers, Fassifern, Goodna and District, Karalee, Laidley, Lowood, Norths Tigers, Redbank Plains, Rosewood, Springfield, West End Bulldogs and my favourite team, the team I played for as a kid, the Swifts Bluebirds. Ipswich is a rugby league incubator. I am a sponsor of Ipswich Rugby League and the Ipswich Jets Intrust Super Cup team, and I sponsor Ipswich State High School's dance students, who are the cheer squad for the Ipswich Jets team. It is time the Western Corridor got an NRL team and it is time the NRL supported the Western Corridor bid.

Budget

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (16:05): I want to discuss a matter of keen interest to people in my electorate. It is very important to distinguish between the two distinct phases of the coalition's economic management in this all-important first term. The two phases are...
immediate budgetary repair and reform—firstly, budgetary repair. It is instructive to think of the Australian economy following the fiscal recklessness of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor governments as a trauma patient. The severity of injuries of a major trauma case requires immediate and effective treatment not only to keep a patient alive but to reduce the healing time from injury.

Under the policies of the former Labor government Australia was on a trajectory of having $5.6 trillion of debt by 2055. That is a net-debt-to-GDP ratio of 122 per cent. To put that in perspective, that is slightly below that of Greece and above that of Spain today. We needed to move quickly and effectively. Trauma medicine often uses the term ‘golden hour.’ It refers to that period after a major trauma when urgent and effective care must be given to patients in order to increase their survivability and reduce healing time. The coalition has concluded the ‘golden hour’ of care for the Australian economy. It has staunched the blood loss and stabilised the patient. We have taken many hard decisions, made many difficult choices and produced dramatic outcomes.

As a result of measures already implemented by the coalition, our debt level has been halved to around 57.2 per cent of GDP by 2055, or around $2.6 trillion. However, there is much more to do. We can now get on with providing long-term care for the economy. This is where we can implement important strategic reform that is warranted not as a budgetary measure but because it is the right direction for the nation's future: making the necessary changes that will keep expenditure and payments sustainable, making the necessary changes that will engage and remove the barriers to participation by two of the mainstays of our workforce—that is, women and older Australians—and ensuring our youth have adequate access to jobs.

These strategic changes will deliver an economy that has capacity to weather strong headwinds should they emerge in the future. We will do this in an analytical way, we will do this in a methodical way and we will do this in a determined way. The Australian economy has passed the initial crisis. The coalition has dramatically altered the trajectory of Australia's economy. The 'golden hour' is over, and we have salvaged an economy on the edge and tracking towards disaster to an economy with the capacity for growth and strength and well placed to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities for future generations. On the ground, that helps us pay for the things that the people of Eden-Monaro need and want.

Chisholm Electorate: Budget

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (16:08): On Friday, I hosted a very important community forum in my electorate to discuss the impact the Abbott government cuts have had on organisations in my community. Organisations from across my electorate were invited, and the response was absolutely overwhelming. Not only did a huge number of organisations send representatives, but those that could not took the time to send me detailed descriptions of cuts which are hurting them and their concerns about the future.

Small local environment groups like the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve, who do not operate on a significant sum of money but rely on small volunteer grants and council assistance, have started to feel the effect of the federal government's cuts to council environment grants, which is flowing on to their groups. The vital community support services such as the Family Access Network, who provide support to disadvantaged families
and young people facing homelessness by providing a roof over their head but are struggling to keep up with demand on emergency support, have no certainty of any funding beyond the next 12 months as a result of the Abbott government's decision to cut $240 million from the DSS discretionary grants program. The Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council, who also rely on this grant program, are facing a $200,000 funding shortfall from July next year and have no idea how they will provide support to their client base. And Community Information Support Services, who provide emergency relief for people in need, will also now struggle to provide the vital tax time financial advice service they provide through volunteers, because their clients now all need to have their own webpage and access to online services. Most of these people do not even have a computer, let alone their own email account.

In my electorate, the demand on the community information support service will only increase, as the Abbott government did not, despite previous assurances, provide any funding at all to the Waverley Benevolent Society. This organisation provides vital support in my community; they are now going to rely entirely on donations.

We also heard clearly and loudly from our local schools, who just want to know: where is our Gonski money? This was a broad spectrum of local organisations—schools, universities, community groups, housing associations and philanthropic organisations—bound together by a common set of complaints: cuts to existing funding, uncertainty around future funding and a genuine concern that they will no longer be able to provide the level of services that lives up to the expectations and needs of our community. These are all organisations that, no matter their size, need to budget and plan ahead. They are being hampered by cuts, and the uncertainty about future funding is making it almost impossible to plan ahead.

I call on the government to restore the funding they had cut from the organisations that so many people in my community rely on and to follow the experience and advice of the Eastern Community Legal Centre—who, I am happy to say, had their funding restored by the Abbott government, but only after massive lobbying. So I urge all community organisations, groups and services to keep lobbying and complaining loudly and to keep their fight in the public eye, because that is how their funding will be restored. But they should not have to. Vital services in our community should be funded appropriately to serve the client base that needs their help.

Boothby Electorate: Environment

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (16:11): I rise to provide an update about new Green Army projects in my electorate. But before I do I would like to thank Cooper Smith from Ipswich Grammar School for his assistance. Cooper visited parliament and my office today as part of this year's Work Exposure with Government Program and helped draft these comments.

I have spoken previously about Marion council's Green Army project to protect and restore grassy woodland in the Sturt River catchment, and it will be a great pleasure to attend the graduation of those participants in two weeks' time. However, last month I was very pleased to announce two more Green Army projects, focusing on the Mitcham Hills and the Seacliff to Brighton sand dunes. These projects involve the protection and restoration of grassy grey box woodlands in the Mitcham Hills and the conservation and restoration of the Seacliff to Brighton sand dunes.
The Green Army is firstly, and always will be, an environmental program. In both projects, young people will be removing potentially damaging weeds and introduced species, and revegetating Indigenous flora. But, importantly, the new Green Army project being led by Mitcham council has another purpose, which is to focus on decreasing the level of bushfire risk in our local area. This will be achieved by attacking and removing fuel sources such as woody weeds and feral olives, and the project delivers on my election commitment to that end. In addition to diminishing bushfire risk, the condition of local grey box woodlands will be greatly improved. Popular trail networks and surrounding fauna will benefit through the revegetation of indigenous flora and through track surface maintenance.

The new Green Army project being led by Holdfast Bay council focuses on the restoration and conservation of the Seacliff to Brighton sand dunes and the surrounding environment. Again, this will be achieved by the eradication and removal of harmful foreign plant life which is damaging the dunes. It will also formalise beach access paths and reconnect these dunes with the nearby Minda dunes.

Young people in Boothby interested in joining the Green Army will now have the opportunity to be part of one of these projects and help our community deliver important local conservation outcomes. These projects are not only taking care of our environment; they are making a positive difference to local communities as well as providing important training and skills for young people. Personally, I believe that the combination of these factors is a great strength of the Green Army program and is an important key to its success in the present and will be in the years ahead.

These projects—the removal of woody weeds and the restoration of native vegetation in the Mitcham Hills, and also the revegetation of the sand dunes—have been key environmental priorities of mine in Boothby for a long time. I am very pleased that, by working with both Mitcham council and Holdfast Bay council, we will be able to deliver on this.

Makin Electorate: Bushfires

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:14): Between 2 January and 8 January this year, there were devastating bushfires in the Adelaide region in an area surrounding Sampson Flat. When the fires were eventually brought under control, 27 homes had been destroyed, 134 people had been injured, 13,000 hectares of land had been burnt and there were millions and millions of dollars of losses.

Within hours of the fires commencing, a state of emergency was declared and residents of Greenwith and Golden Grove in the Makin electorate were being evacuated from their homes. Many of them sought refuge in the local shopping centres, Civic Park at Modbury and at the Golden Grove Recreation Centre, where an emergency evacuation and relief centre was quickly established. Indeed, many of the families left their homes not knowing whether they would return to them. They did not know if their homes would still be standing.

On the morning of Saturday, 3 January, hundreds of people attended an emergency briefing on the fire situation, provided by the police and fire authorities, outlining what assistance measures were in place, what roads had been closed, and what preparation people at risk should make. Whenever an emergency or disaster arises we see the best in people, and such was the case with these bushfires. People from across the state were offering food, housing,
clothing, animal shelter, personal services and any other assistance that they thought might help.

The goodwill continued well after the fires. On Sunday, 8 February, the Salvation Army at Modbury hosted a thank-you service for front-line crews. On Wednesday, 11 March, the Modbury Bowling Club hosted a social bowls evening for the Tea Tree Gully and Paracombe CFS crews. It is simply not possible to acknowledge or even know every person that assisted during the fires; however, the role of the front-line services—the firefighters, the police, ambulance crews and SES crews—was invaluable. It was largely because of their efforts that no lives were lost, that more homes were not burnt down and that more injuries were not sustained.

I also acknowledge the Housing SA staff who oversaw operations at the emergency relief centre, the many community volunteers who assisted at the centre and the Commonwealth Human Services staff, who also set up a mobile office at the centre. I thank the media—in particular, ABC 891, which in the first days of the fire devoted all of their broadcasting time to the fires, providing regular updates and important information to the community. I also thank both the Minister for Justice and the South Australian Premier's Office who, on Saturday, 3 January, contacted me to offer their assistance should issues arise where their intervention would be helpful.

For families caught up in the fires, when the smoke cleared reality set in. Homes were lost, treasured possessions were lost; sheds, fencing, farm equipment and so many other assets were all burned. Even more distressing was that so many pets and farm animals were either burnt to death or dying. For those families the fires have been truly devastating and perhaps even life-changing. I extend to them my best wishes as they rebuild their properties and their lives.

National Schools Constitutional Convention

Fisher Electorate: Glasshouse Mountains Sports Club

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (16:17): Before making my comments about the electorate today I would like to welcome the nine young Queenslanders who are here today as part of the National Schools Constitutional Convention: Maddi from Saint Mary's College, Cairns; Jacob from Innisfail State College; Jerome from Ingham State High School; Jaya from Indooroopilly State High School; Lauren from Mackay North State High School; Peta from Toowoomba State High School; Joel from The Cathedral School, Townsville; Javier from Bremer State High School; and, from my own electorate, Eilish from Kawana Waters State College. Her dad and I went to school together, so what a small world it is. No stories out of school. Welcome to you all, and congratulations on being down here. I hope you find it a time of inspiration. We look forward to your inspirational leadership in the years to come.

I also rise today to talk about the generosity of the Sunshine Coast community. I often talk about it here in this place. It does not matter whether we are saving the lives of children who need brain surgery or whether it is helping local community groups, the Sunshine Coast is an incredibly generous community and that has been demonstrated yet again.

In 1922, the Glasshouse Mountains Sports Club was established. This is where my wife Sue and I and our family played sport—touch footy—and many other sports. Unfortunately, it has fallen on hard times. It had a debt of $160,000. With the ANZ Bank able to call in a
mortgage, it looked like netball, soccer and touch football and cricket were no longer going to be played, and over 1,000 young kids as well as young adults were going to be denied the opportunity to play sport. It affected the whole sunshine coast. But the community got behind it. We needed $160,000, and as of today, they have now raised over $119,000.

I pay credit to the local paper, the Glasshouse Country News, and Leah, who has led the charge on the old committee and the new committee. I want to put on record a few of the families that have donated between $5,000 and $10,000 each. We have the Morgan family and Hansons Quarry. The Apex Club of Maleny, up on the range, has taken the time and the effort to donate to us in the lowlands. We have Arnestos Transport; the Gowens family; the Forster family; the McNamara family; Basset Barks; Braetop Strawberries, with Peter Young; Pelican Waters; and Henzells real estate. Another 150 community members have donated small amounts of money. Over the weekend, we saw the Sunshine Coast Soccer Federation—every club across the coast—come together to raise money for this club. I thank them all. Finally, McDonald's out on the highway will be donating 15 per cent of all its sales across the counter from this Thursday. This is a great community. They deserve our support. I applaud them for making our community what it is.

Scullin Electorate: Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:20): I rise to acknowledge the efforts of those involved with the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program in the Scullin electorate. The Anzac tradition plays an important part in Australia's collective identity. One hundred years on and our nation has changed, and our sense of nationhood has changed with it and so, too, that of the community that I am proud to represent here.

I am very pleased that the successful applicants of the local grants program represent and reflect how much Australia has changed since 1915 in telling important and powerful stories about the World War I experience. Firstly, I acknowledge the efforts of those on the Scullin Electorate Committee: Herb Mason, from the Epping RSL; Liz Pidgeon from Yarra Plenty Regional Library; John Langford from the Diamond Creek/Doreen RSL Sub Branch; and Ian Harrison from Legacy Australia. These committee members played a crucial role in evaluating applications against the selection criteria as set out by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This was no mean feat! It was a pleasure to share in their deliberations and to see how seriously they took the work they were doing on behalf of our community. I am very pleased to say that the committee recommended the vast majority of applications to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and that these were subsequently approved by the minister.

I turn now to the applications themselves, which cover a wide range of groups and organisations across the electorate. I was inspired by the breadth, diversity and quality of the successful applications, which include: Nillumbik Shire Council for interpretive signage that acknowledges the history of the Hurstbridge Memorial Recreation Park; Open Channel Co-Operative, who are contributing towards the production of a series of commemorative short films on the Anzac Centenary; the Turkish Women's Turkish Women's Recreational Group, whose '100 Poppies' Anzac Centenary mosaic mural at Thomastown Primary School is already attracting much attention in the community; Yarra Plenty Regional Library's project 'Discover Your Anzac Story', which is helping people with family and genealogy searches for connections to World War I; the Friends of Westgarthtown in respect of the production of a video and banners called 'Westgarthtown and the First World War: German Descendants at
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

War and on the Homefront', which is an import part of Melbourne's north story of World War I; Saint Monica's College is to construct an 'In Flanders Fields' Epping Anzac Memorial on the school grounds of Saint Monica's College Epping; and the Diamond Creek East Primary School for the school's Anzac commemorative events in April, of which I am very honoured to be a guest.

I am pleased to stand here and congratulate the successful applicants on their projects, which will all make—indeed, some are already making—a valuable contribution to their respective groups and organisations and to the community of Scullin in Melbourne's north. In putting together these applications, the committee, the applicants and I have been conscious that our storytelling cannot just be about the centenary; it must also be about keeping in touch with our emerging sense of nationhood as we commemorate the events of Anzac in 1915.

McMillan Electorate: Anglican Church of Australia

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:23): On 21 March this year, I was pleased to be present for the installation of our new bishop, Bishop Kay Goldsworthy, to lead the Gippsland Anglicans. Bishop Kay Goldsworthy, who is the first woman consecrated as a bishop in the Anglican Church in Australia, has returned to Victoria to become the Bishop of Gippsland. Her election as Gippsland's 12th Bishop comes less than six months after the shock death of my good and dear friend Bishop John McIntyre after a short illness in June.

It is the latest 'first' for Bishop Goldsworthy, who was an Assistant Bishop of Perth, where she has worked since 1988. She was among the first women in Australia to be ordained deacon in 1986 and priest in 1992. In 2008 she became a bishop shortly before the consecration of Melbourne's Barbara Darling, who retired recently. Bishop Goldsworthy will be the first woman to lead a diocese in Victoria and only the second in Australia, after Bishop Sarah Macneil was appointed to Grafton last year.

Raised in Melbourne, Bishop Goldsworthy ran a restaurant before studying for the ministry at Trinity College, Parkville. She served in the parishes of Thomastown-Epping and Deer Park-St Albans before moving to Western Australia in 1988 as chaplain of Perth College. She was a canon of St George's Cathedral, rector of suburban Applecross, area dean of Fremantle and archdeacon of the Southern Region of Perth diocese. At the time of her appointment as bishop she was administrator and registrar of the diocese. Bishop Goldsworthy is 58 and married to Benjamin James, and the couple has twin adult sons, Tom and Ben.

There was something that I did not mention on Saturday when I was asked to address the gathering on behalf of this parliament. I did not mention her gender. The reason I did not mention her gender is because it is irrelevant. In this parliament, we have come to a place now where the bishop is a bishop who happens to be a woman, not a woman who happens to be a bishop. There was no reason whatsoever to mention her gender, and I did not. I say to every young girl with aspirations in this place today: in our future in this great nation, especially across Gippsland—from Pakenham in the west, to the border; from the great rolling hills of the southern Great Dividing Range, down to the rolling hills of South Gippsland—you will be treated as a person. I said a few other things on Saturday that are not for this place, but for the gathering that was there. Importantly, it is a great new start for Gippsland. Bishop Goldsworthy will be treasured by the community, she will be accepted and revered, and we wish her all the very best during her time in Gippsland.
Mental Health

Mr MARLES (Corio) (16:26): Labor fully supports today's calls by the mental health sector, calling on the Prime Minister to maintain funding for mental health services. The government needs to come clean, by announcing its plans now for a strong mental health system for the future. A Mental Health Australia survey late last year showed that 85 per cent of not-for-profit mental health agencies are losing trust in the Abbott Liberal government because of its failure to provide certainty for the sector. The survey also reported that nine out of 10 mental health organisations would need to reduce staff, and most would need to reduce services, if they did not find out about their funding future. The government continues to sit on its final report of the review into mental health services that was provided to the government in November last year.

Labor has repeatedly put forward motions in the Senate calling on the government to table the first two reports of its mental health review so that the mental health sector, including consumers, could have a broader conversation about mental health in this country. But the government has stubbornly refused, leaving the sector mired in uncertainty and, disgracefully, leaving vulnerable Australians with mental health disorders without any certainty or security about the future of their services. What we are left by this government's callous cold shoulder to the sector is a tsunami of uncertainty for mental health providers.

In my community of Geelong, Headspace is but one organisation helping people with stress, anxiety and mental health issues. Headspace deals with 2,000 individual visitors each and every year who, combined, give rise to 6,400 operational visits throughout the year. There are 33 staff at Headspace, with 13 additional staff employed under the Access to Allied Psychological Services funding. All of that is now without any certainty from the federal government about its future funding, and, as a result, the excellent and very important work they do will be in jeopardy from June this year. The lifeline they offer vulnerable people in our community is critical, and we must ensure those services are not lost. Losing these services would throw our mental health services into a state of crisis. We must have confidence in our system, for all who use it and who rely upon it. This government must commit to building a strong and robust mental health system. Instead, the Abbott government seems intent on destroying it. This uncertainty is unfair to an already vulnerable sector within our community. They absolutely deserve better than the uncertainty that this government is offering, and so I urge the Abbott government to resolve this matter and make clear that funding for these important services will continue beyond June.

Cyberbullying

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (16:29): On 22 February 2014, Charlotte Dawson took her own life. The circumstances surrounding her death are not yet known; however, it was publicly known that Charlotte had a long battle with depression and bullying. Her death has brought to light the serious nature of intimidation and bullying that can take place on the internet.

A couple of my constituents, Emma Mastronardi and Lara Harwood, were so concerned and so upset about the circumstances of Charlotte Dawson's death that they started an online petition. As we know in this place, for petitions to be presented to parliament they have to actually have signatures and online petitions do not have that avenue. But this petition cannot be ignored. It currently has 204,275 signatures on it. In an attempt to bring this situation to
light, Emma and Lara created the petition after Charlotte took her life. They are calling for 'Charlotte's law'; they are asking for the Australian and state governments to introduce cyberbullying laws to tackle serious online abuse not just for kids but for adults too. The police also need the resources to be able to enforce them and act against those who relentlessly harass others online.

This government has done a lot about cyberbullying, under the leadership of the member for Bradfield, and while a lot of this has been focused on younger people, Charlotte Dawson's death highlights that it is a serious problem for adults as well. Social media sites do need to act to address bullying and trials on social media and to work with authorities. Emma and Lara have pointed out that social media sites like Twitter can be more proactive about addressing this serious issue. Emma and Lara also have promoted the use of support services like Lifeline, which is 131114, or the Kids Helpline, 1800551800. In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Emma Mastronardi and Lara Harwood for pursuing this serious issue. Charlotte was a personal acquaintance and friend of Emma Mastronardi. I support her and Lara in their endeavours and I note that we should be acting on this.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Deregulation

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:32): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the previous Labor Government introduced more than 21,000 additional regulations in five and a half years and as a consequence, Australia:

(i) ranked 128th out of 148 countries for burden of government regulation according to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index; and

(ii) came second last in a 2012 ranking of productivity growth by the Economist Intelligence Unit;

(b) the Government has a deregulation agenda to cut $1 billion in green and red tape each year;

(c) on 26 March 2014 the Government held the first ever red tape repeal day, removing over 10,000 pieces and 50,000 pages of legislation and regulation saving over $700 million in compliance costs; and

(2) commends the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for his effective management of the Government's deregulation agenda.

Bureaucracy and regulation: these are two words that most Australians hate as an individual, as a family or as a business owner. We hate these words, yet every one of us is responsible for either creating more unnecessary red tape and regulation or for implementing it. I am sure there are plenty of people outside this place who would question that claim, as the general belief is that it is only government that creates unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation while it is the business owners and families who are forced to deal with that burden.

The reality is that if it were only government who created unnecessary regulatory burdens, then perhaps Australia would not have come second last in the 2012 ranking of productivity growth by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Instead, as identified in the Deloitte Access Economics latest productivity report, Get out of your own way: unleashing productivity,
which was released in October last year, the cost of complying with self-imposed rules created by the private sector is double that associated with government regulations. The self-imposed rules of the private sector cost $155 billion a year, $21 billion to develop and administer and a stunning $134 billion a year in compliance costs. I do, however, note that the report went on to say that not all compliance is bad, and much of it is necessary. The issue is that many of the rules that are put in place either overcompensate or carry a heavy burden that is not justified on a reward-risk basis.

I am the first to admit that government does play a significant role in creating red tape as well, but I do highlight that, despite the public perception, this is half that of what the private sector does with an estimated 94 billion. The key difference here, though, is that this coalition government has recognised the impact of those unnecessary regulations on the economy and has introduced a systematic deregulation agenda to not only stop further burdensome practices being introduced but also remove those pieces of legislation that have already been passed by this place and the other where it is appropriate to do so. This need to remove the regulatory burden on our economy is something the coalition has recognised for many years, including the 5½ long years we were forced to look on as the former Labor government introduced 21,000 additional regulations—regulations which hinder business and hurt the hip pocket of every Australian.

Members know that the mining tax and the carbon tax were two of Labor's biggest contributors to reducing Australia's international competitiveness and two of their most monumental policy failures. Members would also know that, thanks to this coalition government, both of these onerous taxes are now gone and their burden removed from business and government. This was not just a financial burden at a grassroots level either; it was also a significant red-tape liability that constituted 29 different acts and 1,625 pages of additional burdensome regulation and legislation. While those opposite created regulation which led to this great country embarrassingly being ranked 128th out of 148 countries for burden of government regulation, according to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index, this coalition government is instead doing everything we can to scrap it in the same way we scrapped the mining tax and the carbon tax.

Unlike those opposite, we have also systematically managed and implemented this policy initiative. We are not just closing our eyes and putting a cross through some legislative practices—which, dare I say, is about the level of competence those opposite showed while in government. Instead we are methodically looking at every government portfolio and are working with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to ensure every decision is weighed and measured. I have done the weighing and I have done the measuring, fellow colleagues, and I must say that a $1 billion annual red-tape reduction target is a lot of regulatory weight to remove from government and, by extension, from business. This is a lot of weight but the coalition government is not one which shirks such tasks, which is why last year we exceeded this target by more than $1 billion, taking the total reduction in compliance costs to $2.1 billion.

I am also pleased to say that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Christian Porter, the member for Pearce, last week announced an additional $305 million in net red-tape reduction, putting us on track to meeting that $1 billion target again this year. I commend Mr Porter for his commitment to and effective management of the government's deregulation
agenda, along with the former parliamentary secretary, Josh Frydenberg, the member for Kooyong, for implementing the first two repeal days last year. Each of these red-tape reductions is supporting businesses and supporting every individual by making their interactions with the government less complex and costly. An important example of this has been achieved through creation of myGov—a one-stop shop for a range of services, including Medicare and MyTax. I support this motion and I look forward to hearing from the other speakers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Whiteley: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (16:38): Let me start by saying to the member for Swan, who is a thoroughly decent fellow, that a good place to start on this motion would be with some reality, some truth and some facts. This might help those members opposite who continue to just regurgitate the same old tired lines—which are just not true.

In 2013, I did an examination of the number of annual interactions with government by jurisdiction. Some would call this red tape. What I found was that local government was responsible for 25,234 of those interactions. The states were 2,641 and the Commonwealth was responsible for about 382. This may surprise the government, who identify the federal government as being largely responsible for all excessive red tape, all regulation and all burdens. I would say that they are just as responsible as anyone else. None of us like red tape, but we should not take advantage of that without acknowledging that many pieces of regulation are designed to protect people—be it in food, on roads or in other places—to enhance our lives, to protect and enhance small business, or to level the playing field.

What this motion does highlight is the importance of continuing to work through the Coalition of Australian Governments, COAG, with the states and local government to keep a focus on removing unnecessary regulation and duplication across jurisdictions—which is exactly what Labor did in government. We did this through our Seamless National Economy reforms, the first 17 of which reduced business costs by an estimated $4 billion per year.

I say to those opposite that their claims are in no way a true reflection of the regulatory environment in which small business operates. It is misleading to suggest that regulation has a direct and negative impact on small business or a particular sector. In fact, in many cases it is the exact opposite. Of the so-called 21,000 pieces, for example, 3,400 of these were air worthiness certificates to keep us safe in the air. What should we do about those? Should we get rid of those? I should also point out that of the 21,000, 4,200 of those were tax concession orders to help small business. They wanted these 4,200; small business wanted them. Labor repealed 16,794 acts and legislative instruments when in government as a part of the ordinary routine business of government. We did not have bonfires and set whole libraries on fire and burn the books just because we thought there might be a few people who might enjoy a burning of the books; we just did our job.

This government cite some interesting examples in their Cutting Red Tape glossy brochure, such red-tape cutting examples as Commercialisation Australia. They cut Commercialisation Australia and called that a red-tape reduction, so small business have nowhere to go when they want to commercialise. Investing in Experience—my God, we have to get rid of that through red-tape reduction. That is what the Liberal-National Party did, the Tony Abbott
government. They got rid of the National Workforce Development Fund, another red-tape cut. The textile, clothing and footwear Building Innovation Capacity program—how is that a red-tape cut and saving? And it goes on and on with all of these great small business programs around innovation, productivity.

If the member for Swan wants to learn something about productivity and economic growth, he should maybe have a look at why these programs were put in place in the first instance because then he would have a better understanding of why a Labor government put them in place—that is, to address the very concerns that he highlights. But what will happen under the Liberal government? Getting rid of these innovation programs, the mechanisms of productivity and growth and helping small businesses, means small businesses will not thank you because small businesses are finding it very, very difficult. Every survey and report that I can find says business confidence in this country is at its lowest ever. Small businesses are hurting. Talk to any retailer on high street and low street, and every other street you can find, and you will see. This is a trumped up, worthless motion based on completely irresponsible government behaviour.

They are just trotting out the old regurgitated line of 21,000—21,000 widgets, 21,000 things that happen—but the real problem here is if you are serious about the economy and productivity and growth and innovation, then you back it and you support. If you are serious about small businesses, you give them tax concession on the things they invest in—people, assets. You invest in them and they co-invest and the economy grows. This simplistic, idiotic regurgitation of red-tape bonfires does nothing for small business or the economy. (Time expired)

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (16:43): That was a bit harsh. There is a great movie I watched once with Mel Gibson in it. It was called What Women Want. Now we certainly have not got enough time today to explore that, but I ask the question today: what do businesses want? What they want is for government to get out of their way. It is a pretty simple response. They want government to get out of their way. They absolutely want government to break the ongoing increase of regulation and compliance. They want to see government stop breaking their backs with regulation and compliance. They want to be efficient. They want to see regulation and compliance issues addressed and removed. The previous speaker made a very good speech—it was quite entertaining actually—but whatever way he wants to spin it, and he can spin it all he wants, whatever way he wants to try and play out his response to this motion today, businesses are not buying what he is selling over there. They know that the Labor Party is absolutely synonymous with more regulation, more compliance, and more red tape. They know that, and you know they know that. The fact of the matter is that we are getting on with the job of cutting red tape, because that is what is important.

The key reforms that we are pursuing as a part of this government are quite simple, really, when you bring it all down. They are that we want to minimise and simplify interaction with government. We want to get out of their way. They are working hard enough in their businesses. They have got enough work to do trying to actually pay the bills, keep on top of sales and keep on top of human resource issues. They just want us out of their way.

The second key reform theme of the regulation and compliance reduction is reducing regulatory obligations and reporting. Why is it that they have to fill in a form for local government, and then, two days later, a form turns up from the state government and a couple
of weeks later another form turns up from a department of the federal government? We want to reduce the regulatory obligations and reporting mechanisms that are currently in place. It is not hard to do; you just need a commitment to do it. Labor will say, 'Well, we had a commitment to do it,' but what was their record? Do not look at what they say; look at what they do. Kevin Rudd, elected Prime Minister, said it was going to be one in, one out. One regulation or one act in and one out. He got confused. I have said this before. He was confused. He thought they said one Prime Minister in and one Prime Minister out. That is what he said. He got confused, which was not hard for Kevvy. The fact of the matter is, the Prime Minister of the day, Kevin Rudd, said, 'We are going to take the scissors to red tape, compliance and regulation.' The scissors got lost, but guess who found them? The current Leader of the Opposition found the scissors, and they ended up in the back of two Prime Ministers, and it was certainly 'one Prime Minister in, one Prime Minister out.'

But I digress; the third key reform area is to fuel economic growth. You do not fuel economic growth by getting in the way of business, overloading them and breaking their back with reporting and compliance issues. We want to get on top of that.

The fourth key reform in the area of regulation and red-tape reduction, is common-sense reforms. Let us put the common-sense reform test and filter everything we do through that. That is what this government is doing. All ministers are committed to doing this, because they have been instructed to do so from the very top. Our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, wants to see this as something that is not just talked about but in fact enacted by every minister of every department.

Getting out of the road of business is the most important thing that I think government can do. Yes, we need to stimulate the economy by the way in which we work with the levers that we have available to us as a government. But at the end of the day, the last thing they want to see is us intervening in their lives, continually putting our footprint in their front door, continually sending them another form to fill in, another fee to pay. They are over it and they want us to break the back of that environment in which they try and do business. This is an important matter that has been raised by the honourable member, and whilst we may have a little argy-bargy and a little bit of theatre and some humour in this, it is a very serious matter. Our approach to regulation is one of a very positive nature. (Time expired)

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:48): I agree with one thing that the previous speaker said, and that this is a serious issue. It is a serious issue because this government has tried to use the stunt of red-tape repeal day to hide some pretty nasty attacks on good working people, including their own cleaners. What we have seen from this government since they got elected is three fabulous stunt days, where they have stood up in the parliament and said that they are making it easier for business. What we have actually seen in the paperwork that they have tabled, in the bills we have seen before the House and in the regulations that have been put forward by various ministers is that the bulk of it is about trivial things—like changing full stops and commas, correcting misspelling of words—which they claim are great red-tape repeals. That has been the bulk of their work. But what have been hidden in those thousands and thousands of pages are some pretty nasty attacks on low-paid workers.

The first example that I would like to expose and talk about is the government's own cleaners—the cleaners that work here at parliament. Prior to this government's red-tape repeal day, its very first, the cleaners were paid in accordance with the Clean Start guidelines and
principles. What this government did on that first red-tape repeal day was, basically, abolish those guidelines. It abolished those guidelines for all of its cleaning contracts, so then the contracts of cleaners who were being paid in accordance with the Clean Start principles had to go with cleaning companies that were paying the award. What it meant for some of the hardest working people in this building, yet the lowest paid, was that they would have pay cuts of up to $7 an hour. That meant that these low-paid workers would struggle to be able to pay their bills.

What we had from the Prime Minister at the time was a denial that this would happen. The Prime Minister denied that these changes would strip between $172 and $250 from the pockets of these full-time cleaners. The Prime Minister said it was not going to happen and that it was a Labor scare campaign. The Prime Minister stood up in the parliament and said he wanted to make it absolutely crystal clear that no cleaner’s pay would be reduced as a result of these changes. The Prime Minister either lied on that day—he either lied to the parliament; he either misled the parliament—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): The member will not use that unparliamentary language and will withdraw.

Ms CHESTERS: I withdraw. The Prime Minister either misled the parliament or does not understand how contracting works, because what we have seen since this government has repealed the Clean Start guidelines is that the contract cleaners working in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection have received a $2 an hour pay cut. Their wages have been cut because the contract went out for tender, and the cleaning company, to get the contract, tendered on the award, which undercut the Clean Start guidelines and principles. That is the result of what this government did through its red-tape repeal day. Hidden in the pages and pages that it put before this place is a tax on working people.

Another example of what this government did on red-tape repeal day, as recent as last week, is an example around 457 visas. The minister responsible, the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, went out and said to the community that they are going to streamline 457 visas, to make it easier for companies to bring in people on these temporary work visas. What the minister did not say when she was out there was that there would be a budget save of about $30 million in compliance costs through the introduction of flexible streamlining arrangements. What concerns me is that we already know, by media reports, that there is currently exploitation going on within the temporary visa system.

In my own electorate, in Bendigo, there was a young couple that were here on a temporary work visa arrangement and they were not paid wages for 12 months. They took their claim to the Fair Work Ombudsman, who is now investigating this particular case. They are now owed $85,000. What concerns me is that the minister has not come out and said how she is going to stop this from happening. Instead, mixed up in the red-tape repeal day was a suggestion that we are going to make it flexible and easier for this kind of exploitation to occur. This is a very serious issue because people are being ripped off. (Time expired)

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (16:53): I thank the member for Swan for moving this motion, because it allows members on this side of the House the opportunity to remind members on that side of the House of just how badly they failed to reduce red tape. Australians were promised—as was alluded to by the member for Braddon—by the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd that Labor would have a ‘one regulation in and one regulation out'
approach to legislation. Instead, we were burdened by an avalanche of new regulation—21,000 additional regulations in just 5½ years. That is 10 regulations for every day Labor were last in government. Unfortunately, Labor's commitment to ramping up the regulatory burden was felt by every Australian. Shamefully, the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index ranked Australia 128th out of 148 countries for burden of government regulation. Australia also placed second last in a 2012 ranking of productivity growth by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Fortunately, this government has fulfilled its commitment to cut $1 billion in red and green tape every year. In fact, to date, the government have delivered $2.45 billion worth of deregulatory savings, and this is more than double our $1 billion annual target that we promised to deliver. Under Labor, Commonwealth regulation was costing Australians approximately $65 billion annually, an astounding 4.2 per cent of GDP. Members opposite are committed to regulation; regulation is in their DNA. When we held our first-ever regulation repeal day on 26 March 2014, Labor dismissed it as a joke and they still continue to dismiss it as a joke. They continue to dismiss the task of reducing the regulatory burden on Australia businesses and families.

For the first time in Australian history, a federal government has undertaken a thorough and accurate stock-take of all federal regulatory costs. We are continuing to measure and reduce the cost of government red tape to Australian businesses, organisations, families and individuals. The Assistant Treasurer, Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Hon. Christian Porter MP, should be commended by all members for their success in reducing the regulatory burden.

No-one would dispute that business regulation is essential in ensuring that the rights of employers, employees and the general public are protected. However, regulation that is inefficient or unnecessary unfortunately imposes undue costs on businesses and individuals. Labor either does not understand or does not care about the regulatory burden on Australian businesses. In regions such as the Central Coast, small business is collectively our largest employer; therefore, it is essential that the environment in which they conduct their business is free from unnecessary, time-wasting regulations; and, as I previously said in parliament, the cost of compliance is a major barrier to growth. The average Australian business deals with eight regulators in a given year, spends close to four per cent of its total annual expenditure on complying with regulatory requirements and spends approximately 19 hours a week on compliance related activities. This is precious time that could be better utilised growing the business and delivering more jobs.

It is astounding that Labor do not even have a plan to combat unnecessary red and green tape. They criticise, they object, they block, they say no—all the while without an alternative plan to support Australian businesses and households. In fact, their centrepiece policy for the next election is to reintroduce the world's biggest carbon tax. We repealed the carbon tax because it was contributing to $194.4 million of unnecessary red-tape costs to our business community. Our goal will always be to make life easier for Australians and make it easier for businesses to invest and create more jobs.

Significant progress is being made to help free up the time spent by small businesses dealing with red tape. An estimated 447,000 small businesses will benefit from administrative changes to entry thresholds for pay-as-you-go instalments. Of these, 45,000 small businesses
that have no GST reporting requirements will no longer have to lodge a businesses activity statement where, to date, lodgements have been made only to report pay-as-you-go instalments. The remaining 402,000 small businesses with modest or negative incomes that are required to lodge a BAS will no longer have to interact with the pay-as-you-go instalment system. Thanks to our efforts and measures such as the ones discussed today, Australia now has its most precise, comprehensive and transparent program to reverse the growing costs of red tape to the Australian economy.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:58): I will give this to them: the government talk a good game on red tape. Unfortunately, we need more than talk—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:59 to 17:14

Mr WATTS: As I was saying, this government talks a good game on red tape, but it takes more than talk to have an impact on regulatory growth in this country. As someone who worked in the ICT sector before entering this space, I have firsthand knowledge of the experience of sifting through page after page of regulation implemented by parliaments and regulators across this country. So it is presumably people like my former self that the member for Kooyong was trying to impress when he set up his website cuttingredtape.gov.au, now being lovingly maintained by the member for Pearce. The 'Track our Progress' section on this website purports to be a running measure of red tape reduction under this government and claims that the Abbott government has saved business $2.45 billion in deregulatory savings since they took office. Unfortunately these savings have been more stunt than substance—changing the word 'facsimile' to 'fax' and removing the hyphen from the word 'e-mail' in all government legislation. It truly puts the micro into microeconomic reform.

The website cuttingredtape.gov.au elevates spin over substance, and it seems that people are seeing through it, too. The Sydney Morning Herald revealed on Sunday that 99 per cent of the comments left on the website in its first 3½ months in operation were left by spammers and that nearly 50 per cent of all the traffic on the page had come from public servants in Canberra. It is also interesting to note that the government's deregulation PR campaign only seems to move the metre one way, in that the extra regulation the government has implemented during its term is conspicuously absent from its press releases. The truth is that, just like the Howard government before it, this government is addicted to regulation.

The motion before us claims that the previous, Labor, government introduced more than 21,000 additional regulations in 5½ years, but it fails to mention that the Howard government introduced more than 40,000 pages of regulation between the years 2000 and 2006. And I will do the maths for you: that is an average of 6,000 pages of new regulation a year through the term of the Howard government. This government, like the Howard government before it, has a 'regulate first, think later' attitude. Many of the government's policies introduced just this year impose extra burdens on business. In the field of policy where I spent the majority of my career before entering this place, the ICT sector, we have seen a suite of new regulatory burdens on business. The metadata legislation we have been debating this year put a greater burden on telcos by demanding that they retain certain types of their customers' data for two years. The Children's e-Safety Commissioner creates regulatory obligations with respect to bullying on the internet and the response of social media companies to these claims. The online copyright enforcement code of practice and an upcoming website-blocking regime to
be debated by this parliament in coming sitting weeks will create similar burdens. These are clear examples of regulatory growth—not that you would see them on www.cuttingredtape.gov.au.

We should not move away from the brunt of this motion, however. It is true to say that there were around 22,000 new regulations implemented under the Labor government from 2007 to 2013. A total of 3,400 of these were airworthiness directives—measures that were put in place to make and keep air travel safer. After the tragedies that have occurred in the last year, I doubt that anyone in this chamber would get up in this place and criticise measures of this kind. There are multiple other examples of necessary regulation that the previous Labor government implemented. However, it should be noted that under Labor from 2007 to 2013 a total of 16,694 acts and legislative instruments were repealed—without a flash website, without fanfare and a self-promoting assistant minister—just as a matter of course for a responsible government.

Labor introduced the standard business reporting to streamline business-to-government reporting. Labor also introduced the national business names registration service, which removes the requirement for business to register in each state and territory jurisdiction, significantly lowering costs and time for businesses. Schemes like the Superannuation Clearing House enable businesses with fewer than 20 employees to pay all of their staff super contributions into a single transaction rather than multiple super funds. These are tangible ways in which the previous, Labor, government relieved regulatory burdens on business—substantive ways, interventions of substance rather than spin, and without a flash website.

It is time to have a grown-up discussion about the rising levels of regulation in Australia. I do believe this. But I do hope that the government can leave its PR-driven, hype-filled, hyphen-busting approach behind and join Labor in a conversation about the substantive ways of reducing regulatory growth in this country.

MRS WICKS (Robertson) (17:19): I really want to commend this motion on deregulation, because it speaks directly to residents and to businesses in my electorate of Robertson. As the member for Swan noted, the previous, Labor, government introduced more than 21,000 additional regulations in just 5½ years—not, of course, that the member for Gellibrand admitted this in his contribution, but these regulations left Australia down the bottom of two global indicators. The 2013 World Economic Global Competitive Index ranked us as 128th out of 148 countries for burden of government regulation, and we were second last in a 2012 ranking of productivity growth by the Economist Intelligence Unit. In the last year alone of the former Labor government, Commonwealth regulation was costing us approximately $65 billion per year, a massive 4.2 per cent of GDP. That is why this government has a strong agenda to cut red tape by holding two repeal days every year.

I am pleased to say that after the first three repeal days this government has delivered more than $2.4 billion worth of red-tape reductions. In fact, on the most recent repeal day we repealed more than 10,300 legislative instruments and introduced legislation to repeal over 2,700 acts of parliament.

For people living in my electorate, red-tape reduction means we can help ease the burden on Central Coast businesses, community organisations, families and individuals. It means less time filling out forms, less time waiting in queues and less time searching for government information. We have also been really open about how we have done this so people on the
Central Coast can be confident that there is a precise, comprehensive and transparent program to reverse the growing costs of red tape on the economy. For individuals there are simple changes that make sense, like making identity checks easier for retailers and consumers when purchasing new prepaid mobile phones. That has an annual compliance saving of $6.2 million. On flights, restrictions have been lifted for using electronic devices so travellers can use them during all phases of flight. It is simple but it also has an annual compliance saving of $17.7 million. Students who receive government payments are now able to change their details online at a time that best suits them without being required to wait for hours contacting a call centre or attending a service centre. That is an annual compliance saving of $2.7 million. There are really benefits for industries on the Central Coast, so they can get on with what they do best without being weighed down by unnecessary paperwork.

One such area is aged care, an important sector in my electorate. Our changes will result in millions of dollars in compliance savings for aged-care providers. For example, we have increased the proposed thresholds above which aged-care accommodation prices must be approved by the Aged Care Pricing Commissioner. We have also proposed a simplified accommodation-pricing process, which removes the requirement for aged-care providers to follow a strict process in setting prices. This also ensures consumers receive clear information on accommodation prices. We have repealed provisions in the Aged Care Act 1997 that required approved providers to notify the Department of Social Services of any changed in key personal in their employment within 28 days of the change occurring. We have also streamlined the forms for the Aged Care Approvals Round process, reducing the overall size of the application forms by 50 per cent. This recently led to more than 70 new aged-care places being offered in Point Clare in my electorate, with the particular focus of every single one of these places on supporting people with dementia.

For each resident in these aged-care homes there is a great need for people to care for them and slashing red tape helps makes their job easier. For example, Andrew from Terrigal was telling me recently with experience working in an aged-care facility on the coast. He spoke about his desire to build a positive experience based around real friendships and relations with the people who live there. He said his role was not just task focused but was also about supporting our local residents who make aged-care facilities their home. The coalition government recognises that with an aging population we need to ensure aged-care providers are able to get on doing what they do best without being weighed down by red tape. That means that people like Andrew can focus on doing their job well and local residents in aged-care facilities in Robertson get the best possible quality of care.

Time does not permit, but I could mention similar case studies and examples in small business, the health sector, tourism, finance, building and construction, and many, many other industries. But by tackling this burden we are putting into motion a stronger, more prosperous economy. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (17:24): This motion is an embarrassment for the government. They have got an addiction to chanting slogans, telling tall stories and simply making it up as they go. What that really means out in the real world is that all they manage to do is to talk down our economy and, in particular, business confidence, which is having a real impact on business and our wider community. We see it surfacing now, in particular in a rising unemployment rate.
The government talk about 'repeal day' and give themselves a pat on the back for getting rid of outdated and unnecessary regulation, something that governments have done for years. Of course there is a need to get rid of outdated regulations—to change them from time to time and throw them out if they are not working. They pat themselves on the back because this legislation gets rid of a regulation which abolished state navies, something that had not existed since the First World War, and gets rid of mule control, something that is seriously out of date as well. I give them a pat on the back for doing that, but it will have no impact on the real problems in the real economy in the suburbs and towns and country districts of our great country. All of this, of course, is done in the name of increasing our competitiveness and productivity. How delusional can you get?

The fact is that the data that is cited by those opposite to claim that there is something wrong with our competitiveness and our productivity is simply all twisted—part of the tall story they are telling, which runs our country down. Australia is the 10th-easiest country in the world to do business in. That is according to the World Bank. It is the seventh-easiest in the world to start a business. Of course, all of these things combined amount to the fact that Australia is a good place to do business and a place where people want to invest, and that is why Australia has a triple A credit rating, reaffirmed last week by one of the major rating agencies who gave us that status, the third rating agency to endorse the strength and competitiveness of our economy.

They are trying to pin this story on Labor and say that there is a problem with productivity in Australia which has to do with outdated regulation. The truth is that it is always a challenge to drive productivity growth in our community. What is so absurd about the critique we are hearing from those opposite is that they are taking the axe to the drivers of productivity growth in our economy—hacking into education, hacking into skills and training, hacking into research and development, hacking into innovation, and hacking into first-class, economic capacity building infrastructure. They are the drivers of productivity in our economy. Despite all of that, stand back and look at the Australian economy, the 12th largest in the world. It is 20 per cent larger now than it was at the end of 2007.

We have challenges in our economy, but we are a First World economy with first-class economic settings, which do need to be updated from time to time. It is just that the drivers of that growth in productivity in our economy are being attacked by this government in the name of competitiveness. It is simply obscene, bizarre, for them to tell this tall story, which is not accepted by the rating agencies and not accepted by most credible economists but somehow is the truth. It is the parallel universe in which the Abbott government lives.

What does the government feel it necessary to tell these tall stories? I think it is really about trying to score political points, which, in itself, is having a dramatic impact on productivity in our economy. We now have a dramatically lower exchange rate and we have record low interest rates—so why is business confidence 16 per cent below what it was at the last election? It is because we have a government that is simply out of control, addicted to slogans, putting politics before policy and trying to score political points all of the time. It is a government that has in fact doubled the deficit over the forward estimates. Of course, the consequence of this is that we now have an unemployment rate with a six in front of it, not a five—all on their watch. The poor performance of this government and its handling of the economy is pretty bad news for a lot of people in Australia, so what we get are tall stories.
Of course, what we get is really their agenda, and their agenda is to roll back the size of government and to roll back the interventions of government in the economy which provide the essential protections that small business requires. If they were really serious about small business, they would not have got rid of the instant asset write-off and they certainly would have applauded us tripling the tax-free threshold. But what do we hear? All this stupid language about regulation. (Time expired)
Debate adjourned.

Brain Injury

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (17:29): I seek leave to amend the motion standing in my name.
Leave granted.
Ms HALL: I move the motion as amended:
That this House:
(1) recognises:
(a) that Brain Injury Awareness Week will be held from 9 to 15 March 2015;
(b) that over 700,000 Australians live with a brain injury; and
(c) the work done by the Bouverie Centre in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Human Services to improve services provided to people with acquired brain injury; and
(2) calls on the Government to:
(a) provide more services to accommodate people with a brain injury; and
(b) develop a national scale partnership similar to the partnership seen in Victoria which helps people with a brain injury, and their family members.
(3) further recognises that Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI) can be acquired in many varied and different ways, e.g. as a result of an accident, a stroke, drug and alcohol abuse, tumours, poisoning, and disorders such as Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and Alzheimer's disease; and
(4) calls on the Government to:
(a) work with Brain Injury Australia to establish a nation-wide policy which will reflect the needs of people with an ABI, as well as the needs of their families;
(b) undertake a public awareness campaign to inform the public about ABI, its causes, prevention and management; and
(c) provide more funding for research into ABI.
Last week was Brain Injury Awareness Week. I think it is a really important time for us to sit and look at the implications of acquired brain injury, something that impacts on the lives of 700,000 Australians who are living with brain injury. Acquired brain injury is any damage to the brain that occurs after birth. The damage can be caused by an accident, by trauma, by stroke, by alcohol and other drugs or by diseases such as Parkinson's. Three out of every four Australians living with acquired brain injury are under the age of 65 and as many as two out of every three of these acquired their brain injury before they turned 25, and three out of every four with acquired brain injury are men. Any number of factors can cause acquired brain injury.

I have a young woman who works in my office as a volunteer. She was attending university when she was diagnosed with brain tumours. It has had an enormous impact on her
life. She now spends most of her time in a wheelchair. She cannot work, has visual problems and has problems with her speech, yet she is still intelligent and is an integral part of our team in the office. In this country, people do not really understand what acquired brain injury is, do not understand that acquired brain injury is very distinct from intellectual disability. When the brain is damaged, some other aspect of ourselves changes. People, after suffering a brain injury, quite frequently are a different person to the person they were before the brain injury.

If you look at how we view ourselves, if you look at the importance of the brain, if you look at so much of who we are, it is linked to our brain. If our brain is injured, it can affect our mobility, our ability to eat or talk, our intellect, our intelligence level, and our cognitive ability. As such, it has an enormous impact.

I would like to spend the remaining time talking a little bit about the Hunter Medical Research Institute which has teamed up with the Newcastle Knights. They have been looking at concussion in rugby league players. It is a neurological study that is of a very different kind where players are undergoing state-of-the-art MRI scans at the newly opened HMRI imaging centre. It is under the auspices of Professor Chris Levi, who is a leader in this area and in the area of brain and mental health research. He is undertaking this research that I think will provide a lot of information on the impact of trauma. The MRI scanning will complement assessments that are being provided looking at precise real-time visual perspectives of brain response. It will open up new knowledge in concussion and acquired brain injury.

This is just one aspect of acquired brain injury, one area where there is research being undertaken, one area that looks at the impact of acquired brain injury. I am calling for more studies and more research into acquired brain injury and for better services and better support for those living with acquired brain injury and for their families, because acquired brain injury is one of those acquired injuries that really are life changing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr Griffin: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (17:35): Brain Injury Awareness Week is held every year in March. With more than 700,000 Australians living with a brain injury it is vital that we give as much support as possible to those working on treatments and cures. I thank the member for Shortland for bringing this motion to the House, as it gives me the opportunity to again highlight the outstanding researchers at the University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute, who are working day and night to find better ways of looking after our brains and to find treatment and cures for trauma and injury. I spoke last week about their most recent breakthrough in Alzheimer's research, but there is so much more being achieved at the institute.

For more than a decade, the founding director, Professor Perry Bartlett, and his team have achieved remarkable results, with major scientific discoveries. The institute comprises three research centres designed to specialise in different aspects of brain research: the Science of Learning Centre, which identifies and researches effective teaching; the Clem Jones Centre for Ageing Dementia Research, which is entirely for research into the prevention and treatment of dementia; and the Centre for Neurogenetics and Statistical Genomics, which looks at the genetic basis of psychiatric disorders, motor neurone disease and cognitive...
The researchers work in collaboration with clinicians and commercial partners also to develop therapeutic approaches to alleviate the effects of brain diseases.

Brain injuries can be caused in many ways, sometimes through brain diseases such as Parkinson's disease, sometimes by alcohol and drug use, sometimes by a stroke or sometimes by trauma. Brain injury caused by trauma such as motor vehicle accidents is too common an occurrence in Australia. That is why there is a major need for more research into what happens to the brain after this type of injury is experienced. The Motor Accident Insurance Commission recognises this and is committed to provide funding to the Queensland Brain Institute, which will allow them to employ a full-time researcher in the field of trauma. Currently, there is no precise way to assess the level of brain damage after an injury nor is there a way to track changes or the effectiveness of treatment. This research area is a field in which the Queensland Brain Institute is hoping to expand, and this extra funding will be of huge assistance.

Another brain injury that is a major cause of disability is stroke. They also happen far too frequently, with one person suffering a stroke every 10 minutes in Australia. Researchers at the Queensland Brain Institute have had some major success in recent times in the study of brain damage caused by strokes. They have found that the worst damage to the brain is often caused not by the stroke itself but by what happens to the brain afterwards, when it is trying to repair itself. When clots form in the brain after a stroke they cause inflammation, which is very damaging. Scientists have found that a molecule called CAL-101 has proven to stop this inflammation. Using this molecule for a first-response treatment and continuing to promote current public health messages to identify the signs of stroke could be a huge step forward in lowering the rate of strokes.

The estimated economic burden of strokes in Australia is $49.3 billion and they contribute to around 40 per cent of dementias. At the end of last year, the Stafford Fox Medical Research Foundation donated $2.5 million to the Queensland Brain Institute to fight stroke induced dementia, known as vascular dementia. This is another example of the impressive reputation of the institute and the research being conducted.

During Brain Injury Awareness Week, we think about all those affected by brain injury and their families. Considering that three out of every four of the people living with brain injuries are under the age of 65 and that two out of three acquired the injury before the age of 25, it is important to get answers about how our brains work and it is important that we do it sooner rather than later.

We should all be proud of Professor Perry Bartlett and his remarkable team at the Queensland Brain Institute for their dedication and commitment to finding treatments and cures for these injuries. They are continuing to have great success, and it is important that we support their funding and promote the institute so that we may have a future where brain injuries become a thing of the past.

**Mr Griffin** (Bruce) (17:39): Brain Injury Australia estimates that well over 600,000 Australians live with a brain injury. ABI is distinct from intellectual disability. People with a brain injury may have difficulty controlling, coordinating and communicating their thoughts and actions, but generally retain their intellectual abilities. As earlier speakers have said, three out every four people with an ABI are aged under 65. As many as two out of every three people with an ABI acquired their brain injury before they turned 25. And three out of every
four people with ABI are men. We may speculate that this is due to men being more likely to be involved in sporting injuries, car accidents and physical assaults.

ABI is a complex and individual condition. When the brain is injured people can experience a range of disabilities that will affect them physically, as well as affecting how they think, feel and behave. Long-term effects are difficult to predict and will be different for each person. The significant changes in personality and behaviour of a person with a brain injury can be difficult for families to cope with. ABI affects all family members, including the injured person, partners, parents, children, siblings, extended family members and community networks. Distress, concern and changes in relationships are common in families adjusting to the long-term effects of ABI. This has been described as the ripple or domino effect on the family after the injury where other family members experience their own adjustment difficulties. Therefore, someone who suffers an ABI will not only experience a loss of function but also often lose many aspects that define their life, such as their job, their marriage, their friends and their standing in society.

ABI is often called the 'hidden disability', because it can cause problems with a person's cognitive functions and these new thought processes, habits and unusual behaviours are not as easy to recognise as other physical disabilities such as vision impairment or quadriplegia. As a result, people with brain injury are often misunderstood and their disabilities not recognised. For example, it can be easy to lose patience with someone whose brain injury causes them to be extremely forgetful or incapable of initiating action, or who becomes very aggressive over small issues. ABI can often cause personality change, turning a once peaceful, easygoing individual into an aggressive and even violent one.

Coupled with this, ABI sufferers can also experience problems with impulse control. This can mean that they will say and do socially inappropriate things. Such behaviour often alienates their friends and endangers the sufferer when out in society. The combination of these two impacts can lead to ABI sufferers finding themselves in trouble with the law or even incarcerated. Other impacts of an ABI often include epilepsy, slowed reactions, poor balance, difficulty concentrating, sight and hearing impairments and memory problems. A brain injury can even affect one's sense of smell. That might sound benign enough, but, for example, it can become dangerous if there is a gas leak.

While the outcome of the injury depends largely on the nature and severity of the injury itself, appropriate treatment plays a vital role in the level of recovery. This is where occupational therapy and ongoing support to the ABI sufferer and their carers is vital to a patient's recovery. Unless people with an ABI have the ongoing support of a good network of family and friends, they find it difficult to obtain any form of assistance. As a consequence, their psychosocial functioning may be affected and many end up living in psychiatric hospitals, boarding houses or prisons, or they become homeless.

It is at this point I would like to recognise the exceptional work undertaken by service providers supporting people suffering a brain injury. I would particularly like to mention the tremendous work of BrainLink and Monash Health. BrainLink services is a Victorian based service that is dedicated to improving the quality of life of people affected by acquired disorders of the brain. Located in Blackburn, BrainLink offers a wide range of support services to people with an ABI, their families and their carers. BrainLink's first priority is to respond to the immediate needs of the families and friends of those who are living with an
acquired brain disorder. BrainLink offers a first point of call for families at onset of diagnosis; peer support programs; innovative and flexible respite opportunities; specialised case management; comprehensive information and resources; and a referral service to assist the community in navigating the disability service sector. In my own electorate of Bruce, I wish to recognise the important work done by the skilled staff at Monash Health in the rehabilitation of people who have experienced a brain injury.

At the Dandenong Hospital there is an acute rehabilitation ward where people who have experienced trauma take their first steps to recovery. For their ongoing journey, Monash Health Community Brain Injury Services helps people with an ABI to achieve their goals, take control of their lives and develop life skills to maintain their independence, and offers educational, recreational and employment services.

People suffering an ABI are often overlooked due the hidden nature of their disability. Today, I join with calls on the government to provide more services to accommodate people with a brain injury and work to develop a national scale partnership—similar to the partnership seen in Victoria, which helps people with a brain injury and their family members.

I would like to congratulate the Member for Shortland for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. The people who suffer from ABI are throughout all our electorates and throughout the entire country. They are deserving of recognition of their issues, and I will support from government and from community service to ensure they have the opportunity to live their lives.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (17:44): I rise to support this motion and I thank the member for Shortland for raising this serious matter with parliament. Last week, the 9 to 15 March, was Brain Injury Awareness Week. Brain injury is more common than many Australians realise, with over 700,000 Australians living with a brain injury. Three out of four of these individuals are aged under 65. One in two Australians with a brain injury acquired their injury before they turned 25. Brain injuries can result from numerous causes. The leading cause of an acquired brain injury is stroke. Approximately 60,000 strokes occur every year. This number continues to grow, proportionate to our population growth, and particularly our increased aged population. Strokes primarily occur in older Australians, however, around one in five strokes affect people under the age of 55. Other causes include accidents or trauma, brain infection, alcohol and/or drug use, or diseases such as Parkinson's Disease. Over 22,000 Australians were hospitalised as a result of traumatic brain injury in 2004-2005. Over two in every five incidents were caused by a fall. Nearly one in three was due to a motor vehicle accident, and one in six was caused by an assault.

These numbers demonstrate the need to recognise brain injury, and support the 700,000 Australians who live day-to-day with a brain injury. I join with the member for Shortland in acknowledging the work done and services provided by the Bouverie Centre, in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Human Services. The Bouverie Centre, based in Melbourne, focuses on the fundamental role of the family and social networks, in helping people with a brain injury. They achieve this by combining clinical family therapy, academic teaching, qualitative and quantitative research, workforce development, and community education in one integrated service. Such services are essential to supporting not only people with a brain injury, but also those who provide care to them, including families and friends.
Brain injuries can significantly change a person's personality and behaviour, and this can be a very difficult and confronting issue for families to cope with. I recall the words of a friend whose husband many years ago was critically injured in a hit-and-run. He sustained serious injuries, and he was very lucky to survive. To the outside world, he now appears quite normal, but his wife did tell me 'he is not the man I married: I am married to a stranger' and that has had a huge impact on that family. Understandably, for those who are not familiar with dealing with brain injuries, it is difficult to identify what family members are experiencing. The fact that brain injury can result from numerous and random sources means that none of us are immune.

There is an outstanding organisation in the member for Shortland's electorate, Camp Breakaway, with whom I am proud to have had quite a long association. It was here that I was told the story of one of their clients, who was a teenager at the time. As a toddler she was sitting in the toddler seat in the back of the family car, when at truck pulled up alongside and a large rock fell through the roof of the car. It seriously injured the young girl, leaving her with lifelong serious brain trauma, and a lifetime confined to a wheelchair.

At Camp Breakaway, I will never forget meeting the families of loved ones with serious brain trauma, and the stories of how a random accident, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time, altered their lives forever. I take this opportunity to thank the wonderful staff and volunteers of Camp Breakaway, for the outstanding respite camps that they offer families and carers.

Many of us could not imagine how we would react if found in that situation, and services such as those provided by the Bouverie Centre are vital in supporting those confronted with brain injury. In New South Wales, the Brain Injury Association of New South Wales is the peak advocacy organisation for people affected by brain injury. Their services provide assistance to people with brain injury, family members, friends, professionals, and the broader community. It is worth noting that the Brain Injury Association of New South Wales is supported by both the New South Wales government and the Federal Government, through the Department of Social Services. This includes serving as a representative body for people with brain injury, and driving change in policy, service and attitudes to make a difference in people's lives. This motion calls on the government to provide more services to accommodate people with a brain injury, and develop a national-scale partnership, similar to the partnership seen in Victoria, which helps people with a brain injury and their family members.

We must, as a government ensure that all Australians in need of such services have access to them. Furthermore, it is important that we have a coordinated approach between the states and territories that reduces duplication and ensures the expenditure is utilised as efficiently as possible to aid those in need. Once again, I thank the member for Shortland for moving this motion, and I look forward to all members of parliament working to improve the lives of Australians with brain injury. (Time expired)

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (17:50): I too rise to support the motion moved by the member for Shortland and thank her and all the speakers who have risen to speak on this motion. It does us great credit in this House when we move things in a bipartisan manner, recognising the issues and concerns of our electorate and dealing with them in a mature way. The Federal Chamber is a nice place in which we can often do that, and it is a pity that the public does not get to see that more visible reality of the parliament working for the betterment of the nation.
Brain injury if often referred to as the invisible disability. The majority—three out of four—who acquire a brain injury will make a good physical recovery but will sustain often debilitating and permanent cognitive disabilities, including difficulties with memory and concentration, resulting in a reduced ability to learn, to plan and to solve problems. People with a brain injury are regularly thought unintelligent, unmotivated and uncooperative, which is doubly disabling. It is an invisible disability because there is often no outward physical appearance, but behavioural traits change. So people are given a label that indicates they have something wrong with them, but people do not understand the underlying cause. Also people say, 'You've recovered. Surely you should move on.' But all of us have known somebody who has suffered a stroke, and a lot of those disabilities stay with you for a long time.

So brain injury is the hidden disability. Brain injury, like a lot of other disabilities, tracks social locative disadvantage. People at the greatest risk of a brain injury are drawn from exactly the same population as those who are at risk from any other injury: from backgrounds of low income, low levels of education, high levels of unemployment, poor housing and so on. Often services for these individuals go missing because they are not in the suburbs where the individuals have greatest lobbying power. The 655,000 Australians that the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates have a brain injury are also radically under-represented in the disability service system. Brain Injury Australia fears for its hidden unknown number living at or beyond the margins: Indigenous Australians, the homeless, the incarcerated. One of the surprising statistics is the number of people in jails who have a acquired brain injury, as is those living at home being cared for by family and friends whose brain injury is unknown, undiagnosed and untreated.

There are over 20,000 hospitalised for traumatic brain injury every year in this country, and that is a staggering number. Between 2,000 and 3,000 of those moderate to severe injuries are associated with some manner of profound and permanent disability. It is a large statistic that often goes unnoticed. As Brain Injury Australia has found, many have concluded that lived experience of acquired disability is distinct and different from a cognitive, development disability. For many of the brain injury Australians, their brain injury is in the prime of their life, occurring right at the point of entry into adult life and the maximum expression of independence from family:

... in leaving home, adventuring in the world of work, embarking on further study. Instead, their injury becomes the watershed event of their life. Often just a moment, an instant, of—nothing more, or less—than inattention, than undue risk—their own—or, tragically— somebody else's—that moment, that instant divides their life in two. And coming to terms with the reality that the watershed cannot be completely bridged is often a lifelong struggle.

There is a girl and her phenomenal family who I have met with many times through the fantastic organisation called BrainLink that both I and the member for Bruce have had great dealings with for many years because of their extraordinary CEO Sharon Strugnell. The life of this girl, and that of her family, was ruined by a violent boyfriend. Her life was destroyed at the hands of someone who was meant to love her, and she has been confined to a wheelchair and to a life that will never be the same. Again, it happened in the prime of her life when she was just 20. But the family did have access to BrainLink and did have access to support and did have access to respite and information.
When many acquired brain injuries happen and people go into hospital, they do not know what to expect or where to go. BrainLink provides a service at hospital, and even at the children’s hospital. A lot of children, through epilepsy and through other acts unknown, are faced with this lifelong change, and it is the families who need the support. BrainLink is one such service that I cannot speak more highly of for what they do. Every year I bang on a beanie—a very attractive look—for Brain Injury Awareness Week and to remember our brains and to pay attention to them.

Debate adjourned.

Tuberculosis

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (17:55): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) 24 March is World Tuberculosis Day (WTD);
   (b) WTD is a designated WHO global public health campaign and is an annual event that marks the anniversary of the 1882 discovery by German Nobel Laureate, Dr Robert Koch, of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis;
   (c) tuberculosis is contagious and airborne—it ranks as the world's second leading cause of death from a single infectious agent and left untreated, each person with active tuberculosis disease will infect on average 10 to 15 people every year;
   (d) the theme for WTD in 2015 is 'Reach, Treat, Cure Everyone';
   (e) in 2013, 1.5 million people died from tuberculosis worldwide with 40 per cent of deaths occurring in countries in the Indo-Pacific region;
   (f) Papua New Guinea has the highest rate of tuberculosis infection in the Pacific, with an estimated 39,000 total cases and 25,000 infections each year;
   (g) the prevalence of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis continues to increase worldwide—rising from 450,000 cases in 2012 to 480,000 cases in 2013, with more than half of multidrug resistant tuberculosis cases found in our region; and
   (h) tuberculosis is:
      (i) the leading cause of death among HIV positive people—HIV weakens the immune system and is lethal in combination with tuberculosis, each contributing to the other's progress; and
      (ii) considered to be a preventable and treatable disease, however current treatment tools, drugs, diagnostics and vaccines are outdated and ineffective; and

(2) recognises:
   (a) Australia's resolve to continue to work towards combatting the challenge of tuberculosis in the region and the need for discovery, development and rapid uptake of new tools, interventions and strategies as recognised in the WHO End TB Strategy;
   (b) the WHO End TB Strategy was endorsed by all member states at the 2014 World Health Assembly and aims to end the tuberculosis epidemic by 2035;
   (c) the Australian Government funding of health and medical research is helping to bring new medicines, diagnostic tests and vaccines to market for tuberculosis and other neglected diseases; and
   (d) the ongoing support for research and development of new simple and affordable treatment tools for tuberculosis and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis is essential if the WHO End TB Strategy goal is to be met.
Today, 24 March 2015, is World Tuberculosis Day. World Tuberculosis Day is a designated World Health Organisation global public health campaign, and is an annual event that marks the anniversary of the 1882 discovery by German Nobel Laureate Dr Robert Koch of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis. The theme for World Tuberculous Day in 2015 is ‘Reach the 3 million: Find. Treat. Cure TB’.

Tuberculosis is a highly contagious and airborne disease. It ranks as the world's second-leading cause of death from a single infectious mosquito, second only to HIV-AIDS, and if left untreated each person with active tuberculosis disease will infect on average 10 to 15 other people every year. For those already infected with HIV, tuberculosis is the leading cause of death. HIV weakens the immune system and is lethal in combination with TB—each contributing to the other's progress. In 2013, 1.5 million people died from tuberculosis worldwide, with 40 per cent of deaths occurring in countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Papua New Guinea has the highest rate of tuberculosis infection in the Pacific with an estimated 39,000 total cases and 25,000 infections each year. Tragically, about three million TB sufferers are missed every year, which prevents these people from receiving essential care and treatment for the disease. Twelve countries account for 75 per cent of missed cases, and South Asia and Africa account for nearly two-thirds.

Through increased awareness and treatment nearly 22 million lives have been saved from TB since 1995, and there has been a 45 per cent decrease in TB deaths since 1990, but there is much more to be done. While TB is considered to be a preventable and treatable disease, current treatment tools, drugs, diagnostics and vaccines are outdated and ineffective. The prevalence of multidrug resistant tuberculosis continues to increase worldwide, rising from 450,000 cases in 2012 to 480,000 cases in 2013, with more than half of multidrug resistant tuberculosis cases found in our region.

The World Health Organisation's End TB Strategy was endorsed by all member states at the 2014 World Health Assembly and aims to end the tuberculosis epidemic by 2035, with full elimination by 2050. The Australian government is continuing to work toward combatting the challenge of tuberculosis in the region and the need for discovery, development and rapid uptake of new tools, interventions and strategies to achieve this goal. The Australian government's funding of health and medical research is helping to bring new medicines, diagnostic tests and vaccines to market for tuberculosis and other neglected diseases. The Minister for Foreign Affairs recently announced an assistance package for Papua New Guinea. The additional funding of $15 million will focus on improving the treatment of drug resistant strains of TB, and brings the Australian government's total assistance package to $60 million to support the control of tuberculosis in PNG. Additionally, Australia's commitment of $200 million over 2014-16 to The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has helped diagnose and treat 12.3 million cases of TB, eight million of whom live in the Asia-Pacific region. The global fund provides 75 per cent of global funding for TB treatment.

I acknowledge the work of Policy Cures, Results and other organisations involved in the fight against TB who marked this year’s World Tuberculosis Day with the Minister for Foreign Affairs launching the Australasian Tuberculosis Forum, ATF, which has been established to facilitate greater recognition for the policymakers, clinicians, patients, scientists and public health workers working for tuberculosis control and elimination in our region. The ongoing support for the research and development of new, simple and affordable treatment
tools for tuberculosis and multidrug resistant tuberculosis is essential if the World Health Organization's End TB strategy goals are to be met. I commend this motion to the House.

(Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons): I call for a seconder for the motion.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (18:00): I am delighted to second this motion moved by the member for Ryan. Of course, 24 March being World Tuberculosis Day, it is important that we reflect both on the history and on the current policy settings in relation to tuberculosis. At the beginning of the 20th century, tuberculosis was the leading cause of mortality for females in Australia and second leading cause for men. TB claimed thousands of lives in this country every year and accounted for around eight or nine per cent of all deaths. For many who contracted the disease, TB was a long, slow death sentence, from what was referred to unscientifically but accurately as 'consumption.' Those who could afford it, both here and abroad, would often try to beat the disease by fleeing to healthier locations like mountains and the seaside to take the cure and give themselves a better chance of survival. The fine sanatorium buildings that exist to this day in areas like the Blue Mountains or Dandenongs are reminders of a time when TB was prevalent, public health campaigns urged people not to spit in the street, and the only response was isolation, rest and diet.

Antibiotics and improvement in living standards and intensive-screening campaigns, especially in the wake of World War II, all but eradicated the disease here. At the end of that century, not a single fatality was recorded in Australia in 2000. Sadly, unlike other diseases such as smallpox and polio, Australia's success has not been matched by similar outcomes in the rest of the world, and tuberculosis remains in many countries one of the leading causes of death. While there have been significant improvements, according to the World Health Organization, tuberculosis is second only to HIV-AIDS as the greatest killer worldwide due to a single infectious agent, and it is very sad also to note that for many HIV-positive people, because HIV weakens the immune system, TB is a lethal combination for these patients.

In 2013, nine million people fell ill with TB and 1.5 million people died from the disease. Over 95 per cent of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries. Australia continues to record one of the lowest notification rates of tuberculosis, but there are worrying signs that we are once more at risk because of the failure to eliminate the disease overseas and its mutation into a new, multidrug resistant strain.

In October last year, Queensland Health confirmed the first death of an Australian citizen from complications related to this multidrug resistant tuberculosis. The 32-year-old Torres Strait Islander woman died after being admitted to hospital six days earlier and had what was described as a close connection with another Torres Strait Islander woman, who died from MDR TB at the Cairns Hospital in April 2013. The woman was known to travel between Cairns, the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea. In many ways, sadly, this was inevitable because Papua New Guinea, our nearest neighbour, with intense people-to-people contact, especially across Torres Strait to Queensland, has the highest rate of TB infections in the Pacific, with an estimated 39,000 cases, and 25,000 new infections each year.

TB is a preventable and treatable disease. But PNG is a poor nation that does not enjoy the health standards that we take for granted here. It shows why it is not just in Australia’s interest as a good global citizen to continue the fight against TB, but why with even the best health system in the world we cannot be immune to the spread of this disease. More than 85 per cent
of notified cases detected here occurred in the overseas-born population, and the current epidemiology of TB in Australia is largely a direct result of the global TB situation. Short of closing all of our borders and placing all Australians who travel overseas in isolation on their return, the only way we can protect ourselves against TB, as we did from smallpox and as we are close to achieving with polio, is to eliminate the disease all over the world.

That is why today, in this motion, we are committing to the WHO End TB Strategy, endorsed by all member states at the 2014 World Health Assembly, to end the TB epidemic by 2035. In our region, we resolve to combat TB by working with our partner countries to build strong and sustainable health systems. As Australia’s experience has shown, a strong public health system and a determined effort can beat TB. We also declare our strong support for ongoing funding of health and medical research in Australia which is helping to bring new medicines, diagnostic tests and vaccines to the market, for TB and other neglected diseases. The development of new and simple affordable treatment tools for TB and multidrug-resistant TB is essential if the End TB Strategy goals are to be met. Let us hope that in the not-too-distant future we can look back on TB as a distant memory not just in Australia but across the globe. (Time expired)

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (18:06): First of all, I would like to commend the member for Ryan for her ongoing advocacy on this issue. World TB Day aims to build public awareness that tuberculosis remains an epidemic in much of the world, causing the deaths of nearly 1.5 million people each year, mostly in developing countries. Our neighbour PNG, which lies within just four kilometres of the Australian islands of Saibai and Boigu, has the highest burden of TB in the Pacific region. While it is difficult to estimate the rates of drug-resistant tuberculosis, it is considered to be endemic in PNG. Of approximately 23,000 cases reported in 2013, sadly, 28 per cent are people under the age of 15. In fact, my long interest in tuberculosis stems from 2010, when nine-year-old Violet Ausi was brought on an eight-hour dinghy trip from Daru to Australia by her father to get treatment that she could not get in Papua New Guinea.

Ignoring this problem or hoping it will go away is just not an option. Yesterday, I was pleased to host an event with Policy Cures and Results International to raise awareness of this killer disease. I would like to mention the courageous speech that was given by a young Filipino girl, Louie Zepeda, who was 25 years old and working as an architect in Manila when she contracted multidrug-resistant tuberculosis meningitis. Louie told us of her 24-month, gruelling treatment, where she swallowed over 14,000 pieces of medication and endured terrible side effects, including paralysis, Parkinson’s symptoms, depression and the prospect of infertility. Louie was eventually cured, but the toxic treatment left her blind. In her words, she felt ‘worthless’. It took a lot of soul-searching for her to find a new purpose in life, but she is now a qualified architect, she has a master’s in disability policy, she is married, she has a daughter called Zoe and she is a passionate advocate for tuberculosis patients. Her story really struck home. Not only did I learn that tuberculosis is not just a disease of the lungs but Louie’s story showed how tuberculosis can strike healthy, active, professional people and change their lives forever. In her case, it was a disease of the brain which affected her optic nerves and caused her blindness.

TB is not just a social tragedy; it is also an economic tragedy. That event with Louie was followed by last night’s launch of the Australasian TB Forum here in parliament. I would like
to thank Dr Stenard Hiasihri, from Western Province, for his insights into being a doctor in PNG and treating tuberculosis patients. His comment that tuberculosis is 'Ebola in slow motion' really said it all. His experiences in having to diagnose patients using out-of-date technologies and then struggling to administer toxic drugs for anywhere between six months and two years reinforces that we must get effective vaccines, better diagnostics and more-efficient treatment. To that end, it is very welcome news that our foreign minister has pledged $30 million over three years to help bring new diagnostic tests and drugs to the market to tackle drug-resistant tuberculosis and malaria.

I have spoken many times in this place about the failure of the previous system, where millions of dollars were thrown at this problem with no accountability and no focus on outcomes. This government's direction is a breath of fresh air. At a local level, I have been working with Sheridan Morris from the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre on a $1.85 million pilot project that will establish four service platforms in key villages along the Western Province coastline of Papua New Guinea. This project will be up and running by the end of this month, focusing on water and food security, sanitation, and a secure base for community health workers. I am looking forward to continuing to advocate for this project so that stage 2 can get underway sooner rather than later.

To conclude, the theme for World Tuberculosis Day in 2015 is 'Reach, Treat, Cure Everyone'. It is ambitious, but it has to be. As Dr Hiasihri and Louie Zepeda said yesterday: 'Imagine our children growing up in a world without tuberculosis.'
the importance of taking real action to combat tuberculosis by doing things like investing in research and development to combat tuberculosis. You cannot rein in multidrug-resistant tuberculosis without improved drugs, improved diagnostics and improved vaccines. A lack of investment in research and development can result in unnecessary suffering and death. So donors and implementing countries must increase funding at different stages from basic research to clinical trials, because I am told there is a $1.3 billion annual gap in funding for new tools to stop the spread of tuberculosis. Of course, current tuberculosis programs require improvement. I am informed that more can be done to mitigate the spread of drug resistance by using current tools more effectively. I am also informed that once someone is on treatment they stop being infectious. This is really important because as the member for Ryan, the mover of this motion, said: a person who is infectious would infect on average 10 to 15 other people. So, clearly, it is really important that we reach all people with tuberculosis to ensure that the infectiousness is curbed and, in turn, curbing infectiousness will curb drug resistance. That means, like everything, that resources are needed, and those resources need to be appropriate—at a level that can make sure that everyone is reached. That means necessarily increasing political support and money for national tuberculosis programs. Worldwide, I am told, tuberculosis detection and treatment programs are underfunded by US$2 billion per year. That is a significant challenge for countries around the world as they grapple with this epidemic.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has supported 12.3 million people to receive tuberculosis treatment, and eight million of those have been in the Asia-Pacific region—in our region. Recently, the global fund reported that it has received US$2 billion in project proposals globally that meet its criteria but that cannot be funded from existing resources. That means that funding commitments need to be made. Like the other speakers in this debate, I do welcome the government's announcement yesterday that they will provide $30 million over three years to aid those affected by tuberculosis and malaria—although I would note that a number of organisations have raised concerns with me about aid cuts more generally, and that is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (18:15): I rise to support this motion on World Tuberculosis Day. I want to thank the member for Ryan. She is to be commended for her continuing diligence in highlighting this issue. Indeed, her passion in ensuring continuing awareness of this issue is well known to the House, and she, along with me, many of our other parliamentary colleagues and the member for Leichhardt, Hon. Warren Entsch, have been tireless in pursuing this issue on behalf of his constituents in Far North Queensland and in consideration of the welfare of our nearest neighbours in Papua New Guinea.

As I informed the House on 20 March last year, TB is not a distant problem for Australia. None of us should be complacent and think that TB is a disease of the last century and that it not relevant to us here in Australia, particularly in Queensland and to Queenslanders. Australia is committed to supporting our neighbours combat tuberculosis and to strengthening critical health systems that get more than half of the world's TB cases that occur in the Indo-Pacific region. The importance of this is underlined by the fact that a country right on our doorstep, Papua New Guinea, has the highest rate of TB infection in the Pacific.

I am on record in this House as saying that in the 21st century we should be aiming for zero TB deaths throughout the world and throughout the Indo-Pacific region. On World TB Day,
today, we should reflect on the need to show our commitment to properly funding the global fund in this fight to ensure that TB becomes a disease consigned to history.

That is why I am really proud to acknowledge the efforts of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Julie Bishop MP, in securing the Australian government's pledge of $200 million to the global fund Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria's fourth replenishment for 2014-16. The global fund provides around 75 per cent of the global funding for TB. In the Asia-Pacific region, the global fund has supported treatment of more eight million cases of TB. On 18 June 2014, when launching the government's aid policy, the foreign minister announced a commitment of up to $30 million per annum from 2014-15 for health research for development, including medical research. It is this focus and the emphasis on medical research that is particularly important. For far too long, our approach to tackling the scourge of TB has been based on diagnostic tests that are almost 100 years old and are tragically outdated, and some of those treatment regimes are outdated as well. This is why Minister Bishop's announcement included further support for product development partnerships to develop new drugs, vaccines and diagnostic tests for high-burden diseases in our region.

In February 2015, the Australian government also announced a $15 million package for the support of TB control in PNG's National Capital District and Western provinces. That was made up of $10 million for the TB response in the NCD from that 2014-15 period to 2016-17 for case funding, early diagnosis, effective treatment and care and support; and $5 million from 2014-2017 towards drug-resistant TB control initiatives in Western Province. This support will focus on effective management of drug-resistant TB in hospital and community settings. When you look at it, Australia's commitment for TB control to Papua New Guinea has amounted to some $59.7 million from 2011 to 2017.

I want to thank the member for Leichhardt, who was here earlier, for his constant vigilance in this area. Australia has refurbished the Daru General Hospital TB ward and outpatient service blocks, and constructed a purpose-built 22-bed TB ward. I want to thank him very much for his constant work in this area.

I have no doubt that our refocused efforts in combating TB in our region and the increased priority on medical research is the correct approach. In this regard, I want to thank the member for Ryan for this motion. I want to thank the member for Leichhardt, for his relentless advocacy on this issue, and Minister Bishop and all of the members who have spoken today on World Tuberculosis Day. Hopefully we will make these initiatives a reality.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (18:20): It is indeed timely that this resolution is before the Federation Chamber today, because, as other speakers have mentioned, it is World Tuberculosis Day and there has been the foundation forum here today to discuss the issues related to it, but also because the respected NGO RESULTS visited many members over the past week. RESULTS, whilst critical of the government's reduction in foreign aid, in discussions with me certainly praised the government's three-year package of $15 million towards combating tuberculosis. They further noted, on 5 February, in congratulating this initiative:

However, failure to address the lack of effective diagnostics, drugs and vaccines will continue to result in major long-term human and economic costs …
They also cite the reality that there is not only the impact upon the individual and the local society. Where you have a situation where it is the third main cause of women's deaths in the 15- to 44-year-old age group, there is the impact on young children of losing their mothers. But this is also, of course, an economically important problem facing the world. It is estimated by RESULTS that $1 trillion to $3 trillion over the next 10 years will be lost in regard to the world economy. The World Bank has further estimated that a loss of productivity of four to seven per cent of GDP in a significant number of nations is the result of the presence of tuberculosis.

Whilst it has been around with us since 7000 BC, and whilst we have of course had some major improvements in this country, it is no accident that four of the six speakers on this particular motion come from Queensland, because this problem in Papua New Guinea in particular—and, on a broader front, the Pacific—is such that it is having an impact on this country in regard to the reported instances of it. Papua New Guinea has had an alarming growth of 47 per cent over the last decade in the number of reported cases. We are talking about a situation where, as other speakers have indicated, between 1.4 and 1.7 million people—there are different estimates—die from this each year, and nine million new cases are reported. Due to the collapse of the health system in Papua New Guinea—and we have had various speakers in this parliament before a variety of committees testifying to that—the situation in Papua New Guinea is alarming, and it will have an impact on this country because of cross-border movement.

The micro-organism can survive in a dry state for many weeks, which is part of the problem we face. First-line drugs must be taken for six to nine months, and if that is not fulfilled then we have the very serious growth of strains that are not liable to be combated by the multidrug attacks on it.

The situation now is that we have an international strategy from the World Health Assembly which indicates that the World Health Organization is seeking to eliminate tuberculosis in countries with low levels of the disease, targeting 33 countries and territories where there are fewer than 100 TB cases per million population, aiming to have fewer than 10 new TB cases per million in these countries by 2035, and total elimination by 2050. That is commendable; that is worthwhile. However, as indicated by a variety of speakers, in our particular part of the world, in the Pacific, and also in Africa, it is endemic in certain countries. While it has fallen by 40 per cent in number of deaths since 1990, the number of new cases are in decline. It has proved extremely resilient.

I commend the speakers in their efforts to highlight the problems of this disease. It is interesting that two Nobel Prizes over history have been given in the field of combating tuberculosis, but obviously we still have a very real issue.

In conclusion, I hope the member for Bowman is not indicating the use of props at a later stage in the next debate. It would be quite alarming.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: Oh, more than one person. I commend this resolution. It is great to see this initiative, particularly by Queensland members, who are more centred on this issue than other parts of the country. There have been initiatives by Results and by the World
Health Organization—they certainly are to be supported—and the recent voting and money by the government is to be commended.

Debate adjourned.

**Research and Development**

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:26): I move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates the Australian researchers at Monash University and Amaero Engineering Pty Ltd who created the world's first 3D printed jet engine;

(2) recognises that:

(a) Australia has a history of punching above its weight when it comes to research and development; and

(b) huge opportunities are available to create new advanced manufacturing jobs and industries with the right government support for our science, research and manufacturing sectors; and

(3) condemns the Government's shortsighted approach to science, research and industry policy, where it has:

(a) cut $878 million from science and research, including $115 million from the CSIRO;

(b) recklessly undermined the Australian auto manufacturing sector, risking the loss of millions of dollars annually of investment in research and development;

(c) failed to support the shipbuilding industry by refusing to guarantee that the 12 future submarines will be built in Australia which would lead to millions of dollars of investment in research and innovation; and

(d) introduced enormous uncertainty for innovative businesses conducting Australian research and development, with retrograde changes to the Research & Development Tax Incentive that sees the removal of the benefit for expenditure over $100 million and a reduction in the rate of the offset by 1.5 percentage points for all firms across the board.

I congratulate Monash University and Amaero Engineering Proprietary Ltd, who in partnership with others including the CSIRO and Deakin University, created the world's first 3-D printed jet engine. Earlier today, I met with Dr Tony Peacock, CEO of the Cooperative Research Centres Association, and Simon Marriott, from the Advanced Manufacturing CRC, who provided me with a personal briefing on the printer. It is a remarkable invention that will reduce the time and cost of producing prototypes, enable the rapid and relatively inexpensive production of small quantities of parts and the production of highly customised components in small production runs. The 3-D printer was proudly developed here in Australia, by the public and private sector working together, and it was, I understand, four and a half years in the making.

The outcome highlights several critical matters: firstly, the importance of investing in science research and development; secondly, the importance of investing in and supporting university research; thirdly, the importance of innovation to Australia's future, and to the future of Australia's manufacturing sector: and, fourthly, that Australians have the ability to invent, innovate and develop new products. Australians have proven time and again that we can lead the world in science and innovation breakthroughs. Australia's future is indeed as much dependent on research development and innovation as the future of any other nation.
Even our agricultural and mining sectors, which have created considerable wealth for Australia over recent years, will struggle without continuous innovation.

Disappointingly, this government does not seem to understand or value our researchers and scientists. Only last week, the Minister for Education and Training—the fixer—was holding some 1,700 scientists to ransom, using them as a bargaining chip to try to get his unpopular and retrograde university deregulation changes through parliament. This was not a one-off, misguided thought bubble, but follows a pattern of neglect of our science sector by the Abbott government. It began with a government that on coming into office did not appoint a minister for science. Then, in its first budget, the Abbott government cut $878 million of funding from science and research, including $115 million from the CSIRO. One has only to go to one of the many breakfast briefings provided by the CSIRO in this place to understand the value of that organisation’s work to our nation. The stupidity of cutting funds to CSIRO is a no-brainer.

In addition, the government cut all the programs that encouraged and rewarded innovation, like Commercialisation Australia, the Innovation Investment Fund, Enterprise Connect and the Research and Development Tax Incentives. Then in a total display of ignorance and arrogance, the Abbott government turned its back on the automotive sector and the Australian Submarine Corporation, both of which added hundreds of millions of dollars of research, development and innovation to the Australian economy. If time permitted, I could talk about personal examples in Adelaide of companies that innovated as a result of the work of both of those sectors. The benefits of research and development dollars spent by the car makers or the Australian Submarine Corporation were not confined to their own sectors but ultimately spread throughout the economy. Indeed, several European countries have maintained strong manufacturing sectors not through cheap labour but by investing in science, research and innovation, and by developing niche products in advanced manufacturing.

Australia has the ability to do the same, but this government, rather than build on Australia's existing innovation strengths and opportunities, is tearing them down. It is a government that is looking to the past for solutions instead of looking to the future; a government that gives lip service to science and research but then does the reverse with its budget.

Australians can see what is happening and so can the Australian science sector and industry. They are not blinded by the government's spin. They understand the damage the coalition government is doing to Australia's future and that is why they have lost confidence in the Abbott government. The government's blind ideology has not only lost Australia tens of thousand of jobs, including research scientists and engineers, and hundreds of millions of dollars of innovation investment, but also lost the productivity gains and the export value that those investments in science, innovation, research and development would have brought to Australia. The Abbott government simply does not understand that more than ever before Australia's future is dependant on innovation, and for that it stands condemned.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): I thank the member for Makin. Is the motion seconded?

Mr Conroy: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (18:31): I rise to speak on this motion put forward by the member for Makin, and I have to say that it is disappointing to hear from the member for Makin so many spurious, inflammatory, irresponsible and, frankly, false claims.

I often despair at the way in which politicians are perceived in our community. I know for myself as a new member that I do try very hard to play a straight bat and tell it how it is. I have to say that—and I would never say this about members opposite, because I know it to be false. So when the member for Makin says that our government does not value scientists or researchers, it is that sort of rhetoric that is just disappointing. It is clearly ridiculous and, more so, it is disappointing because I do think we need to see a higher level of debate.

I do agree with the member for Makin, who asserts that there are huge opportunities to create new, advanced manufacturing jobs in industries with the right government support for our science, research and manufacturing sectors. We agree wholeheartedly, and that is why we are providing such strong support for these areas.

I want to put on the record that in 2014-15 the government is providing $9.2 billion in support of science, research and innovation. Support for science and research in the industry portfolio will total $5.8 billion over four years. This includes more than $3 billion for the CSIRO. There are some savings being made at science agencies, just like in other government entities. The reality is that members opposite left us with no alternative: Labor's legacy to the people of Australia was, of course, gross debt projected to rise to $667 billion and $123 billion in cumulative deficits. The efficiency dividend increases from 1 July 2014 from 2.25 per cent to 2.5 per cent apply to all agencies subject to the efficiency dividend. It only applies to a percentage of the budget funding for AMES, CSIRO and ANSTO, representing their corporate component.

In addressing some of the false and inflammatory claims that have been made in this debate, I do want to reflect on my own electorate of Corangamite and look at what happened with Ford. Ford, of course, ended its manufacturing under the previous Labor government—and Labour often forgets to remind the people of Corangamite about that. In January 2012, the former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, came to Geelong and announced $34 million for Ford. Then, some six months later, after promising that this would lead to 300 new jobs, we saw a loss of 330 jobs. The fact of the matter is that Holden, Toyota and Ford left of their own volition, and the fact of the matter is that we have had very strong support for the auto sector.

If you look at Labor's record, Labor promised $6.2 billion in funding for the auto sector over 13 years, and yet, in 2011, reneged on three separate programs: the 'cash for clunkers' program—wasn't that a great success; it absolutely crashed—the Green Car Innovation Fund, and the LPG Vehicle Scheme to encourage the uptake of LPG. And then, to cap it off, we saw, from members opposite when they were in government, how they slapped the car industry, or attempted to, with $840 million in carbon taxes over a decade and $1.8 billion in FBT changes.

So what we are doing is: we are confronting the big challenge for jobs of the future. That is why we are rolling out a $155 million growth fund, $30 million for skills and training, a $15 million boost to the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program, $20 million for the Automotive Diversification Program, and the $60 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Program. And one of the recipients of a grant under that program is Backwell IXL, a great local manufacturer in Geelong, as just announced last week.
So our government has very strong support for science, for research and for innovation. We have a strong focus on investing in these industries, building the jobs for the future and not throwing the bandaid solutions that we saw under the Labor Party.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (18:36): There is one thing I agree with the previous speaker on, and that is: we should look beyond the rhetoric. Let us look in this debate at the actual evidence. The evidence is that those on the other side have an appalling record in terms of support for industry and jobs. Let us start from the top level and work down.

We have a decade-high unemployment rate. We have a 14.2 per cent youth unemployment rate under those opposite. Aggregate hours worked in the economy have only grown by one per cent since the election in 2013. Average hours of work have fallen since their election. We have a labour force underutilisation rate of 15.1 per cent, which is the highest underutilisation rate since 1995 when we were coming out of the 1990 recession. Perhaps worst of all, we have the highest underemployment rate ever of 8.7 per cent. Statistics started being collected in 1978 on underemployment, and it has never exceeded the level we have now—not even at the depth of the 1980s recession or the 1990s recession did we see an underemployment rate higher than it is now. These are damning statistics that demonstrate the lack of commitment and the lack of delivery from those opposite.

If we look at manufacturing specifically, according to ABS statistics we have seen 12,000 manufacturing jobs already disappear from the sector under their stewardship. We will see 50,000 automotive jobs go in the next few years, and another 200,000 indirect jobs will go. It is an absolute untruth to argue that Holden and Toyota were leaving regardless of what would happen. I was involved in the negotiations with those companies before the last election, and what was very clear was: with the current funding envelope, under the Automotive Transformation Scheme, they would have stayed. They left for one reason: the $500 million cut to that fund promised by Mrs Mirabella when she was opposition industry spokesperson and put in place by Prime Minister Abbott. The spokesperson for Holden was very clear. He said before the last election: 'If you cut that $500 million, we will go.' And that is what happened when Mr Abbott won the election. So let us have none of this rubbish about, 'They were always going.' That is the end of an entire industry—50,000 direct jobs going, and another 200,000 in peril.

We are seeing the same in shipbuilding. I saw 200 shipbuilding jobs go at the shipyard of Forgaes at Tomago very recently in my region.

It is not just support for jobs where they have underperformed. They consistently attack support for research and development. In 1996, when the last coalition government won power, they slashed the R&D tax concession from 150 per cent to 125 per cent, which had a dramatic impact on R&D immediately, and we have seen now a $900 million cut to science and research under this government.

The previous speaker talked about the $188 million for their growth centres, which is a good announcement—except that that is a cut from $500 million, which is what Labor had applied to the precincts initiative, which is essentially the same thing: promoting industrial clusters. That is a $300 million cut, and they brag about saving that $188 million when they cut $312 million from what is essentially the same program. So this shows their lack of commitment in this area.
Another initiative from the last government that they have ignored this the Australian Jobs Act, which gave Australian companies the first chance of winning work on projects over $500 million. Again, we have heard nothing of it since this mob have come to power. We have heard nothing about it because, ultimately, they talk a big game about support for jobs. They are supposedly the party for small business, ignoring their attacks on things such as instant asset write-off. You just have to look at the evidence. The evidence is less support in programs that are poorly targeted. In terms of the statistical performance of employment under this government, it is woeful—a decade-high unemployment rate, the highest underemployment rate ever measured in this country and a dreadful youth unemployment rate that will scar a generation of people.

I agree with the last speaker that we should not try to make things up; we should not try and engage in empty political rhetoric but we need to look beyond the rhetoric to the evidence. The evidence is damning in government support and the evidence is damning in actual economic statistics. I stand together with the Labor Party supporting jobs, supporting research and development and supporting developing an innovative economy that can compete with the best around the world. Those on the other side stand for a rustbelt economy, an economy concentrating on the farm and the quarry because that is what ultimately they think the Australian workforce should pursue and they will stand condemned in history.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (18:41): I seek leave to make a further contribution.

Leave granted.

Ms HENDERSON: I think in this debate it is worth putting forward—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Ms HENDERSON: I will try and speak without interruption given the member for Charlton has just had his go. I think it is worth putting on the record a number of initiatives of this government. Last year the government released the industry innovation and competitiveness agenda, which recognises the important link between science and industry. The government will provide $188.5 million to pursue global excellence in areas of competitive strength through industry growth centres.

I do note the member for Charlton's comments in relation to the industry hubs, which was the previous government's policy. I have to say, those industry hubs were regarded by industry as a failure. They were actually providing very little funding, particularly in the advanced manufacturing and the other hubs that were being rolled out in Victoria. What we are seeing with the Minister for Industry announcement is a very strong commitment to grow the jobs of the future.

I hear the member for Charlton talk about how he does not want to engage in rhetoric and then he talked about the rustbelt. Again, this sort of rhetoric is incredibly disappointing. Perhaps he should come down to my home town of Geelong, a very fine advanced manufacturing town, a town where the member for Corio said to the Geelong Advertiser, 'manufacturing was dying' under this federal government. However, it is a town with 12,000 people employed in manufacturing with 500 manufacturers. Manufacturing is responsible for around 40 per cent of the region's GDP, so we are seeing a very strong commitment through the growth fund that we announced, the local Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, a $29.5 million fund. Unfortunately, the Victorian government committed $7.5 million
to that fund but currently only $4 million is committed. We are still waiting to see that money delivered.

I say to members opposite, come to my home town of Geelong and look what we are doing. Look at the examples, look at where we are investing. Carbon Revolution is an incredible business investing in state-of-the-art carbon fibre wheels for the global auto market. Come and look at Marand, which is helping to build the trailer for the engines of the joint strike fighter, an incredible defence company building 14,000 separate parts in this trailer and making Geelong very proud.

I do reiterate, and it is on the record, that the decisions to cease manufacturing in Australia by 2016 from Ford and 2017 from Holden and Toyota, were made entirely by the companies themselves. It is important to note that on 10 March 2015 the government announced that the Automotive Transformation Scheme, which provides investment for support for research and development, is going to continue as legislated. I do appreciate that there was an announcement by our government to cease that scheme, but we are continuing it. It was caught up in the Senate. That will give not only Ford, Holden and Toyota but also, very importantly component manufacturers the opportunity to continue to get the full support under that scheme.

I also look at what is happening in research and development by Ford in Geelong. Again we see Ford with an employment workforce of something like 490 workers at Ford's proving ground and at Ford's research and development operation in Geelong—a very strong commitment to global auto manufacturing, right through beyond 2017.

I also want to put on the record that the Australian government is committed to acquiring a future submarine that provides the best possible capability and value for money for Australian taxpayers while maximising the involvement of Australian industry. That is the responsible thing to do. The government has stated that it is investigating a number of options for new submarines from France, Germany and Japan whilst at the same time ensuring that Australian workers and Australian manufacturers, particularly focussed in South Australia, get every opportunity to be part of that very significant project. The competitive evaluation process announced by Minister Andrews will ensure that capability, cost, schedule and key strategic considerations will be very much a part of our Future Submarine program. *(Time expired)*

**Ms MacTIERNAN** *(Perth)* *(18:46)*: I think it is interesting that the government was not even able to marshal three speakers on this and we had to recycle the member for Corangamite in order to continue the debate. That really does say it all about the commitment of this government to this fundamental task of supporting innovation and industry in this country.

I believe, as the members on this side have said, that we have a very profound problem facing us. As I travel around Western Australia, I see the amount of restructuring that is going on and the extent of the job losses in not only the mining sector but also a lot of industries that are associated with the mining sector. We are going to have a very, very real challenge in terms of creating employment, and we see that already feeding through the unemployment statistics, which unfortunately are tracking very much in the wrong direction. And, of course, we are racing to notch up various free trade agreements, which will place Australian non-agricultural industries under even greater pressure.
I want to talk a little bit today about some of the creativity that we are, nevertheless, seeing in Australia. We all know the tragic stories about Australian inventions that went overseas for commercialisation and manufacturing—the Xerox, the black box, wi-fi, and various photovoltaic technologies. But I have to say that, despite all this doom and gloom, there are actually signs of life. One of the fabulous things about this role is that you come across those. I want to talk about a few of these that I have been dealing with. One is Hofmann Engineering. This is an outfit based in my electorate. It employs around 600 people and is headquartered in Bayswater. It was founded by two immigrant toolmakers 45 years ago and now has facilities not only in Western Australia but also in Victoria and New South Wales.

Quality in innovation has been really at the heart of this company. They design, manufacture, repair and refurbish mining and industrial equipment. They are now the largest privately owned engineering company in Australia. They really are in the heart of the beast. They manufacture steel mill gears for export to China, they produce wind-turbine gears for clients in Germany and they produce aircraft parts for the US. The company tell me that they are spending around $33 million each year to deliver innovation and flexibility, and they point to the strategic role that various innovation grants from government have had in allowing them to be ahead of the curve and continue to be competitive in a very, very challenging environment. They also depend very heavily on the development tax breaks that they get, and it is important that they get them. They also have participated in defence industries, and they provide parts for submarines.

We have enough company in WA, Fairclough Corporation, an extraordinary group. They have developed equipment that is used in ultrasonic testing, imaging, track geometry and ground-penetrating radar to determine the condition and soundness of railroad tracks, and they manufacture the equipment. So the technology is being developed here, and we are seeing this equipment being manufactured and exported into markets like Japan, Brazil, Taiwan, China and Korea.

We have a company called PDC. Their slogan is 'engineering evolved'. They create highly accurate scaled virtual models of all the structural components in a building. These independent models and data are integrated and standardised to produce a 3-D model. In this way, they can determine the progress of a construction project, anticipate the problems and cut costs very significantly. They are currently doing work on the new Apple campus in California.

So we have all of this creativity here, but all of these companies are saying to us that they need government to help them and to match, with their policy, the inventiveness of these companies.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (18:52): Science and research are critical right around Australia, particularly in my home state of Tasmania. One of the points that I would like to make about the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation is that the I in CSIRO stands for 'Industrial', and we should never forget that. That is where it was born, that is where it started and that should be the focus, and increasingly that is the focus of this government: to make sure that our scientific and research endeavours are applicable within industry in a practical way.

This is no more evident than in my home state of Tasmania, within the university and with the commitment that this government has shown to Antarctic research. It is critical to our
country. In the week when we mourn the passing of our 22nd Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, it should be remembered that he moved the Antarctic research division from Melbourne down to Hobart, which was the right thing to do. It is an important part of the Tasmanian economy, and this government's commitment to research and innovation in the Antarctic should not be underestimated. I think, for example, of the $24 million that was committed as an election commitment to the collaborative research centre in respect of Antarctic studies. I think of the fantastic work that is done by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. In terms of infrastructure, I think of the $38 million that was committed to the upgrade of the Hobart International Airport. The primary reason that that happened was the program around the Antarctic Division in Hobart. That is going to be the driver, and I think there is generally broad support for the idea that that will enable Hobart and, indeed, Australia to compete with New Zealand, South America and South Africa as a step-off point for many countries as they look at doing research in the Southern Ocean and in the Antarctic. It will also present opportunities for an important and growing sector within the Tasmanian economy—that is, tourism and the opportunities that flow from that for exports. Not least is the commitment from Minister Hunt to purchase a new icebreaker to replace the *Aurora Australis*.

These are the sorts of things that are, again, showing this government's commitment. Indeed, industry is the critical part. Investment in science and research must be focused. It should not necessarily be done just for the sake of research but—as there has always been in this country—there should be an opportunity to apply it in a practical way through the innovative people that we have.

That could be no more evident than in the recently announced Innovation and Investment Fund. That is a $13 million fund that was launched in Tasmania, and I was pleased to have Minister Macfarlane in my electorate for a couple of days. There were 137 applications received, and $85 million-worth of private capital was committed. It shows that there is confidence coming back into the economy—that there are green shoots. After three years of having a Labor-Greens government in Hobart and a Labor-Greens government in Canberra, our state is finally finding its feet again. Tasmania, I am so pleased to say, is off the bottom of the tables in terms of unemployment, and we are seeing confidence coming again into business to reinvest in the things that they business does well.

There were 40 successful programs out of those 137 applications. The flip side of that is that there were 100 that missed out. But the feedback from AusIndustry—and the good work that they did—demonstrated that there were another 30 or 40 projects that were of very high quality. This goes to the fact that jobs growth is starting to come again in this country. Even last year, jobs growth in this country was three times as fast as it was in the previous year under the Labor government. So things are starting to move again. Tasmania is certainly, under the Hodgman Liberal government, well and truly open for business—whether it be tourism, aquaculture, or the innovative people that are using the Antarctic Division as a step off. There are so many opportunities in my state and it is a very exciting time to be a Tasmanian.

Debate adjourned.
Cruise Liner Industry

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (18:57): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) the cruise liner industry makes a significant contribution to the regional economies of Sydney, Fremantle, Brisbane and Melbourne;

(b) sulphur dioxide emissions are a significant source of air pollution from cruise liners docked at ports in Australia and are harmful to human health; and

(c) by 2020 the cruise liner industry will implement new measures to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from cruise ships docked at ports under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships; and

(2) calls on the cruise liner industry to introduce measures ahead of 2020 to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from cruise liners docked at ports near residential areas including through the use of low sulphur diesel fuels.

This is an opportunity for us tonight to recognise the extraordinary contribution made by the cruise liner industry in Australia—a $3.2 billion industry—and I am probably one of the first people to rise in this place and say thank you on behalf of the millions of people who have enjoyed a cruise at an affordable price for a unique and special experience.

There is another level of this debate that has been brought to light in New South Wales, and I want to highlight that Australia is probably the last major economy in the world—certainly we stand apart from the EU, the Caribbean and the Americas—where cruise ships visiting our ports are burning the thick black stuff and not the clear stuff. We need to get these emissions down in all our cities. It happens in the rest of the world and I think tonight is an opportunity for us to appeal to the cruise liner industry to do just that, and to do it through corporate social responsibility and not through further regulation.

Just this week we heard an announcement from the New South Wales Liberal government that as soon as possible after this week's election they intend to introduce regulation to require cruise ships at berth in New South Wales to use ultra-low-sulfur diesel with a sulfur content of less than 100 parts per million. By July of next year they will be moving to a situation where cruise ships use low-sulfur diesel at all times in Australian areas—certainly in zones around major ports. I commend New South Wales for that but I ask the logical question: what happens in the rest of Australia? This is a federal issue but, more importantly, it is an opportunity for the cruise ship industry to step forward and do something as a form of corporate social responsibly.

Now I acknowledge the economic impacts of cruise ship liners in major cities. I acknowledge the impact in regional economies, like Townsville, like Burnie, like parts of Western Australia and up the Queensland coast. But above all, I think about the fact that it is no-one's fault that there is high-density living right next to cruise ship liners, and where these overseas terminals exist. It is no fault of anyone's that people want to live next door to where these large shipping liners berth. This is far away from ports, and I know the objections from the cruise ship industry about burning clean fuel. They are predominantly based around price—that there is a 16c per litre difference, that the supply is not guaranteed, that they do not all have an auxiliary fuel-tank, particularly in older cruise-liners, and that the long-term plan is a MARPOL 2020 target of scrubbers.
But that is not the answer for residents living close to these shipping terminals right now, with high-sulfur fuels being burnt—effectively a bunker oil, with 2,700 to 3,500 parts per million—just a hundred metres away from where they live. They cannot move, and I know that in many cases you might say ‘they might have been there first’. It is unlike the ports where we have large carriers burning this stuff, because they are not in densely populated locations, and, to be honest, the ships were there first. But in overseas cruise-ship terminals, all I ask is one thing of the cruise ship industry: 'Do what is affordable, reasonable and feasible, and, if you can minimise an emission for the cost of a Big Mac per person, just do it, and don't be dragged to that point and look completely reluctant about it.' I have talked to the ship owners and I have talked to the cruise ship industry, and I must admit that I have encountered shifting opposition and a whole lot of reasons of why they cannot do it. But Caltex has popped the bubble: they can deliver it in five days. Caltex has told us that it is not even half a tanker to refuel one of these shipping liners, thus making sure that kids living nearby are not breathing in high-particulate, high-sulfur matter, that turns to sulfuric acid when you breathe it in.

It is not good enough. The Industrial Revolution dragged England out of the Middle Ages, but we can do better than having kids working in coalmines and we can do better than having this kind of emission 100 metres away from living areas and high-density residential areas. The New South Wales coalition are going to act. Every other state in Australia will be asking exactly these questions. Why is it good enough that in the EU you cannot travel between ports without burning the clean stuff? Why is it that in the US you cannot even come near a port without burning the clean stuff? All of these liners have the clean stuff on board in an auxiliary tank, but they will not flick the switch. Why? Because it costs a Big Mac meal deal per person. It is a $4,000 dollar cruise ship ticket. It is eight bucks to burn the clean stuff. It is such a simple request, and I am stunned that, when you are sitting around a boardroom table discussing your corporate social responsibility, someone is still saying in a 1970s attitude: 'Whatever you want for corporate social responsibility, as long as it does not hurt our bottom line.' Well, this one barely hurts your bottom line. This stuff is 16c a litre cheaper. This stuff should not be burnt close to where people live. This stuff is revolting. It should not be burnt anywhere near where children live. We can do better than that.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Henderson): I ask the member to refrain from using props.

Mr LAMING: We can burn the clean stuff. It is eminently available. We should be using that, and not this, and I insist on the cruise-ship industry cleaning up their act and burning the clean stuff like they do in the rest of the world.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the Member for Bowman, and out of respect for the attendants here in the chamber I would ask the member to clean up the mess he has left. Is the motion seconded?

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (19:03): I second the motion. I am not going to even attempt to follow the theatricality of that, but I certainly would say to the member for Bowman that I am very pleased to second the resolution. This is a resolution that is extremely important from two perspectives. Of course, Labor supports our cruise-liner industry, our tourism industry more generally, and of course as a representative of the seat of beautiful Sydney, which incorporates Sydney Harbour, its islands and its
foreshores, I am a great supporter of the environmental constraints that the member is proposing, but also, of course, of keeping our working harbour. To keep our working harbour, we need to ensure that our working harbour, the tourism industry and the industries associated with it take account of the rights of the residents of Sydney Harbour, too. Australian ports and our shipping industry are a very important part of our economy: they are important to our productivity, to jobs, to our long-term prosperity. So too is our tourism industry. The member spoke about the growth of the cruise part of the tourism sector, and how important it has been. I think it something to be celebrated and acknowledged.

But we know that in this area, in ports and shipping more generally, the operators of shipping have increasingly been making a priority of environmental sustainability. They have responded, in part, by changing their operations. We need to do much more and much better in this area; we need to consider how the operations of the cruise liners are affecting the quality of life, the safety and the health of local communities and residents.

Labor supports the protection of the health of harbourside communities. We certainly think that protection should be brought into line with international standards. I have met a number of times with the residents in my own community about the impact of cruise ships docked in White Bay in particular. Residents of the nearby Balmain peninsula live with these harmful sulfur emissions because of our environmental standards in Australia. They also live with an enormous amount of traffic noise and other inconveniences that come with the docking of the cruise ships at White Bay.

When White Bay was approved, the community was told at the time that there would be best practice environmental regulation. That has not occurred. Local residents deserve clean air and they deserve a response to their complaints—more than 300 complaints in a seven-month period. That is why I was pleased to hear the Liberal's announcement this week. But I also remind people that some time ago New South Wales Labor announced that it would support a range of new regulations around the emissions at the White Bay Cruise Terminal. New South Wales Labor proposed to bring the operation of White Bay into line with world's best practice, firstly by designating White Bay as an 'emissions control area' and reducing the maximum allowable sulfur content of the fuels used by cruise ships from the current 3.5 per cent to 0.1 per cent; secondly, by banning overnight berthing at the terminal, thirdly, by implementing independent noise monitoring and greater penalties for breaches; fourthly, by immediately investigating ways to implement ship-to-shore power, as recommended by the recent New South Wales upper house inquiry; and, lastly, by negotiating with the federal government to secure greater access for cruise ships to Garden Island.

Luke Foley, indeed, initiated the recent New South Wales upper house inquiry into the operations of the EPA, and was responsible for ensuring that White Bay was included as one of the terms of reference for that inquiry. The upper house inquiry recommended stronger environmental measures by the EPA at White Bay, saying that it 'failed to anticipate the magnitude of the impacts experienced by residents.'

New South Wales Labor's proposals are not radical. They are quite in line with what the member is proposing. They would simply bring New South Wales into line with regulations already in place in North America and in Europe.

The Australian cruise industry is a great asset and many operators have already made efforts to reduce emissions from ship engines. Many cruise operators are moving towards new
Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (19:08): I have the greatest respect for these cruise liners. They are incredibly efficient businesses. I have had the privilege of travelling with them. My understanding is that there are only two companies worldwide now that dominate the whole market.

When they came and presented here to the parliament last year, I remember talking to the Australasian CEO. He told me, down to practical measures, the cost drivers—what it cost them to feed a person on the ship with everything from lobsters to breakfast: the whole gambit. I do not wish to repeat the dollars here, but it was ridiculously low. The reason for this is because they do things in such a way that they have to be very efficient but at the same time they have big cost drivers.

To the member for Bowman: he understands, and has made the point today, that this is not a huge dollar saving, but it is something that is critically important. Along with the member for Sydney, he pointed out today that this company does have a social conscience. And I think it is worth actually fleshing that out a little, because with the disaster that has beset Vanuatu recently it has in fact been Carnival Australia that has done an enormous amount of work over there. The point I am going to make here is that by helping Vanuatu they have been seen for their social conscience and the social fabric of their business to do things which, perhaps, are not just for the bottom line in the single financial aspect but for the triple-bottom line. They source their bottled water and their coffee, now used throughout the whole P&O Pacific Cruise fleet, via Vanuatu. They replaced a lot of their furniture on board and made sure that it met Australian Custom's needs. They did these things not because they had to but because they wanted to.

The point that I want to highlight here today is that the world is moving very quickly. Expectations are moving quickly, whether it is in innovation, whether it is in digitisation or whether it is in the environment. And whether we are talking about something as iconic as the Great Barrier Reef or something that seems so small in comparison—as to the admissions for a short period of time while in port and the number of particles per million that are coming out of these ships—they are equally as important to the people who live around them.

I would appeal to the board and the management of these two great companies that do so much for the Australian economy—and have done so much for our region in employing people, in creating a wonderful atmosphere—to say you make the almost impossible seem possible when you are a passenger on these ships. You look at the logistics, you look at the entertainment and you think that you are capable of great things, and we should applaud you.

On this occasion, I join with the member for Bowman and the member for Sydney in saying please do not wait for governments—whether it be the New South Wales government or the federal government—to mandate and require something. Lead, get ahead of the game, get ahead of the curve and show that not only are what you providing on board lifelong technologies that reduce their environmental impact. But my friend Verity Firth, who will be the next member for Balmain, has been making the case very strongly that this process must be sped up and that the concerns and rights of residents need to be taken into account.

I congratulate Labor in New South Wales for bringing these matters to a head, and I will work with them to ensure that this issue is resolved for residents and for industry in the best, fairest and most practical way.
memories but also what you are doing is good in every aspect of your business. In doing so, your recognition as a wonderful corporate citizen that values your customers, as well as the environment and your bottom line will be recognised by us all.

I commend the member for Bowman for bringing this matter to the House's attention. By bringing it here today, I hope that this is all it takes for these two wonderful companies to take the extra step, go the extra mile and do something a little more—nothing more or less than has already been expected and that they are delivering in overseas ports.

Mr Danby (Melbourne Ports) (19:12): I commend the member for Bowman for presenting this motion. Cruise ships, of course, berth at Station Pier in Port Melbourne, increasingly, bringing with them tourist dollars to all of Melbourne. This is of course welcome. These ships also bring with them the unwelcome by-product of dangerous fumes. Something needs to be done, as the member for Sydney has said, and I thank both her and the member for Bowman for bringing this to the House, and particularly the member for Sydney for explaining how much parliamentary debate this has caused in the New South Wales parliament and how they have already gone into this matter.

The cruise ship industry is a growing phenomena in Australia, as Australia becomes a more and more popular destination for overseas tourists. The number of ships calling into Melbourne has risen in recent years. In 2012-13, a record 58 cruise ships docked at Port Melbourne. This record was pushed up to 66 stays the following season. The most recent season has projected the number of 77. It is clearly a growing business, which is good for business and tourism in Victoria. But it is not just cruise liners increasingly coming to Melbourne; more Victorians are living in the area.

There is an area near Port Melbourne called Beacon Cove. It used to be an industrial area but there are more and more high-rises in that area. The population is increasing quickly and a number of local industrial sites have been turned into apartments—some of them are very nice apartments. This mix of a large number of tourists and locals would be excellent if not for the unhealthy cocktail of gas and toxic heavy metals, that the member for Bowman has mentioned, that spews out from some of the ships' funnels close to the homes of my constituents.

It has been explained by my parliamentary colleagues that the fuel that these ships use literally comes from scrapping the bottom of a barrel. When crude oil is refined, various qualities of fuel are siphoned off, leaving, when all finished, sludge at the bottom so thick that it has to be heated to flow through pipes. This sludge has concentrated levels of sulfur and heavy metals that the refining process left behind. This sludge, commonly referred to as 'bunker oil' or 'bunker fuel', is the material that cruise ships use when they sail the oceans blue. Burning this sludge is bad enough for the environment but, concerning though that may be, it is the burning of this sludge in ports in Australia, which does not happen in other countries, that is particularly agitating all of us.

As others have pointed out, this fuel contains high levels of sulfur and, when spewed into the air, it forms sulfur dioxide and, when combined with moisture in the lungs, can form sulfuric acid. Of course, it is dangerous and in fact the Australian national standards criteria of air pollutants deems that over a one hour period should not be exposed to more than anything but 0.02 parts per million of sulfur dioxide. Over a one year period this average should be no more than 0.002 per million—put differently, that is 0.000002 per cent of the air we breathe,
but bunker fuel contains 3.5 per cent sulfur or 1.7 million times the maximum recommended amount over a one year period.

When sailing on the high seas spreading this poison from tall funnels does not affect the people on the decks below but when berthed in Port Melbourne, in Sydney and other places, this poison is being pumped into a fixed location. And why? As the member for Bowman and the member for Sydney pointed out, the ships keep their engines running so they can provide electricity for the continuation of passenger services that are needed on the ship. You would not consider the pollution which you might breathe as a car zoomed passed to be acceptable if you were standing inside a garage with a car engine running. That is difference between people living down wind of these ships when they berth in Port Melbourne and other ports in Australia.

In EU countries, in North America and the Caribbean they have all recognised this fact. They will not let cruise ships use bunker fuel within 100 miles of their coasts, but Australia does not have such legislation yet, and that means cruise ships continue to use this sludge as they chug into Port Melbourne and other places, even when they are berthed. Because these ships are barred from using this sludge close to American or European coasts, they usually have two tanks aboard—one diesel which burns cleaner and one for bunker fuel. But, as the member for Bowman pointed out, they will not flip the fuel over from one tank to the other because it is cheaper not to do it. Many of the ships that visit Australia also visit Europe. The International Maritime Organisation has mandated that from 2020 the current level of 3.5 per cent of sulfur content be reduced to a maximum of 0.05 percent. That is a good move.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:
That grievances be noted.

Budget

Ms KING (Ballarat) (19:17): In just two days time this parliament will rise for the final time before the 2015 budget. The next time we sit, the Treasurer will hand down his second budget and yet in health, as in so many areas, we are still dealing with the smoking wreckage of the Treasurer's first effort way back in May last year.

I have been an MP for some 14 years now and I cannot recall a time when a budget had been so disastrous, so rejected, that it continues to cast a shadow over the budget for the following year. The Prime Minister is now assuring everyone that this will be a very boring budget with none of the broken promises or shocking attacks on patients, pensioners and students that were the hallmark if this government's first budget.

The facts are that, as far as health is concerned, nothing has changed: the broken promises, the tax hikes, the attempted destruction of Medicare, public hospitals, Medicare locals, the cuts to drug and alcohol services that are about to be announced—if the government is to hold true to the 30 June deadline for all of these services across the country—and mental health, we have heard today, is in absolute crises. All of this will be in the so-called boring budget, because the sad thing is that, when it comes to health, this government does not seem to have learnt a thing from its debacle. So in this final week of the parliamentary sittings before the
2015 budget, it is worth going through the long and sorry tale of the damage it will continue to inflict as a result of the 2014 budget.

No issue has done more damage to the standing of the Abbott government and in destroying its legitimacy than its lack of a coherent health policy and then its attempts to severely undermine the architecture of healthcare reform and universal health care—measures it kept hidden from voters in the 2013 election campaign but then unveiled in the May budget. The public outrage and political fight over that budget has of course been dominated by the GP tax, and frankly I am astonished that the Abbott government is still determined to pursue this measure. We have had a $7 GP tax, a $20 GP tax, a $5 GP tax and now a GP tax via stealth through a long-term freeze on rebates. It has been called a co-payment, a price signal, a value signal and, for one day, a modest contribution.

The government is set, it appears, to pursue what is called direct billing, which in essence is bulk billing but will enable bulk billing and GP co-payments to co-exist, opening the door for patients to now pay for the government's $1.3 billion cut to GP services. Regardless of the name, regardless of the method, the one thing that has not changed is the government's aim, which is to fundamentally undermine universal health care, to reduce bulk billing, deter people from seeing a GP—in fact, its measures are predicated on a drop in GP visits—and make patients pay more. It is bad for patients, it is bad for doctors, it is bad for health care and it is ultimately bad for the budget. It is a self-defeating policy which tries to make a short-term addition to the budget at the cost of greater long-term health costs. It will simply turn people away from seeing a GP, sending many of them into emergency departments or in some cases causing some people not to seek early intervention, leading to even worse conditions and enforced hospitalisation. There is virtually no health expert in the country who thinks putting a barrier between patients and their GP is good health policy, and yet this is what the Abbott government has done and has held up as its principal goal when it comes to health care for almost a year now.

In hospitals the focus on the GP tax has taken some scrutiny away from other changes made to health in that budget which are every bit as damaging. Principal among these were the decisions to abandon Labor's agreements with the states to fund 50 per cent of growth in the efficient price of hospital based activity over the next decade—not just inflation or population growth—a move which has cut $57 billion out of the budget over the next decade. If you read the Liberal Party's policy document, that is something they committed to too. 'Fifty per cent of growth in the efficient price of hospital based activity' is there in blue and yellow, which I think were the colours of the policy document at the time. It is there, and that promise has been broken.

In March's Intergenerational report this was the single biggest contribution to the savings claimed by the Abbott government, and yet it is a complete fraud. The growth in hospital costs will not magically be lowered by declaring that from 2017 the federal government's share of hospital spending will grow each year in line with inflation and not by the six per cent or more that is the actual cost of running hospitals. This cut did not save the claimed $57 billion over the next 10 years; it just transferred that cost onto the states and territories.

At the same time, the government has also torn up the series of agreements years in the making and agreed by governments both state and federal, Labor and Liberal, to use that funding to improve patient care and make hospitals much more efficient. After decades of
hospital agreements simply being an excuse for cost shifting, this one rewarded activity and at
the most efficient price. It really was an agreement to try to stop the blame game that happens
in health funding.

The Grattan Institute, for example, has found the difference in cost of a common gall
bladder treatment varies by around $4,000 across hospitals and hip replacements by more than
$16,000. Taxpayers could save potentially more than $1 billion a year if all hospitals just met
the average costs of treating patients. That work has in essence, by the ripping up of the
agreement that requires the growth from the Commonwealth to be based on that price, been
tossed aside. State governments with their diminishing sources of income are now somehow
supposed to pick up the tab for the gap between inflation and hospital costs.

On the issue of Medicare Locals, one of the more distressing and frankly ridiculous
decisions of the government has been to get rid of the 61 Medicare Locals despite the Prime
Minister promising none of them will close. They are all meant to close on 30 June. All of
them are providing substantial mental health services. All of them are providing Indigenous
health services. All of them are providing other important training and other mechanisms
throughout the primary healthcare system in communities. Over 3,000 staff who do not know
if they have a job past 30 January are waiting while the government makes a decision on its
primary health networks—some 30 of those primary health networks—without having any
cue about how much money is to be committed to them or any of the programs that are
currently funded. What is going to happen to Headspace, which is overseen by Medicare
Locals, and what is going to happen to staff? They are cutting it very fine indeed.

Cuts to dental health have also had significant implications for dental waiting lists right
across the country. Another issue is: what is happening with the flexible funds? Some $197
million was cut out of the flexible funds in the budget. It applies to 11 of them. These flexible
funds fund our drug and alcohol services. That funding runs out on 30 June. There are
hundreds of drug and alcohol services across the country today which do not know if they
have funding beyond 30 June to provide drug and alcohol services—in country towns, in
regional cities, in major capital centres.

Important information services that provide help to people when we are trying to prevent
suicide, trying to provide online counselling services to people who have cancer, online
counselling services to people who are trying to break drug addiction—all of those services
are potentially going to have to give notice to their staff on 1 April. This government has
failed to provide any certainty to any of those services.

We saw today's debacle. I think it is unprecedented. Some 75 different mental health
organisations across the country, after having raised this problem with the government back in
February, now, at the 11th hour, still do not know if they will have any funding beyond 30
June. We have seen it happening everywhere. In preventative health, we saw the abolition
overnight of funding for the national preventative health partnership agreements, which were
funding programs to try and tackle obesity, to reduce smoking rates and to try to mitigate the
impact of excessive alcohol consumption. Programs for healthy communities, healthy kids,
healthy workplaces and funding for local governments, for schools and for a whole raft of
community organisations right across the country—all were aimed at prevention and their
funding was axed overnight.
If you go right through every element of the health sector, including the architecture for health reform that was put in place by the previous government, it is a litany of disaster. It has been a disaster for health policy across the country and for service delivery across the country. None of this will change in the 2015 budget that is shortly to be handed down. The government should be condemned for its health policies.

**Heritage Conservation**

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (19:28): Australia needs a national heritage and arts lottery. I raised this idea last week and, frankly, the response from the broader community—especially from those organisations involved in heritage restoration, conservation and maintenance, as well as from the arts community—has been overwhelmingly positive. Tasmania, like many places in Australia, is struggling to maintain and preserve its built, natural and Indigenous heritage.

My electorate of Lyons is home to many of Tasmania's most valuable heritage sites. I do not think there would be another electorate in the country that has, for example, five built World Heritage sites related to our convict history. I refer to the Woolmers Estate, the Brickendon Estate, Darlington on Maria Island, the coalmines on the Tasman Peninsula and—the site most recognisable to most Australians—Port Arthur. But many of these sites are on private land or are the responsibility of local councils or community groups that do not have access to the funds needed to care for these precious sites.

Tasmania's heritage, both built and natural, has huge, still-untapped tourism potential whilst needing to be maintained in its own right. My particular interest, though, in terms of this lottery in respect of heritage is our built heritage. Like many special art projects, this also falls outside the usual guidelines for government funding and it is difficult to know where to go to raise the money needed. I refer specifically to special projects. Jane Harrington is the Director of Conservation Infrastructure at the Port Arthur historic site, as well as President of Australia's World Heritage Reference Group. She has a deep knowledge not only of Tasmania's heritage needs but also of our national heritage needs. I was really interested to note Jane's thoughts around this idea that has been floated—really, for a conversation within the community—because at the end of the day the community will need to drive these sorts of things.

I am looking for input from both the Tasmanian community and at a national level of what people think about the idea of a national lottery for built heritage and the arts. My thoughts are that a lottery, established with the proper governance, could be the source of much-needed funds for heritage and the arts—for special projects; things that fall outside the guidelines. Indeed, Jane Harrington talked at length about the kinds of projects that might be possible given such an additional funding source. I think, for example, of Willow Court in the town of New Norfolk in the Derwent Valley in my own electorate. It is considered one of the very best examples of an asylum—a mental institution—in Australia. I mentioned Willow Court in my maiden speech. Many of the buildings there actually predate Port Arthur. It is an important historic site, but it is not on the National Heritage List. At the moment with some of the issues, particularly around the Williams' case, sourcing funding has been problematic, particularly from the Commonwealth. We are seeking to have that site registered on the National Heritage List at the moment. The Derwent Valley Council had done an amazing job
in starting this massive job, restoring and maintaining this huge site which has so much potential to be a fascinating visitor destination.

But there are minimal resources to deal with such projects on such a scale. There are many properties on private land. I think, for example, of the probation stations on the Tasman Peninsula. I think of the many historic buildings around the state of Tasmania. In terms of Georgian architecture, Tasmania has more registered properties than the rest of Australia combined. I think, for example, of the Deal Island Lighthouse that sits in Bass Strait. There was a wonderful article by Dallas Baker, who is the president of the Friends of Deal Island Wildcare, in The Australian a few weeks ago—I encourage everybody to source it—talking about the opportunity there is to see that part of Australia's maritime history restored and to be enjoyed by future generations. In many places across my state, for example, on the Tasman, there is an urgent need for a local heritage study to identify what there is. How can you protect that local heritage without an appropriate audit of what is at risk?

I am looking for a serious conversation about a national heritage and arts lottery, because I think it could be the answer for the funding of these projects that fall outside the current guidelines. I know that Nicholas Heyward, who is Managing Director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, is very supportive of the concept. But I stress and I emphasise that this would be in addition to the funding that is provided by the state and the Commonwealth. We are not looking to replace that, but we are looking for opportunities to enhance that funding. I think of the Derwent Valley Concert Band, a wonderful community band, which self funds irregularly to go overseas because of the challenges that they face. I think, for example, of the Festival of Golden Words—soon to be renamed the West Tamar Writers Festival—as the sort of project that could very well seek funding from such a lottery.

I have the in-principle support of the Minister for the Environment, Minister Hunt, and I thank him for that. I have also discussed the idea with Minister George Brandis, who has supported my efforts to start a community discussion on this matter.

Lottery money would not replace government heritage and arts money; it would be additional funding. I imagine it would be used for special projects. The United Kingdom has run successful lotteries for the arts, heritage and sports for more than 20 years. Western Australia also has its own lottery that supports mostly the film sector. We should also remember that the Sydney Opera House was funded through a lottery. Since 1994, the UK has raised on average 370 million pounds, $700 million, each year. Since that time, they have restored 17,000 properties and 900 parks and they have been done up 70 railway engines.

I particularly think about the heritage that this nation has in rail and the opportunity for tourism rail. In my home state, we think of the West Coast Wilderness Railway. My father was a life member of the Don River Railway. Whilst he was a GP, this was his biggest passion. His proudest moment was qualifying as a boiler welder so that he could drive steam engines. Only this week we were discussing with Mary Knowles, a councillor on the Northern Midlands Council, the idea of having running steam trains again. These are the sorts of things that capture people's imagination. Without the engines being done up to the necessary standard to run on public infrastructure, these things just will not happen. This comes at a cost, and so I am looking for a vehicle to support this idea. There are, of course, sensitive issues around gambling. I am not an expert in this area, but I trust that lotteries are not the
most addictive form of gambling. This is an important discussion, and there are issues here which I think can be resolved.

In summary, I want to hear the views and ideas of communities and organisations from around Australia and from within my state and my electorate as to whether or not they would support this idea. Built heritage is an important part of our nation's history. The arts form part of the fabric of what is the very complex tapestry that makes our nation such a great place. I call on all members in this place and all senators in the other place to have this conversation with their electorates. If there is broad support for this idea in the country then I would encourage people to support me in my endeavour to see a national heritage arts lottery established in Australia.

Abbott Government

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:37): I know you are very aware, Mr Deputy Speaker Goodenough, that International Talk Like a Pirate Day is not until Saturday, 19 September. I know it is a big day in your calendar. I know that the member for Lalor is very passionate about it and also that the member for Herbert is very passionate about it. I foreshadow it because, even though we are a long way from International Talk Like a Pirate Day, this speech is chock-a-block with maritime metaphors. So I foreshadow that in this grievance debate.

The Abbott government has been at the helm of the 'Australia' ship of state for over 18 months. In fact, we have crossed the equator. We have gone through the doldrums and we are well and truly into the second part of the journey towards an election. Obviously, this ship of state has collected more than its fair share of barnacles. Many have suggested that it has got quite a few leaks. We see that pretty much every other day in the newspapers. It is a bit of an understatement to say that the ship of state has leaks. A few weeks back—in fact, here in Canberra—we heard whisperings of a mutiny below decks. This is cause for concern, because, whilst it is only a maritime metaphor, it will impact on the Australian people, particularly the people in my electorate. Even though this ship is listing to port at an alarming angle, we need to work out what is best for the Australian people.

We are only 39 days away from the second budget of the Abbott government. We are waiting to see it announced in May. All of the people in my electorate, especially the most vulnerable, are concerned about what this budget will hold.

As passengers on this Australian ship of state they should be worried. We saw the last time around that we had a budget that was directed fairly and squarely at the poor and at those that are doing it tough in our society. It asked a little bit of the rich but asked most of the poorest people in our society. It was a very un-Australian budget. It was the first time in Australian history that we had an un-Australian budget. It was the first time in Australian history that we had a budget that attacked those most vulnerable in society.

Let's have a look at the economic state of affairs under Prime Minister Abbott. Obviously, things have not improved. The budget is in a much worse state now than when the coalition came to power. Amazingly, we have managed to increase the debt and deficit, and hit families at the same time. It takes a special kind of incompetence to do that as a government. This is a government that is all at sea. We have seen the cost of living rise. In fact, despite all of the promises made to the Australian people about power prices and removing the carbon price, power prices are 17 per cent higher in my electorate under the coalition government.
Business confidence—the real indicia, the engine room of the economy—is at rock bottom. Unemployment is the highest it has been in more than a decade. In fact, the last time unemployment was this high, the member for Warringah, Tony Abbott, was the employment minister. Sadly, in an economy that is growing, we only have half the jobs being created under the coalition government than when Labor was in office before the last election. So the employment situation is deteriorating, particularly amongst youth.

Let’s look at who has been the hardest hit. Sadly, it has been those in our society who are the most vulnerable. These are the people who have been left high and dry by this government: the pensioners, the dementia sufferers and carers, the homeless and victims of domestic violence. To have a government with a Minister for Women and a Minister for Indigenous Affairs—who is also the Prime Minister—supervising cuts to women’s shelters, cuts to community legal centres and cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal centres is shameful. I am sure anyone with a community that has significant numbers of Indigenous people would recognise this. Sadly, we also have seen this coalition government supervise attacks on families.

So, whilst the government is prone to hoisting up the big announcements, when we look closely at what they have announced there is nothing but smoke and mirrors basically. We hear the Prime Minister say, ‘We’re going up to the Northern Territory to spend a few days in an Indigenous community’—a few days in an air-conditioned tent—with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But he also supervised cuts of $530 million.

We see him working out in a gymnasium with the Defence Force people, but he delivered a pay rise that is effectively a body blow to members of our Defence Force. It is not as bad as the punch on the jaw that was actually a pay cut, but it is still a body blow to anyone that has a significant military presence in their electorate. Yesterday, we saw the coalition government announce they will continue funding for homelessness and domestic violence services, but it is too little, too late.

This is in the context of an Indigenous Affairs Minister and Prime Minister who actually said, ‘It is not the job of the taxpayer to subsidise lifestyle choices’, when talking about remote Indigenous Australians and their connection to land. This is a connection to land that might go back 20,000 or 30,000 or 40,000 years. This is a Prime Minister that takes a VIP jet to a party with a Liberal Party donor, but then he is able to lecture Indigenous communities that are doing it tough at the best of times, saying their connection to land is a ‘lifestyle choice’.

The government announced it would continue funding for homelessness and domestic violence services—

**Government members interjecting—**

**Mr PERRETT:** I notice the interjection from those opposite but I did quote the Prime Minister completely accurately.

So we see a cut to domestic violence and homelessness services. This funding should have been renewed months ago. These vital services were left hanging for months and the employees did not know whether the services would continue. Staff were being told that they probably would not have a job and many of them left yet they have mortgages to pay, children to feed. But this government would delay it and delay it. So now the government will let this
vital funding for services get underway yet they are still suffering from a $44-million cut imposed by the coalition government last year.

In February, I was taken aback to see the government announced the funding of the severe behaviour response teams to assist older people living with dementia. However, the coalition government, the Liberals and Nationals, had left dementia sufferers and their carers in limbo for eight months after axing the dementia supplement previously introduced by the Labor government, a Labor government that knows how to care for those most vulnerable.

There is no indication from the government that the next budget is going to be any less unfair than the last one. So batten down the hatches, here comes the next ship of horrible. The Abbott government has already made it quite clear in the next budget they have plans for: a GP tax; cuts to Medicare which will cost families more than $2 billion; hiking up the cost of medicines, which will cost families $1.3 billion; overseeing large increases in private health insurance premiums while ripping money out of public hospitals and Medicare and the states will suffer; $100,000 degrees at universities leaving school leavers unable to afford to obtain a chance to show their skills; pension cuts—in real terms over time the budget papers reveal this; and a petrol tax unannounced that will cost families more than $2.2 billion.

So the Prime Minister has cut and run from his 2013 election promises, those promises made to the Australian people before election night. The Abbott government's intergenerational report confirms that the GP tax, the $100,000 degrees, the cuts to education, the cuts to training and pensions are all in the offing. The intergenerational report contains eight pages about the future and 80 pages about the past and that really sums up the coalition government's current approach to policy.

The experts have decided to give this intergenerational report a wide berth. Instead of thinking up new fairer policy ideas, the coalition keep rehashing the same unfair policies that were in the last budget, not policies that were announced before the last election. This is a classic example of the coalition government being defined by what they are not. All they can do is talk about the past and Labor because they are defined by being 'not Labor' rather than having a core reason for existing. Sadly, as we saw in the last budget, they say in education terms that the best indication of future behaviour is past behaviour—so we will see this budget in 39 days—(Time expired)

Abbott Government

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (19:48): We have some major challenges in front of us as a parliament. I was in this chamber earlier when the member for Corangamite was talking about 'let's move beyond the rhetoric'. I was actually in your chair, Deputy Speaker, and I was sitting there listening and thinking to myself. I went back to my divorce. Whenever my children, my two girls, would come to me and ask a story about what actually happened when they were little and when I was married to my first wife, I said, 'There are three sides to the story: there is my side, there is your mother's side and somewhere in the middle there is the absolute truth. So what you have to do is speak to me, speak to your mother and then you can work out where it fits you.'

What we see in this place at the moment and what the member for Corangamite was talking about earlier was this pervading wall of political rhetoric at the moment. It just seems that politics is the only game in here, whereas I would like to move to the world of
parliament. To use a cricketing terminology, it just seems to be very 'hard hands' at the moment. There seems to be no nuance around the place. There seem to be no areas of grey on either side. I am not casting aspersions at those opposite. I was in opposition last term and I know exactly what they are doing. It is good fun sometimes. But at the end of the day, we have some very real challenges in front of us. The problem we have at the moment is that Labor will say we doubled the deficit when we came in. What we will say is that all the big decisions were put off till way beyond the forward estimates or outside the forward estimates so they been would not have to be taken care of. So, when we came to government, we had to have a look at the state of the books and we had to readjust so that we could get down to those sorts of things.

A friend of mine is a partner in a city legal firm in Brisbane. His statement is the one I love the most: 'Perception is neither right nor wrong; it just is.' I understand from the Labor Party's perspective why they are doing this. I understand from our perspective why we need to do this. What I would expect from both sides is, no matter which way you look at it, no matter which way you frame the debate, we have got some work to do. One of the things that we always threw at former Treasurer Wayne Swan was that he did not have an income problem; he had a spending problem.

What I try to say in my electorate of Herbert in Townsville is that I am a politician for five weeks of the term and the rest of the time I try to be a parliamentarian. I try to tell them exactly what the problems actually are. We do have a spending problem. We are spending much more than we are getting in. The member for Lalor is sitting across the chamber. She has run a school and she understands about budgets. We all understand the consequences of going over budget all the time. So we have to consider what we are trying to do in this space. As the member for Moreton, who was just in here, was saying, our first budget addressed a lot of this. What we have to do is curtail spending. Those of us who have been doorknocking or doing listening posts or community forums will realise that everyone out there knows that we have a problem, and everyone has a suggestion on how we can fix it. Most people believe that, if we could just make politicians work for nothing, we would be back in surplus before tomorrow. That is not going to happen and it is not right, either. Most people will tell you where we can take money from, but it does not affect them. Paul Keating, my political hero, always said that, in the race of life, you back self-interest, because at least you know it's trying.

I think that we have to move past this. This year, we have tried to present ourselves as the government of delivering. We went to the last election saying that we would axe the bad taxes, that we would stop the boats, that we would build the roads of the 21st century and that we would fix the budget mess. We have axed the bad taxes, with pensioners keeping the compensation for that. We have stopped the boats—we have had one boat. What we have done in this space is very, very good. We have announced over $150 billion worth of roads and infrastructure spending. As Treasurer Joe Hockey said in a speech last year, that is the equivalent of eight Snowy River schemes. And I think we ought to move past using historical analogies as well, because when I talk to my kids they do not know what the Snowy River scheme is.
But we do have the problem of fixing the budget. It is not just the GFC that put us here. All the hard work and reforms done by the Hawke and Keating governments and in the first two terms of the Howard government were based on productivity. Everything we did was based on productivity. I was not a member of the party before 2009-10, and I can say with great honesty that after 2001 the Howard government got lazy. The money was coming in and they did not have to do anything. So we spent the surplus. We still had lots of money, but John Howard had given away billions and billions of dollars in tax cuts. Labor came in and had a fantastic set of books, but, with family tax benefit part B, with the tax cuts, we had spending issues. We had the money in the bank at the time to handle it, but there was no sunset clause on it. Come the GFC, even the most pie-eyed person, even the blackest of black or the whitest of white, has to admit that mistakes were made. There were some serious mistakes made. The first round of stimulus we backed. The second round of stimulus we did not back. It was the second round of stimulus and all the issues that came out of it that really dug the hole deeper.

We have some very real issues to come through. So we have tried to be a government of delivery. We are talking about those things. Just after Joe Hockey was announced as Treasurer, he spoke at I think the Australia Institute and said that you have to do three things: you have to tell people what the problem is, you have to tell them what you are going to do about it and you have to take them with you on the journey.

I honestly thought that, because we had spent the previous three years in opposition talking about debt and deficit, the problems we have had with spending, the structural issues around the budget and the fact that we have this line of spending commitments coming at us—we are like a freight train, where we do not have the money—that that would be enough. But it turns out that we have to do more. Now, as well as being the people who deliver we have to be the people who discuss.

I love this thing, the Intergenerational report. I think it is a great document. It is a great conversation starter because it looks at the long-term trends and the issues that we are going to have to face. Everyone knows we have got an ageing population and everyone knows we will have issues around that. What we have to do is to find out what we are prepared to do about it. What am I prepared to do for my grandchildren?—although I have none at the moment. Am I prepared to make that sacrifice?

So we sat down and asked: how will Australia change over the next 40 years? How will governments budget over the next 40 years to prepare for the future? I think Joe Hockey was 100 per cent correct when he said that you have to ask the questions, even about the GST. Will we have a consumption tax? Will we have company tax? With capital being so mobile, there are some very real discussions to have.

In property there are the three p's. The three p's in property are position, position, position; that is all you have to worry about. With the Intergenerational report the three p's are population, participation and productivity. The key for me is productivity. It is what a succession of parliaments, since 2001, have let go. We have to see that everything we do is about participation and productivity, about doing more with less and being smarter in the way we do it.

We are a great country. We are a country that really prides itself on innovation. We have to back our innovators; we have to do the right thing there. We have the Intergenerational report and we must work that information into the taxation white paper and the federation white
paper. We have to have meaningful, productive, well-paid work. And, more than anything, we have to have opportunities for people. I have a 13-year-old son who really wants to be a marine biologist. His marks at the moment tell me he is going to be anything but a marine biologist, but if he applies himself I want him to be in a space where he is able to take up that opportunity.

My City of Townsville is an outward-looking community. We see opportunity and we want to go for it. We want to be introduced to people where we can close the sale. We want to have an organisation of parliaments—state and federal—that will back us as a community to do what we have to do. This is a great country and this is a great institution. What we have to do is to move past where we are at the moment. We have to have these conversations and we have to be better than we are.

We hear people saying that something is a budget bill when everything is a budget bill. Everyone knows it is a budget bill. The HECS legislation was not an education bill; HECS was a budget bill and it was passed because it was the right of the government to pass it at the time, because of what it meant to the government's budget.

I want this place to be a better place. I want us to be better people, and I want us to be better parliamentarians. I thank the House.

Budget

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (19:57): I rise tonight to speak on behalf of the electorate of Lalor—my community. My community has really felt the impact of the 2014 budget initiatives, as they are called, and the cuts announced in MYEFO—under the cover of Christmas—in December. I could rise tonight and flippantly talk about the surprises that the Australian public got in the 2014 budget, and the surprises that we are all waiting for with dread in the 2015 budget, but it is too late in the day to speak flippantly about these things.

We have heard many speakers across the 11 months since the last budget. There has been lots of talk about spending and revenue. I stand here proudly, as a Labor member of this parliament representing my community, to say that my community really like the Labor policy around multinational companies and taxation. They like the fact that that is a revenue initiative, because in my community all the talk around cutting spending means more miserable lives, to put it bluntly.

In Lalor we have over 20,000 families with children—the highest number of families in any electorate in Victoria—most of whom are on modest wages. The budget impact on these families is considerable. Whether it be the changes to the family tax benefit, cuts to child care, or the loss of the Schoolkids Bonus, the impacts are considerable and real.

The impacts on the education sector, which of course also impact directly on families, are also real. With 56 schools, the vast majority serving low-SES communities, the impact of the lack of commitment to Gonski funding is something the local principals regularly raise with me. But the cuts in the education space are broader than simply Gonski. The schools in my electorate are full of innovators who take their task seriously. Many have been involved in trials or projects established under the previous Labor government that were designed to drive school improvement. Many were involved in national partnership trials to drive school improvement. The schools in my community take student learning and the improvement of
student learning seriously. They applied themselves with rigour, with imagination and with innovation to that task and had great success.

So many of these projects have been cut or have had their funding reduced. The government has cut the national cadetship program and the education department's online diagnostics tools program. They have abolished the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood Joint Working Group to provide advice on students with disability. They have ended the development of the Australian baccalaureate, abolished the improving educational outcomes program, reduced funding to the child early learning and professional support program, reduced funding to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. The list goes on and on.

We talk here often in simple terms, trying to drive through those political points. This litany of woes for my community is what I am here to talk about tonight. It is because the people of my electorate, the people of my community, tell me, when I am home in their electorate, ‘Joanne, go up there. Get back up there to Canberra and tell them what these spending cuts mean.’

After an historic low university attendance rate that was lifted post the Bradley review into higher education, and with the low-SES and changes to youth allowance providing incentives previously rarely utilised by the young locals of Lalor, the fear of taking on a $100,000 debt in order to gain a university degree has the potential to push down the attendance rates once again and to leave young people with a huge debt at the start of their working lives.

This cruel budget has far-reaching, debilitating impacts on education at every level, from early childhood through to higher education and postgraduate study. It reflects a difference between those opposite and those on this side. Education for those of us on this side is about investing in our future. Those on the other side merely see it as a cost.

We also have impacts on pensioners, Newstart and employment services. It is not just education that is being impacted in my electorate. We have talked a lot about pensions today, and I have been on my feet twice on that issue, so I will move tonight onto health. When we turn to the health sector, my local community is basically frightened. With a current bulk-billing rate of 93 per cent in the community, the impact of a proposed GP co-payment or, as we saw in the media yesterday, the follow-on effect of the freezing of the GP Medicare rebates to current levels, will also be considerable. When the proposed co-payment was set at $7, this was estimated to be an $11 million impact, on our local economy—$11 million diverted from our local economy. This will be true if it is the $8 hidden cost that we are going to see now because, by stealth, this government insists that it will continue to pursue this.

The cuts to health funding have the potential to impact on services at the Werribee Mercy Hospital. This is a service, a hospital, that was designed to serve a population of 90,000 and is now serving a population of 200,000. This service is desperate for additional funds, not cuts, and cost-shifting to the state government is not going to see money rolling into the Mercy hospital to service those 200,000 people.

Today in the media we see services in the mental health field worried about their future after 30 June, when their current service agreements reach their end. This is a pattern from this government. There has been a pattern of leaving different sectors in limbo as they wait. It is debilitating for these organisations to be left in this space for such a long time. We are now
18 months into this government, and I will credit that it took some people opposite a while to adjust to being in government; I could argue that some of them still have not adjusted to being in government. But on the ground, in communities, the impact is extraordinary, and in mine it is the same. A small mental health art service might not seem important, but often this type of program not only is offering a service to someone with a mental illness but provides a few hours of respite for the family.

Wyndham City Council is set to lose funding for its Healthy Communities program. We heard the member for Ballarat and the shadow minister in here speaking about this earlier. In an area with high obesity and diabetes rates, this vital program will end soon, part of the $368 million in cuts to preventative programs that actually cut health costs in the future by keeping people well and out of hospitals for specialist surgeries.

The list goes on and on. Wyndham Legal Service is facing a $240,000 cut over the next two years. This is a service utilised by those experiencing family violence, young offenders and the newly arrived migrant communities—vital services, the lack of which will leave our local residents without representation when attending court. The government has also left peak organisations who advocate for the poor and oppressed, including Homelessness Australia, Financial Counselling Australia and National Shelter, with an uncertain future and with no certainty about ongoing funding. We heard the minister this week dismiss advocacy out of hand with a comment that this will not be about symbolism. Keeping the needs of our most vulnerable at the forefront of our minds in this place is critical work. If we cannot see the problems, if we do not see the impact, if we do not see how tough people are doing it, then how will we continue to address it? I would go so far as to say that it is my belief that this government has an aversion to data and to monitoring the conditions in our communities, because if you do not see it you cannot be held accountable for not acting on it.

We are about to leave this place for six weeks, and the next time we meet will be budget week. What can my community expect from this budget? Minister Pyne has told us that we are in for some surprises. The Treasurer has told us that it will be dull. The questions in my community are ringing in my ears. Will local schools face further cuts to the Gonski funding model—perhaps cuts to years 3 and 4 in addition to the current cuts to years 5 and 6? I have no doubt that there will be changes to higher education, as Minister Pyne has already indicated his surprise.

Having failed to secure agreement on changes to Newstart in the Senate, I have every reason to believe those on pensions, the disability pension and Newstart payments in Lalor and across the country will be targeted in this year's budget. I hope I am wrong, but I am already standing here knowing that the cuts in the health system are leaving my hospital unable to service a community of 200,000. I ask this government to please stop talking about spending and start having a look at revenue.

East West Link

Ms Henderson (Corangamite) (20:08): I rise in this evening's grievance debate to again call on state Labor and federal Labor to reverse their opposition to the East West Link and just build it.

Ms Ryan: Dead horse!
Ms HENDERSON: The member for Lalor has just said it is a dead horse, and that is an unbelievable statement from a member from the western suburbs of Melbourne. Stage 2 of the East West Link is a 12-kilometre section of road to which we have contributed $1.5 billion.

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Ms HENDERSON: And it is astonishing that the member for Lalor is continuing to interject on this project, which is so important for the people of Geelong, the people of western Melbourne and people even as far as Ballarat. Anyone who travels up the Princes Highway for work, for business or to see their family knows that the West Gate Bridge has reached choking point, and if the member for Lalor does not understand it she is simply not listening to her community. We now see the member for Lalor standing in stark contrast to the Leader of the Opposition and the former member for Lalor, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who both were committed to an East West Link crossing. The Daniel Andrews option—a frankly pathetic option—of a West Gate Distributor which only deals with some 5,000 trucks a day is really a joke.

So it was with great pride that I joined Andrew Katos, the member for South Barwon, and also representatives from Wettenhalls Trucking Group and Riordan Grain, to call on the people of Geelong and the people of Corangamite to get behind our campaign to 'Just Build It!' I am asking the people of Corangamite and the people of Geelong to go to the website buildthelink.com and sign our petition.

For many months, I have been campaigning for stage 2 of the western section; I have been campaigning to fast-track this section. It is so important for jobs for our local economy and for our future. And, combined with the $1.5 billion that has been committed to stage 1 and the $1.5 billion to stage 2 of East West Link, this project will deliver almost 7,000 jobs. This project will deliver the jobs that we desperately need in our great city.

It is astonishing that members opposite oppose this, including the member for Lalor—and I know how many people will be disappointed to hear of the member for Lalor's inflammatory claims, and also her very stark opposition to this project, because the people of western Melbourne, the people of Geelong and the people even of cities like Ballarat know how important it is to unclog Melbourne, because what the western section will do is deliver a second alternative to the West Gate Bridge.

As I mentioned, federal Labor members of parliament—including Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, and including the member for Corio—must reverse their position and back this project. The Andrews government's threats to tear up the contract or pay around $1 billion compensation are economically reckless and will cause Victoria significant economic damage. If the state government—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Ms HENDERSON: And I do ask if the member for Lalor, who is continually interjecting, could perhaps, as I did, show courtesy and allow me to speak in this grievance debate, because this is a grievance of monumental seriousness. The fact that federal Labor and state Labor are standing in the way of one of the biggest infrastructure projects for our state is an absolute disgrace. It means almost 7,000 jobs for the people of Geelong, for western Melbourne and for Ballarat; it will drive new investment into our region, and unclog the roadways for freight movers, for trucking companies and for new businesses. Congestion is
continuing to build and, frankly, the Andrews government has no solution whatsoever. So I say to state and federal Labor: look what you have said before; just build it.

The western section of East West Link will save peak-hour commuters an estimated three hours a week in travel time. Some 14,000 people from Geelong travel to Melbourne each day to work and, as anyone who travels along the Princess Highway knows, it is nothing short of a car park once you get to within about 10 or 15 kilometres of West Gate Bridge. The West Gate Bridge is heavily congested—it is carrying 200,000 vehicles a day—and the western section will provide capacity for around 100,000 vehicles a day. The western section alone will create around 3,000 jobs during construction—jobs that are so important for our region.

Shane Blakeborough of Journey Management, a wonderful transport training and logistics company based in my electorate, estimates that it will cost $1 million more a year for his company alone if the East West Link is not built. It is cheaper for him to run trucks between Geelong and Albury than between Geelong and Dandenong because of the stop-start, and he could get two trips to Dandenong a day if the East West Link was built.

What is so astonishing about this situation is that just six years ago, as I alluded to, the Leader of the Opposition threw his support behind an East West Link for Melbourne, along with the former member for Lalor, former Prime Minister Gillard. They said that 'doing nothing is not an option'. We are seeing already the consequences of Daniel Andrews' reckless conduct. I refer to an article entitled 'Can Australia be taken at its word?' in Infrastructure Investor, published on 6 March 2015:

The Victoria government appears to be considering legislation to avoid paying a private consortium compensation if a project is shelved.

This is going to do enormous damage. Daniel Andrews must reverse his position.

When I announced our local campaign on Sunday, Whettenhalls director Peter Mills said that the chaos on the West Gate Bridge for his company, he has estimated, is costing some $3 million a year in additional costs. We must address the big questions. We must address the big infrastructure challenges, and this is why the East West Link is so important.

I do note that, on 11 March, the Prime Minister wrote to Daniel Andrews and spoke about the risks to the state if this project is aborted, if the contracts are ripped up and if this retrospective legislation is passed. I want to put this on the record. Daniel Andrews, in 2013, said, 'Sovereign risk is sovereign risk. A contract is a contract.' Well, Daniel Andrews went to the election saying this was not worth the paper it was written on. He was wrong. He was absolutely wrong. This is a binding contract. He has previously acknowledged the importance of not breaking a binding contract. Chris Bowen, the shadow Treasurer at the time, back in 2013, said:

… Bill Shorten and I are of one mind—Labor honours contracts entered into by previous governments, even if we don't like them. For issues of sovereign risk, Labor honours contracts when in office.

So why don't the Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite have the courage of their convictions to stand up and honour this contract; have the courage to say to Daniel Andrews, 'Your reckless conduct is causing our state enormous damage'?

The western section of East West Link to which we have committed a massive $1.5 billion is so important. Each and every day, I am fighting for jobs for Corangamite and for our great region, and I will continue to fight for this. So I say: build the link. Build the link that is so
incredibly important for our region, for our future, for families, for new business investment. And I say to the Leader of the Opposition: go back and look at what you said six years ago. Go and look at the damage that Daniel Andrews is doing to our state. Reverse your position and build the link. Thank you very much.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 20:18
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Corporate Credit Cards
(Question No. 451)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 22 September 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.

Mr Abbott: I am advised that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Prime Minister is advised by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that:
From September 2013 to September 2014, credit cards were held by approximately 27% of the Department's staff to use for legitimate business needs. Credit cards are issued to staff for legitimate business purposes and within guidelines that have existed under successive governments. This longstanding practice and the guidelines covering issuance of credit cards to staff is a matter for the Secretary.

Cadbury Factory Upgrade
(Question No. 678)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 4 December 2014:
Has the Government received a business case for the Cadbury factory upgrade.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Yes.