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SITTING DAYS—2020

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

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

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

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

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

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<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wells, Ms Anika Shay</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Clark, TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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## Members of the House of Representatives

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

### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

- Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Buchholz MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Kevin Hogan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Nola Marino MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jane Hume</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Zed Seselja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
<td>The Hon Trevor Evans MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>The Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon David Coleman MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Wood MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships</td>
<td>The Hon Steve Irons MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</td>
<td>The Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Personnel</td>
<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Melissa Price MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families and Social Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Government Services</td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</td>
<td>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</td>
<td>The Hon Luke Howarth MP</td>
</tr>
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Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the ‘Minister’ column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.
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<th>Shadow Minister</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel</td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Mr Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Government Services</strong></td>
<td>Ms Emma McBride MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education and Training</td>
<td>Mr Graham Perrett MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Skills</td>
<td>Ms Ged Kearney MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Mr Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Butler MP</td>
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<td><strong>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</strong></td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Constitutional Reform</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Republic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Ms Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Mr Tim Watts MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator Katy Gallagher</td>
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<td>Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Accountability</td>
<td>Senator Kimberley Kitching</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
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<td>Sensor Patrick Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Reconciliation</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Aged Care</strong></td>
<td>Ms Ged Kearney MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Employment and Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Science</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business</strong></td>
<td>Ms Clare O'Neil MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Technology and the Future of Work</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Small and Family Business</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
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<td>The Hon. Jason Clare MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for External Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water</td>
<td>Ms Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Mr Josh Wilson MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ms Madeleine King MP</td>
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DOCUMENTS—
The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (2018 Measures No. 2) Bill 2019
Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment.

Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Amendment (Improving Safety) Bill 2019
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House, Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans’ Affairs) (12:02): I move:
That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to.

The House divided. [12:07]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 72
Noes ...................... 68
Majority ............... 4

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wood, JP

NYES
Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
AYES

Young, T

Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, FE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Aye: Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hussey, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

National Integrity Commission Bill 2018 (No. 2)

Consideration of Senate Message

Message received from the Senate returning the bill and acquainting the House that:

(a) the Senate passed the Australian Greens' National Integrity Commission Bill 2018 (No. 2) on 9 September 2019 to establish a federal corruption watchdog with broad remit to investigate allegations of corruption and misconduct, and to ensure strong, independent oversight of the actions of parliamentarians; and

(b) public consultation on the Commonwealth Integrity Commission model proposed by the Government ended more than one year ago, but the Government has yet to introduce legislation to establish an integrity commission.

(2) That the Senate calls on the Federal Government to bring on the Australian Greens' National Integrity Commission Bill 2018 (No. 2) in the House of Representatives for a vote in the February 2020 sittings.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House, Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (12:10): I move:

That consideration of the message be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

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

Mr Burke: It goes to a call to the member who's first risen. On these motions from the Senate, the rule has a particular impact. Whoever's responsible for the motion determines whether or not we end up with this being placed in private member's business, which will allow speeches to be given or whether it goes onto government business and no-one will ever be allowed to speak on the bill. In this case, there was someone on their feet well in advance of the minister, and it makes a significant difference.
The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business has made his point. I am going to try and find the page in the Practice, because I have had cause to look at this before. What I might do is rule and, then, if you need me to find the page, we'll have a bit of a history lesson. But it's certainly here. This arose a number of times in the last parliament, thanks to the Manager of Opposition Business, I have to say. That is right. I didn't see the member for Melbourne jump. But what Practice makes clear is, even with private members' motions that have come from the Senate, there is ample precedent where a minister on behalf other government has chosen to take carriage of it and on those occasions they've been given precedence on the call. I can find the page. That's certainly very clear in Practice. And where a duty minister—in doing that, what the government is doing is saying they are going to take it as government business. As for your comment about something becoming government business and it never seeing the light of day, that's a comment you make. But it's up to the government, obviously, how it structures its agenda.

I have taken the point of order. I apologise to the Leader of the Greens, but in this instance, even if he had—there's no need for him to be on his feet, unless he's stretching his legs or something. There is no need for you to be on your feet, because I'm not going to interrupt myself—certainly not this early in the day! Even if he had jumped first, which I accept he did, because of what's clear in Practice, I would have called the duty minister, who, by just jumping, is indicating they wish to take it as government business.

Where we are is the minister has almost moved—I'm going to get him to move it again, because I need to state the question before anything is before the House. I'm giving the minister the call.

Mr CHESTER: I move:

That consideration of the message be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to. The leader of the Greens.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (12:13): I move:

That all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: 'the message be considered immediately'.

This is our chance to have a federal ICAC—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Greens will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House, Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (12:18): I move:

That the question be put.

The SPEAKER: The minister has moved that the question be put.

For the information of members, in terms of that ruling I made, because the Manager of Opposition Business did raise a point of order, in Practice, it says with respect to this circumstance:

Speakers have also taken the view that in respect of business such as consideration of Senate messages, the call should, in the first instance, be given to the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary expected to have responsibility for the matter.

The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [12:18]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

| Ayes ...................... 72 |
| Noes ...................... 70 |
| Majority ............... 2 |

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Flett, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
## AYES

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

## NOES

| Albanese, AN | Aly, A |
| Bandt, AP | Bowen, CE |
| Burke, AS | Burney, LJ |
| Burns, J | Byrne, AM |
| Butler, TM | Champion, ND |
| Chalmers, JE | Claydon, SC |
| Clare, JD | Collins, JM |
| Coker, EA | Dick, MD |
| Conroy, PM | Elliot, MJ |
| Dreyfus, MA | Freelander, MR |
| Geoghegan, S | Giles, AJ |
| Gorman, P | Gosling, LJ |
| Haines, H | Hayes, CP |
| Husic, EN | Jones, SP |
| Katter, RC | Kearney, G |
| Kelly, MJ | Keogh, MJ |
| Khalil, P | King, CF |
| King, MMH | Leigh, AK |
| Marles, RD | McBride, EM |
| Mitchell, BK | Malino, D |
| Murphy, PJ | Neumann, SK |
| O’Connor, BPJ | O’Neil, CE |
| Owens, JA | Payne, AE |
| Perrett, GD | Phillips, FE |
| Plibersek, T | Rishworth, AL |
| Rowland, MA | Ryan, JC (teller) |
| Sharkie, RCC | Shorten, WR |
| Smith, DPB | Snowdon, WE |
| Stanley, AM (teller) | Steggall, Z |
| Swanson, MJ | Templeman, SR |
| Thistlethwaite, MJ | Thwaites, KL |
| Vannikoumou, M | Watts, TG |
| Wells, AS | Wilkie, AD |
| Wilson, JH | Zappia, A |

Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER (12:21):** The question now is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to.

The House divided. [12:21]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
Tuesday, 11 February 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes ......................</th>
<th>72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noes ......................</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority..................</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AYES**

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Passin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wood, JP
Young, T

**NOES**

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfias, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Husic, EN
Katter, RC
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WQ
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tchantch, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliott, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neill, CE
Payne, AE
Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:23): In my earlier contribution to this debate on the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019, I gave a detailed outline of, in particular, chapter 7 of the Corporations Law, which regulates the licensing of financial advisers. It was important that I go through that background, because it sets the context for the observations I'm about to make. Labor supports the amendment, but the amendment is necessary only because of the utter shambles this government finds itself in.

The professional standards for financial advisers reforms received bipartisan support in this place back in 2017. The legislation followed a joint parliamentary inquiry into professional standards in the industry—one that, once again, had unanimous support from all members of the committee. The intent of the reforms was to ensure that all professionals who provided personal financial advice, whether they be stockbrokers, insurance advisers or financial planners, would meet the same sort of professional standards expected of other professions, whether they be an accountant, a lawyer, a medical practitioner or any of the other recognised professions.

The standards, which are set out by the independent Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority, hereafter FASEA, include requirements for advisers to meet education standards, pass a professional exam, to have professional experience and to meet continuing professional development requirements. These are all reasonable requirements. Most importantly, they require financial advisers to be able to abide by a clear, professional code of ethics that ensures that they act in the best interests of their customers. I'm sure that most financial advisers already do abide by a very high ethical standard, but it is quite clear from the findings of the Hayne royal commission that there have been far too many instances of advisers failing to meet that benchmark. So these reforms were sensible and reasonable, and, to be frank, I was surprised to see the Liberal National government support the regulations back in 2015.

The original legislation included generous transition arrangements for existing advisers. I want to go through them, because we're amending those already very, very generous transitional arrangements. Under the original 2015 announcement, existing financial advisers would have until January 2021—nearly four years after the passage of the original legislation—to pass a professional exam. I repeat that: it was 2015 when they were put on notice and 2017 when it was enacted, so for nearly four years they were put on notice that they would have to pass a professional exam. And, nearly seven years after the passage of the legislation, they would have the opportunity to update their professional educational qualifications to meet the new requirements.

At the risk of being repetitious, I also want to point out that this is 11 years since the Ripoll committee made its original recommendations—a report that I know you're very familiar with, Mr Speaker. This is eight years since the Future of Financial Advice reforms, which were first ushered in by the member for McMahon and then the member for Maribyrnong, against full-throated opposition from those opposite. It's five years since the announcement, yet still they could not get it right—even, at the harshest, five years, at the most generous, 11 years. You've had 11 years to get that right, and you still couldn't get that right. The horror show has unfolded since then under the leadership revolving door and the cavalcade of Liberal ministers, treasurers and assistant treasurers—the latest one, sitting across the table at the moment, has apparently made these timelines unreasonable.

It gets worse: the independent body, established by the former minister for financial services, has been through three different CEOs in its first 18 months. Perhaps that is a sign of confidence in the overseeing minister! The consultation with the industry itself has been almost entirely absent for the first of those 18 months. Standards

Question agreed to.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019
Second Reading
were issued mere days before they were due to come into effect, and the FASEA exam, as the minister pointed out in his second reading speech, wasn't in a location which was going to make it even possible for a large swathe of financial advisers to be able to attend and sit that exam, let alone pass it. This is monumental incompetence, incompetence on an Olympic scale.

So, yes, we will support the legislation. But in doing so, we have to point out incompetence and mistake, incompetence and mistake, minister after minister after minister, which has visited this great uncertainty upon an industry which is already going through considerable upheaval. We will support the legislation. I foreshadowed in this second reading speech that I’ll have a substantive amendment to make, which will go to the substance of these laws, but I urge all honourable members of this place to support the second reading amendment as well as the bill before the House. I move:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House criticises the Government and the responsible Ministers for their mishandling of and delays to the reforms to professional standards for financial advisers, resulting in significant uncertainty for both members of the industry and consumers”.

The SPEAKER: Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Bowen: It certainly is.

The SPEAKER: Can you actually say, 'I second the motion'?

Mr Bowen: I don't hesitate to say, 'I second the motion.'

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

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:30): We certainly do oppose this amendment that's been proposed by the opposition. There are three schedules here. We're talking about changes to testamentary trusts, for which I think there's general agreement. There's a second schedule here—where we're talking about extensions of time for the profession to meet their obligations under continuing professional development—and then a third minor schedule.

But what the opposition is trying to do, of course, is to remove what is currently an exemption under conflicted remuneration. They are interests in an MIS that are proposed to be quoted on a prescribed financial market or a listed investment company. What we believe on this side of the chamber is that that needs to be reviewed. It's completely appropriate that we go out and ask industry for their views in this. This public consultation is absolutely vital to actually understand the mood and the temperature of the market. Deciding to ignore or to overrule these important steps is to, basically, assume—as an opposition—that that's going to be the will of the sector. We need to be listening to experts wherever we can.

This four-week consultation is not a long period. It's targeted, it's going to be well delivered and it looks at the merits of the current stamping-fee exemption, which does exist. This isn't the only element of financial practice where there is potential conflicted interest, but it needs to be explored fully within the sector. It allows us to make—as a government—an informed decision on whether to retain, to remove or to simply modify the current arrangements. It's not a long period of time, and that's why we oppose these amendments put forward by the opposition today.

Back to the financial sector themselves—this has been a long and protracted battle for both sides of parliament. There are no points in just cheap shots at each other. Fundamentally, the process started well before the Ripoll review. It's one that's been rolled out through a large profession. They recognise the need for these changes to be made. They've asked for more time—for very good reason. In many cases, these FASEA exams weren't even ready in time. They weren't available to regional areas. So it's important that that is provided and there's adequate time. The FASEA exam having the additional year—to 1 January 2022—is reasonable, and I think the overall requirements for the other specific, specialist areas through to 2026 is a significant period of time now for the profession to adapt and join. We want to see that that happens.

There's some concern from the sector that they've been pilloried and criticised unfairly, and I think that's not an unreasonable perception in many cases. The profession has been let down by not always complete and adequate representation by their bodies. They haven't worked together to make sure that the views of the sector were put forward early, so now we're mounting a rearward move to give the financial-planning sector a chance to express their say. These extra two years absolutely do that.

If you can get a PhD between now and 2026, you can meet your professional-development obligations over that time, no matter how busy your professional requirements are. I speak as a medical practitioner who went through
exactly the same process with the instigation of AHPRA nearly 10 years ago. Every medical practitioner had to go through this step. It can be painful and difficult, and medical specialists have tailored requirements. One of the great concerns from the financial-planning sector is that no matter who you are, you have to do all of the modules, even if you're not actually working in those specific areas. Over time I do wonder whether there'll be additional specialisation within the sector, but that time is not yet. There are simply not enough of the sector that have demonstrated these fundamental seven levels of training, and that needs to occur. There's general agreement that that has to happen, but, over time, I think there is a place for more specialisation. Most registration boards around the world can demonstrate that, and I hope that FASEA heads in that direction.

In conclusion, there have been great concerns particularly for people in mid-career and particularly for those who made substantial investments to buy practices in terms of the impact that this legislation would have. It's the greater good; it has to occur. But those people can say, 'The coalition was listening.' In the last federal election, I committed every Sunday to meeting with financial planners one by one. For many weeks they were extremely concerned about something other than a coalition victory. So they can say that this legislation is in the right hands of the right party and being delivered at the right time.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (12:35): Periodically in this House, we have a serious conversation about who's standing up for consumers and who's standing up for vested interests. We had that conversation in 2012 when Labor moved the future of financial advice reforms, opposed by the coalition. As the Hayne royal commission highlighted:

There must be recognition that conflicts of interests and conflicts between duty and interest should be eliminated rather than 'managed' …

Yet, when it came to office, the coalition set about winding back the future of financial advice reforms, ensuring that no longer did a best-interest duty need to be followed. It would seem to be fundamental that a financial advisor needs to act in the best interests of their client, yet the coalition somehow thought that that ought not be the law of the land. Part of this wind back involved the creation of a loophole affecting units or shares in listed investment trusts and listed investment companies. That has led to a significant increase in the market, with the LIC and LIT market doubling in size to $45 billion since 2015.

ASIC has looked at the performance of these financial vehicles and the picture is not a pretty one. Over the LICs and LITs issued since 2015, they find 42 issued with a stamping fee, or a selling fee, and six without a stamping fee. Overall, their return since inception is minus 6.1 per cent. The returns of those with a stamping fee averaged minus 7.3 per cent, and without a stamping fee, three per cent. This compares to significantly larger returns in the stock market as a whole. The expenses of LICs and LITs are very high and the returns to those who purchase them are very low, but the stamping fees have ensured that many of those advising or broking have garnered significant commissions. These include, according to news reports, advisers and brokers at National Australia Bank, Taylor Collison, Morgans Financial, Crestone Wealth Management, Evans Dixon, Ord Minnett, Bell Potter Securities, Morgan Stanley and Patersons Securities.

A recent survey by Morningstar business surveyed 6,740 experts, advisers and non-advisers, and asked if they thought stamping fees were appropriate. Some of the comments from advisers included the following: 'Absolutely unethical. No justification for ever accepting such fees.' Another stated: 'It is a clear sales commission to sell a product to clients. I have seen it in operation in many businesses, where they target the selling of these products purely to generate revenue.' Another said, 'We're a 100 per cent fee-for-service firm,' and another said, 'It is simply a conflict of interest.' Of the advisers in the survey, only 17 per cent said they accepted stamping fees, while 74 per cent said no and nine per cent said it depended. When asked whether the ban on receiving stamping fees should extend to stockbrokers, more than 70 per cent said that they believed stamping fees should be banned completely. One of the strongest advocates on this has been Christopher Joyce, who has written repeatedly and was quoted in the Australian Financial Review about the importance of getting rid of this exemption. He writes:

I believe any selling fees above say 0.25% are large enough to conflict financial advisers, especially when this selling fee is added to the other transaction fees, including arranger fees and manager fees, which can easily push it above 1%.

I commend the member for Whitlam, who has worked hard on this to get answers out of a government which has, at every turn, seemed to want to defend vested interests rather than consumers and which is, even now, pushing back against a sensible proposal to close a loophole that allows selling fees to accompany a product which has been systematically losing money for investors.

Time is of the essence. According to one article, there are another 20 to 30 listed investment trusts purportedly in the pipeline. There is a risk that this continuation of conflicted advice could lead to more investors finding themselves in these underperforming products. This is an exemption which should not have been put in place. We now know that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission privately advised the government that it was, 'hard to justify,' according to freedom of information requests published by the Financial Review and
discussed by John Kehoe and Aleks Vickovich. It appears that the coalition ignored the regulator and ignored warnings of detriment to consumers if these products were allowed to be sold.

CHOICE has warned against this product, linking the sale of this product to the findings of the royal commission. The CHOICE chief executive, Alan Kirkland, said:

The final report of the royal commission said that exceptions to the ban on conflicted remuneration should be eliminated, and this evidence demonstrates how important it will be to do just that when the government reviews the quality of financial advice in two years' time.

As the member for Whitlam has pointed out, the coalition has been on the go-slow when it comes to implementing the recommendations of the Hayne royal commission. And yet again we see, in the case of these stamping fees, the coalition dragging their heels rather than immediately going out and doing what is the right thing by investors. I commend the work of the member for Whitlam in standing up for consumers and standing up for investors against those who are ripping off the small end of town.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:42): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019 today because I think it is a significant piece of legislation that needs thorough debate, particularly on the way the government has handled this piece of legislation. I want to add my voice to the words of the member for Whitlam and the member for Fenner in how they have articulated Labor's position.

From time to time in this chamber we hear about how the coalition are allegedly better economic and financial managers and that they sometimes appear to be prudent and hold a high attention to detail when it comes to the nation's budget—and all the other talking points that we hear from members of the government—but we know that this simply isn't the case. I want to highlight that directly in this bill that we are debating today. This bill is the government introducing legislation to clean up their own mess.

As we've heard from the shadow minister and the assistant shadow minister, while Labor generally supports the measures contained in this bill, the bill really only emphasises the poor record of those opposite when it comes to managing financial affairs and, indeed, making rushed and, in my opinion, ill-informed decisions that impact on the economy and local businesses. I want to highlight that in terms of a number of local businesses and operators that have contacted me in relation to the specifics of this bill. I'm confident that just about every member of parliament would have had—I hope they've had—the same conversations and the same representations from the financial sector and financial service providers.

To truly grasp the stuff-up by this government in having to introduce this bill, it's worth considering some other facts when it comes to what else they've stuffed up with the economy. I want to talk about private investment, which has shrunk by 20 per cent since the government changed hands—and, by another measure, that hasn't been this weak in the three decades since the recession of the early 1990s.

Private business investment has continued to fall in the most recent quarter and over the past year. Ongoing weakness in business confidence and recent downgrades to the capital expenditure outlook also have economists expecting that this poor performance will continue. Examples of this that I want to relate to the bill today include the latest Deloitte Access Economics Business Outlook. The report found that retail has endured its deepest downturn since 1990, that construction is shrinking at its fastest rate since 1999 and that farmers and finance have had their worst period since the GFC. But in relation to the bill and the impact that this potentially has had on local small businesses, when it comes to the facts and the economy the record is pretty clear. GDP and wages growth have fallen well below budget forecasts. The unemployment rate has increased above what the government said it would and economic growth has deteriorated to its slowest pace since the GFC, and we know that net debt has skyrocketed to the new record highs.

So, what brings us to this bill here today? I want to focus my remarks today particularly on schedule 2 of the bill. I'm sure most members on this side of the House—and I would hope all members of the House—have had firsthand experience of exactly how this sort of bungling from the government has had a direct impact on small businesses, particularly in my local community. Schedule 2 is an unfortunate but necessary amendment following the government's mishandling of the reforms to the professional standards for financial advisers. These reforms were passed, as we know, with bipartisan support in 2017 and set new standards for financial advisers which were to come into effect from 1 January 2019. These new standards are particularly important considering the misconduct identified in the financial advice sector by the banking royal commission. However, the government's independent standard-setting body, the Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority, was extremely slow to set standards. As a result, financial advisers have been placed in the difficult position of being asked to comply with standards and complete exams with very short notice. The government's decision to defer the educational exam requirements is absolutely appropriate given their failures.
I want to take the time to incorporate into my speech today correspondence that I've received from a local financial planner, who introduced himself to me by saying:

I provide advice and service to a range of clients across the age and wealth spectrum, from a lady in her 60s who has been on the Disability Support Pension for many years, to some young clients with young children that are looking at options regarding renovating their current house or moving, to clients that have either retired or about to retire and who in some cases are looking at applying for the age pension through to clients that are multi-millionaires.

This financial planner was quick to point out that he and many other financial advisers had been placed in a difficult position because of the mishandling of this very piece of legislation we are debating today. In his correspondence to me he went on to say:

The Code of Ethics, as it currently stands, needs to be implemented on 1 January 2020, some 4½ weeks away—

This was at the end of last year—

However, the body implementing the Code, the Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority, or FASEA, has not yet provided its final framework, despite the fact that some of the obligations listed in their most recent draft guidance will have a profound impact on myself and a number of my clients. My concern is that due to the wording of the guidance almost every financial planner in the country will be in breach of the Code of Ethics on 1 January.

In this debate today, and as we are debating an important piece of legislation, we've had limited contributions from the members of the government, and at not one stage has anyone had the guts to get up and say: 'We got it wrong. We apologise for the uncertainty. We apologise for the concern.' It is tough out there in the economic climate in this nation. We know that small business is struggling. We know that times are tough. The fact that financial planners have been put into this position is regrettable, and I really wish the government would actually admit that they've stuffed this up and now we are cleaning up what is a pretty large mess by the government's own handling.

The financial planner went on to say:

It would be both wise and practical for new legislation to be applied to all parties providing financial advice (self-employed financial advisors and financial institutions and the banks); there should be a 6 to 12 month transition and implementation period; and the absurd anomalies in the current proposed changes be reviewed with consultation with the practitioners it directly affects.

The hundreds, if not thousands, of emails like this received by government members show just how poorly thought out this process has been.

In researching this speech today I thought that surely there must have been some mistake and the government could not have dropped the ball like they have. But, as we heard from the shadow minister, sadly, we were both wrong. In a media release on 11 October 2019, the Treasurer said:

A Code of Ethics will be applied by law from 1 January 2020, and financial advisers will be expected to meet the code's high ethical standards.

The Treasurer also thanked the professional associations and acknowledged the considerable amount of time and resources taken towards implementing code monitoring by the end of the year. I'm sure that these associations have done their best in a timely manner to help support the industry, but, as we've seen from correspondence from my local residents, the government certainly has not. At this current juncture the government really more resembles *The Hunger Games* movie. They are ripping each other apart and are more worried about their own jobs rather than the impact that this is having on small businesses across Australia.

Their independent standard-setting body, the Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority, has been under-resourced, slow to consult and slower yet to release standards and set exams. These failures have placed impossible pressures on financial advisers to comply with the new standards. But rather than take the proper time needed to get this right, ASIC said:

… the Government announced it will accelerate the establishment of a new disciplinary system and single disciplinary body for financial advisers …

This will replace the role of monitoring bodies that were due to be established by industry associations under the professional standard reforms for financial advisers. Then, just over a month later, after realising the magnitude of this problem and this stuff-up, a follow-up media release on the ASIC website stated:

As announced on 14 November 2019, ASIC has taken action to provide certainty to Australian financial services (AFS) licensees that they will not be in breach of the law because their financial advisers were not able to register with an ASIC-approved compliance scheme by 1 January 2020, as originally required.

ASIC's action follows a Government announcement that it would accelerate the establishment of a single disciplinary body for financial advisers and the withdrawal of applications for ASIC approval of a compliance scheme.
You can clearly see the confusion and chaos in this chamber on most days, as we witnessed yesterday, and the back-and-forth that the government has had with businesses and local residents who have contacted me. New dates, old dates, compliance dates, accelerating, decelerating—what a mess. Yet, as I said in my opening remarks, these are the same members of parliament who form government in this country and who say: 'Trust us. We've got the right settings for the economy.' Those opposite come in here and trumpet themselves as the party of stable government. They are either falling apart on the floor of parliament or completely causing disruption and chaos in the financial sector.

They are not content with letting the economy just grind to a halt. They are now adding barriers and confusing red tape for those people, as the Prime Minister so kindly says, who have a go. But not when you look at the mess of legislation that they are bringing in. They are not having a go and they are not getting a go under this government. There is chaos and confusion in this sector. Rather than confuse businesses, they should be setting clear, transparent and considered time lines that will not throw more uncertainty into the economy than what the government has already created.

I should also touch on the amendments proposed by Labor for this bill. As we heard from the shadow minister, these amendments would remove the current legislative exemption from conflicted remuneration rules for financial advisers in relation to selling of units or shares in listed investment trusts and listed investment companies. So let's be very clear on why this is the case. We know that, since 2015, the market has doubled in size to $45 billion. This is despite regular underperformance, high management fees and the delisting of two LITs and LICs due to fraud in the last four years. ASIC has conducted research on the performance of the 48 LICs and LITs listed since 2015. They've produced negative returns on average, with worse returns for those entities that pay higher commissions. So it's clear that growth in this market has been driven by a legislative exemption to conflicted remuneration rules, created by the coalition in 2014, where financial advisers can receive stamping fees, a form of commission, when they sell LITs and LICs to their clients.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr DICK: As I take the interjection from the shadow minister—do not get me started on pay day lending. If you get me started on that, I will not finish, and we will have extension of time after extension of time. And I'm glad that the relevant minister is at the table because, while he hasn't overseen this specific mess or this botched piece of legislation, he has taken five years to actually deliver reforms.

Nonetheless, it's clear that the evidence has stacked up to show that this is not a government which makes decisions in the best interests of business. Despite all the rhetoric and all the claims of looking after small business, this legislation proves that it's a mess. You cannot trust the coalition to look after the financial sector, whether it be because of its slow action on the banking royal commission or because of its inaction on pay day lending and loan sharks in this country. When it comes to financial investors and planners, you cannot trust this government. This government's only concern is doing as little as possible. The bill today shows that: it has to clean up a terrible mess. Day by day it becomes clearer that, when it comes to managing the economy and looking after small business, this government cannot be trusted.

Whilst Labor will be supporting this bill today, we have moved substantive amendments to it. I look forward to members of parliament supporting them in the interests of openness and transparency and to give small businesses and the financial sector a fair go.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (12:56): I thank all the members who have spoken on the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019. We don't agree with the amendments moved by the opposition. They are finding longer, more complicated and more negative ways of displaying that they will be supporting this bill, and we welcome that support.

This bill contains a number of measures that improve the integrity of the tax system, provide flexibility in completing new financial adviser requirements and ensure existing legislation operates as intended. To recap, schedule 1 amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 to clarify that, from 1 July 2019, the concessional tax rates available for minors receiving income from testamentary trusts will be limited to income derived from assets that are transferred from the deceased's estate or the proceeds of the disposal or investment of those assets. This is an integrity measure, which was first announced in the 2018-19 budget, to deter taxpayers from using testamentary trusts as tax planning vehicles rather than what they're intended to be, which is to provide for their family after death.

Schedule 2, as has been spoken about in the House today, delivers on the government's commitment to extend the time that existing financial advisers have to meet new exam and qualification requirements set by FASEA. In particular, the extension assists rural and regional advisers and working parents, including parents taking parental
leave during this transition period, ensuring that we maintain a diverse adviser industry—a very responsible amendment from the government.

Finally, schedule 3 makes minor technical and machinery amendments to various Treasury portfolio legislation, including amendments to address technical deficiencies in those pieces of legislation, ensuring the law operates as intended, and to remove administrative inefficiencies. We don't support the opposition's amendments, and I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The question is that the amendment be agreed to. There being more than one voice calling for a division, in accordance with standing order 133, the division is deferred until after the discussion of the matter of public importance.

Debate adjourned.

Treasuty Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:59): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020. Labor has a proud track record on superannuation and will continue to fight for a stronger and fairer superannuation system. Our superannuation system sits alongside the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme as a significant national achievement. But unfortunately too many Australians still retire without adequate retirement savings, which is why our super system needs to be strengthened and protected, not undermined.

This bill contains a single schedule, which amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act, the Retirement Savings Accounts Act and the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act to facilitate the closure of eligible rollover funds, otherwise known as ERFs, by 30 June 2021. This measure addresses recommendation 5 of the 2019 Productivity Commission inquiry into superannuation, which recommended that the Australian Taxation Office be responsible for holding lost superannuation accounts and that the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority oversee the wind-up of eligible rollover funds. These changes build on the Protecting Your Super 2019 legislation, which saw low-balance and inactive accounts transferred by trustees to the Australian Taxation Office, but not eligible rollover funds. Since the implementation of Protecting Your Super legislation, fund trustees are required to transfer inactive or low-balance accounts to the Australian Taxation Office.

Eligible rollover funds were designed to look after unclaimed superannuation, but essentially they are now redundant. This legislation provides a timetable to wrap up the remaining ERFs by 30 June 2021, with funds transferred to the Australian Taxation Office. This will allow the Australian tax commissioner to reunite superannuation accounts they receive from eligible rollover funds with the members' active accounts.

We support this bill because Labor wants to see every Australian in a high-performance fund. We want to ensure that we have an end to multiple accounts, which is what this legislation is aimed at addressing. To date, it is worth pointing out, the Australian Taxation Office has successfully reunited more than 2.1 million or lost or forgotten superannuation accounts with their rightful owners. This is something we can all be very pleased about. This is a greater success than AUSfund have been able to achieve over a 10-year period. It is a success rate that we hope to see matched with the wrap-up of ERFs.

I will also formally move my second reading amendment to this bill. I think it is important that members of this place have the opportunity to debate a lot of the issues that currently surround superannuation. There has been a busy agenda of proposals coming from both the government and the backbench since the election of the Morrison Liberal government. Most of them, I have to say, weren't ventilated during the election campaign. Most of them, particularly those propositions emanating from the government backbench—with permission from the Prime Minister, we fully suspect—would have a very, very harmful effect not only on superannuation fund members but also on the strength of the system.

We have a superannuation system which, while not perfect, is the envy of many countries around the world: $3 trillion worth of national savings owned by fund members, savings which are not only providing funds for a dignified retirement for their fund owners, but also providing a pool of investment which enables us to invest in new infrastructure projects and job creation projects, and also enables us to invest in projects and companies in businesses overseas, earning foreign remittances for the fund members. We are now in a situation where, for the first time in our nation's history, we are not a net importer of capital. We have a savings pool which is helping us to provide ballast in difficult times and to ensure that we have the money available to invest in nation-building.
infrastructure and other projects. Why, when we are just realising some of the benefits of the system, many of the members opposite would want to pull it apart is beyond all right-thinking Australians, but that is exactly what they are trying to do. So we're calling on the parliament not only to support the substantive bill but to support the second reading amendment. We think it's important to send a very strong message, from this parliament to the people of Australia, that we believe that every Australian deserves a dignified retirement.

There's a point I want to make to those members opposite—sometimes referred to as 'the dirty dozen'—who are trying to unwind our system of compulsory superannuation and unwind the legislated increases from 9½ to 12 per cent. The point I want to make to those opposite, a point which they're going to have to explain to the Australian public, is this: why is it fair that they take home, on a monthly basis, a 15 per cent contribution from the people of Australia to their superannuation accounts but not fair that the people who clean their offices, the people who look after us in this place, should receive the same—indeed less, a 12 per cent contribution—to their superannuation accounts in future years? Those opposite have a big question to answer: why is 15 per cent fair for them but 12 per cent not fair for the people who clean their offices? And, of course, it's not just the contributions; it's also the tax concessions that go along with those contributions.

With this debate swirling, I think it's incredibly important that we provide some certainty to the people of Australia and get a very clear message out that the parliament supports our world-class superannuation system and that across the parliament—each and every member, each and every senator—we are dedicated to ensuring that we strengthen, not weaken, this superannuation system. I move:

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

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

(1) notes that Labor created Australia's superannuation system so that every Australian can have dignity in retirement;

(2) criticises Government members who would see Australia's world class superannuation system become voluntary for working class Australians; and

(3) further notes that too many Australians retire without adequate retirement savings, which is why our superannuation system needs to be strengthened and protected, not undermined".

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

Mr Husic: Yes, the amendment is seconded, and I reserve my right to speak.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (13:07): It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Whitlam and his comments in this space. Whilst I'm sure there's stuff in the financial services sector—as he well knows—that we would agree on, there's also much we would disagree on. There's nothing more important to me than to see the efforts of this government and the work we're doing in tidying up the superannuation system to remove unnecessary and costly fees that eat away at the retirement savings of hardworking Australians. That's why I'm pleased to be speaking on this bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020. Again, this bill builds on a number of previous pieces of legislation and seeks to further protect the retirement savings of hardworking Australians by closing down eligible rollover funds.

The role of ERFs, historically, was to be a temporary holding fund for lost, small or inactive superannuation accounts, but that has significantly declined or diminished over recent times. The unclaimed superannuation policies put in place by this government through the Protecting Your Superannuation Package changes mean that small, inactive accounts that may otherwise have been paid to ERFs are now paid directly to the ATO. We know our reforms are working, and this bill seeks to ensure that more and more Australians are reunited with their super so they can continue to grow their nest egg for retirement. Since our Protecting Your Superannuation Package reforms became a reality at the end of 2018, the ATO has reunited more than 2.13 million lost or forgotten superannuation accounts, worth around $2.8 billion, with their rightful owners, and this bill seeks to increase those numbers even further.

Another reason to support this bill is to ensure that, by having a single superannuation account rather than multiple accounts, people are not getting charged additional or questionable fees and seeing their savings eroded.

The ATO's data-matching program has achieved far better results than those of the ERFs over past years. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics recently heard that some superannuation funds may be transferring accounts to ERFs to circumvent the government's Protecting Your Superannuation changes. The committee heard evidence that some ERFs recently received an influx of accounts from some superannuation fund administrators ahead of the 31 October 2019 deadline for funds to transfer inactive low-balance accounts to the ATO. This is a blatant attempt from the superannuation industry to repudiate the government's reforms and efforts to reunite Australians with their lost super, in a last-ditch effort to charge more fees. Interestingly, I heard nothing from the member for Whitlam on this activity.
These activities by these super funds hurt Australians most likely to benefit from our reforms, including young people who often have multiple jobs and, as a result, multiple superannuation accounts. We all know the impact of high fees in the long run on people’s superannuation balances. We all know too well how much worse off Australians are in the long run due to the higher fees charged in underperforming ERFs. Fund managers and administrators love these funds because they know can make more and more money from members through these funds, and they rush to ensure they can squeeze every last cent possible from hardworking Australians. They increased their funds under management in the ERFs by an estimated $700 million in the June quarter of 2019 alone, to a total of around $4 billion in ERFs, where previously these had been trending downwards. This is a disgusting and despicable move by super funds, despite there being a more efficient facility in place through the ATO to unite people with their lost super. The government is making these changes to ensure that the funds that people have accumulated through their hard work are all accumulated in one place, in one super fund.

As I've said before, the role of ERFs was already diminishing as a result of our changes, and now they will be closed in a timely and efficient manner. To facilitate this exit, the bill allows trustees of ERFs to voluntarily transfer any amount to the ATO, broadening the current arrangement where ERFs can only send accounts to the ATO if they meet specific conditions. The bill also includes a requirement to transfer all accounts below $6,000 to the ATO by 30 June 2020 and all remaining accounts to the ATO by 30 June 2021. This effectively facilitates the exit of ERFs from the market by the middle of 2021.

We want to make it as easy as possible for Australians to be reunited with their super, and this bill goes a long way towards delivering the necessary reforms to benefit Australians now and in their retirement. Once transferred to the ATO, the ATO will be able to use its superior suite of data-matching tools to reunite these accounts with members' active superannuation accounts. By reuniting these lost accounts with their rightful owners, members will benefit from higher account balances and no longer having to pay multiple sets of fees and, in some cases, having to pay for insurance policies. This legislation will benefit many people in my electorate of Forde—not just young people but many people who work part-time or intermittent work across the age brackets—who have multiple low-balance superannuation accounts. Our reforms seek to benefit them in the long run to ensure they have a strong and secure nest egg in their retirement.

This bill gives effect to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, which specifically recommended that APRA oversee the exit of ERFs from the market within three years. Unlike those opposite, we on this side of the House won't continue to run a protection racket for the superannuation industry. Instead, we are continuing to focus on how we can improve the superannuation industry for the benefit of everyday Australians who are seeking to grow their wealth through superannuation for their retirement.

We will continue to reform the sector and build on our record of protecting members in the system, giving the sector greater clarity and moving towards what's really working for members now and into the future. We will continue to stand with hardworking everyday Australians when it comes to their superannuation because we want to ensure members have more money, more security and more freedom in their retirement and old age, not less. This bill goes the next step to further protecting the superannuation balances of members across this country. I support this bill in its unamended form, given the pious amendment put forward by the member for Whitlam.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:15): I'm speaking in support of this bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020, but also in support of the very sensible second reading amendment that's been moved by the shadow minister for financial services, the member for Whitlam, which correctly points out what this government has tried to do to destroy the superannuation system that was established by Labor when we were in government in the 1980s and 1990s.

That second reading amendment points out that this government has a group of rebel MPs—and let's face it, rebel MPs have been getting away with quite a bit in the coalition over the course of the last couple of days. It's these rebel MPs that are members of the government backbench that are trying to undermine the compulsory superannuation system in this country by proposing ideas such as making superannuation voluntary for low-income employees in Australia—a system that would completely undermine the universality of the system and ultimately result in people retiring with inadequate balances in their superannuation accounts, particularly those that take breaks from the workforce like women, and people having to rely more on the age pension in their retirement. We are also critical of the government for the role that they have been playing in criticising the superannuation industry and some of the measures that they've tried to look at, such as freezing superannuation account balances into the future.

Nonetheless, this bill does contain a single schedule that amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act, the RSA Act and the SUMLM Act to facilitate the closure of eligible rollover funds, or ERFs as they're more commonly known, by 30 June 2021. ERFs were designed to look after unclaimed superannuation and balances, for ERFs are typically low and accounts inactive. This measure addresses one of the recommendations of the
Productivity Commission report in 2019, which interestingly found that people aren't having enough money put into their superannuation and many Australians will retire with inadequate balances into the future. They made a series of recommendations. One of them was recommendation 5, which recommended that the ATO be responsible for holding lost superannuation accounts and that APRA oversee the wind-up of eligible rollover funds. This will allow the ATO commissioner to reunite superannuation accounts they receive from eligible rollover funds with a member's active account. It comes on the back of some changes that were made by the parliament last year. Those changes build on the Protecting Your Super 2019 legislation, which saw low-balance and inactive accounts transferred by trustees to the ATO, not ERFs. By all accounts, that change and that new system have been quite successful in reuniting Australians with unclaimed superannuation.

Fund trustees transferring inactive or low-balance accounts to the ATO have made ERFs redundant. This legislation provides a timetable to wrap up the remaining ERFs by 30 June 2021. ATO matching has been more successful than AUSfand and is in the members' best interests. That relates to the legislation that was passed last year in respect of involving the ATO in reuniting funds with their owners.

The ATO has successfully reunited more than 2.1 million lost and forgotten superannuation accounts, and this is a greater success than the one that AUSfand had over the course of a 10-year period. And of course the superannuation system helps Australians to retire with dignity. It was established by the Labor Party to ensure that it was a universal system and that occupational superannuation applied to all Australians, not just the wealthy, as it had in the past, up to the point when the Treasurer, Paul Keating, as part of that Hawke-Keating government, established the system. With superannuation included as part of the pay packet, every Australian had the opportunity from that point on to put aside and build up a retirement nest egg to retire comfortably.

Yet we all know, even in this day and age, some 30 years on from the establishment of the compulsory superannuation, that too many Australians are retiring with inadequate balances in their retirement savings, which is why our superannuation system needs to be strengthened and protected, not undermined. That's what we've seen from a number of MPs on that side—attempts to undermine the universality of the superannuation system by suggesting things like voluntary payments for people on low incomes that ultimately are going to lead to people retiring with less and less in their superannuation balances, being unable to fund their own retirements and having to rely on the age pension, and with an ageing population putting a greater impost on the budget and the social security system into the future.

That's the situation we ought to be trying, as a parliament, to avoid. But calls by those opposite are based purely on ideological attacks and reflect the fact that many on that side have never believed in the notion of compulsory superannuation and want to attack the system. That's the reason we know that those opposite aren't fair dinkum about compulsory superannuation, and that's why we've got ideological attacks—

Mr Tim Wilson interjecting—

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: such as those from the member who is screaming out across the parliament, who's been one of the cheerleaders for these changes that they're proposing for freezing superannuation.

The Liberal Party has form when it comes to undermining superannuation. A recent report showed the price Australian workers are paying for the Liberal-Nationals government's freezes to the superannuation guarantee. We all know that when the coalition get into government they seek to undermine compulsory superannuation, and they seek to do it by freezing staged increases that have been put in place by previous Labor governments. We saw the Howard government do it when they were elected to office in the 1990s, and now we're seeing it done again by the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government. Those freezes unfortunately have a detrimental effect on Australian workers, and that's been demonstrated by Per Capita's report The super freeze: what you've lost, which showed that this government's 2014 superannuation freeze has already cost the average worker more than $4,300 in retirement savings. You don't boost retirement savings incomes by freezing superannuation.

The last time the Liberal-Nationals government froze the superannuation guarantee, wages growth didn't pick up. We got record low wages growth instead. So, this notion that's being pushed by those opposite that there's a trade-off between staged increases in superannuation and wage increases is not borne out by the anecdotal evidence or by the statistical evidence, because since that freeze has been in place we've had record low wages growth here in Australia, and Australian workers have fallen further and further behind. Those opposite would have Australians fall further behind in their retirement by trying to freeze the superannuation guarantee increases—increases that were put in place with plenty of lead time and plenty of information for employers to ensure that they were able to pay them, and they were staged in very small increments.

The report claims that the real take-home pay for the median worker has actually declined since the instigation of the superannuation guarantee freeze. Anyone who thinks that freezing superannuation again will make employers suddenly pay higher wages is kidding themselves. It was this notion of trickle-down economics at its
best, once again, when we saw the government pushing cuts to corporate tax rates. Where's the boost to wages in the wake of the cuts to corporate tax rates? It hasn't been going into the pockets of workers; it's been going into the pockets of employers and big businesses throughout this country, cheered on by those opposite. The previous speaker, the member for Forde, wanted to criticise the industry superannuation funds. Well, what about those bank-run superannuation funds? Don't they perform well—the ones that have been propped up and supported by those opposite through their policies. We all know that they've done their best to protect the banks and the dodgy dealings that have been going on in the banks over the course of the last decade by the fact that they voted 26 times against holding a royal commission into the banking industry in this country.

Anyone who thinks that freezing superannuation again will make employers suddenly pay higher wage rises is kidding themselves. It's not about higher wage rises for low-income workers at all. This is about an ideological obsession that those opposite have with the notion of compulsory superannuation. They never supported it when Labor instigated it. They never supported it through the life of its processes, and they have never supported the staged increases that Labor legislated for whilst we were in government.

The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have an appalling record on wages and superannuation. Their retirement incomes review shouldn't be a stalking horse for more cuts to the pension or for further delays to the legislated increase in the superannuation guarantee to 12 per cent. That's what we're all worried about on this side of the chamber: that this retirement incomes review isn't about checking on the state of the superannuation system and its adequacy and whether or not it's producing the right outcomes for Australians in retirement. It's become a stalking horse for those opposite to come up with an excuse to, once again, freeze the increase in the superannuation guarantee, which is staged to increase to 12 per cent over the coming years.

Those of us on this side of the House are committed to the legislated superannuation guarantee rise. We call on this divided government and those who are seeking to agitate for a freeze in the legislation to do the same. Freezing the legislated increase won't lead to pay increases, and it won't change super tax benefits for high-income earners. The original timetable has been delayed twice, costing workers who are retiring today between $60,000 and $100,000 in their superannuation balances.

Our world-class superannuation system means that we have an investment pool of $3 trillion worth of savings. Our system, compared to our population, is the envy of the world. The reason it's the envy of the world is Labor took that decision to institute compulsory superannuation and to ensure that there were regular increases in the notion of compulsory superannuation and the minimum guarantee into the future, to ensure that people have a retirement nest egg, but, just as importantly, to ensure we have a pool of investment funds that will fuel growth in business and productivity in this country. This creates a nest egg for Australians and is being invested in infrastructure and businesses which are generating wealth, creating jobs and ensuring Australians own more of the economic activity of this country.

Anyone that wants to see a system reduce not only the compulsory savings of Australians but that pool of investment funds isn't fair dinkum when it comes to ensuring the veracity of retirement incomes policy. The Reserve Bank has identified low productivity growth, globalisation, underemployment and a decline in bargaining power, all as drags on wages growth and productivity. Wages are weak now, not because of the superannuation guarantee but because this government does not have a plan to boost growth, to boost investment in our economy and, importantly, to increase wages.

We agree that workers need a wage rise, but we don't think that that should be paid for by a freeze on compulsory superannuation increases. That's not the way to produce income increases in this country to boost investment and to boost growth in the economy. The last time the Liberals and Nationals froze the superannuation guarantee, wages growth didn't pick up. We got record low wages instead, and that is their record when it comes to supporting wages growth in our economy.

In conclusion, Labor created the world-class superannuation system that we have in Australia so everyday Australians can have dignity in retirement, and we will always fight to protect it, no matter what.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Brian Mitchell):** I thank the member for Kingsford Smith. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Levi, Mr Joshua**

Mr BURNS (Macnamara) (13:30): Last Friday, in Sydney's Great Synagogue, we said farewell to a good man taken far too soon. I admired Joshua Levi very much and was proud to call him a friend. Josh was a fine journalist who rose through the ranks of *The Australian Jewish News* from a reporter to become its CEO. Josh understood the power of a story but also the importance of journalistic integrity. Josh's pursuit of justice for victims of child
sex abuse was unflinching. He stared down pressure and threats, including legal ones, and was still fighting for victims until the very end.

Josh was funny, charismatic and kind, and he had an infectious laugh. He loved to talk, and everyone loved to talk to him. I will cherish our conversations about politics and life. Josh told me how excited he was to become a father, and it is desperately unfair that he was only able to become one for just three short weeks. So, to baby Lara: your dad loved you, and we are all heartbroken that you won’t get to grow up knowing the wonderful man that your father was. I know he will always be looking after you from above.

My thoughts are with his family and friends, especially his parents, Ann and Ian; his brother and sister-in-law, Ben and Mel; and most of all, his wife, Lia, who brought so much joy to his life. Rest in peace, my friend.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Road Safety

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (13:31): Everyone who knows me knows that I am passionate about road safety. My commitment to road safety stems from my work as a Queensland police officer, and I'm pleased to be able to continue some of that work in my role as a chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety and also as a former chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety. There is some great work being done nationally by organisations such as the Australian Automobile Association, iRAP, the Australasian College of Road Safety, FCAI, ANCAP and many others, but a local organisation in Wide Bay deserves special recognition.

Recently I took road safety minister Scott Buchholz to the Roadcraft Driver Education centre to meet the CEO, Sharlene Makin, and their group of skilled educators. Roadcraft is an iconic Gympie institution, and for over 40 years their programs have prevented crashes and saved lives locally. I congratulate them on what they do.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the great work of Labor Party senator for South Australia, Alex Gallacher. Alex is one of my co-chairs on the Friends of Road Safety, and I join with the road safety community, this parliament and the wider Australian community in wishing him all the best in a speedy recovery and a quick return.

Emberson, Ms Jill

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (13:33): Australia lost one of our most active, passionate and inspiring ovarian cancer advocates with the passing of Newcastle ABC radio journalist Jill Emberson on 12 December 2019. Just 10 months before, Jill had been a guest speaker at my annual Ovarian Cancer Australia fundraiser morning tea. Jill demonstrated that day, as she did many days before and many days after, that she was not going to go quietly and that her battle with our most lethal women's cancer would not be in vain. Jill spoke wherever she could, including here in Parliament House, and was successful in securing $20 million in Commonwealth funding for ovarian cancer research and a further $15 million for clinical trials into gynaecological cancers. She was incredibly forthright that day, like she was every day.

This funding is very welcome, but more is needed. Every day in Australia four women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and three will die from the disease. It is our deadliest cancer for women and the sixth most common cause of cancer death in Australia. Fewer than half of women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, just 46 per cent, are alive five years later. Ovarian Cancer Australia wants to improve the survival rate through research into better treatment and, more importantly, into early diagnosis. For that reason, I will continue to hold my annual morning tea event to raise funds for Ovarian Cancer Australia. This year it is being held on Friday 21 February at Belmont Golf Club. I urge all members of this House to join me in calling for more funding for ovarian cancer research.

Queensland Health Department: Dairy Tender

Mount Cotton: Rural Fire Service

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:34): I congratulate you on your ascension, Deputy Speaker O'Brien. I have two issues. The first is the Queensland health department's tendering of dairy, turning to Lactalis instead of Maleny Dairies—what awful treatment of a local provider! State Labor instead chose for all the profits to filter back to a multinational, overseas. They could have split the tender and made sure that both providers were winners, but they chose not to, despite their 'put Queensland first' policy in tendering. Just two weeks later, Lactalis decided to close their Queensland operations. That's right: phase it all interstate the minute they secured the contract. Was that considered in the tender process? No. It's slack Labor tendering again, costing Queensland, costing jobs and costing Maleny Dairies and making it absolutely clear that Queensland Labor cannot manage tendering.

Let's move to the Queensland Rural Fire Service. Five years ago, on 10 September 2015, the community got together for a rural fire service in Mount Cotton. Who would kill it off? Don Brown MP and his Labor union.
mates. They didn't want a rural fire service in Mount Cotton. What did we get? We got a fire the following year: water bombing, 26 fire crews and still no rural fire service in Mount Cotton, because of union opposition to having rural fire services. Four years on and Mick de Brenni walks in, in a classic ‘What happens if I press this button?’ moment, and says, ‘Why don’t we have a rural fire service here?’ It’s too late; it’s out of the box; it’s all happening. Congratulations to the community: you’ve flipped Labor again. We have rural fire services for Mount Cotton, where we deserve them. (Time expired)

Werriwa Electorate: Infrastructure

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (13:36): I congratulate you on your new role, Deputy Speaker O’Brien. Over the past weekend, significant flooding has hit parts of south-west Sydney, including the electorate of Werriwa. Three hundred millimetres of rain lashed the region, with the Georges River peaking at just over five metres, making it the largest flood since the 1980s. Properties have been inundated, residents evacuated and schools and roads closed. I take this opportunity to commend the great work of the emergency services and local councils over the last few days. However, I condemn the government for its lack of action on local infrastructure. Once again, Cambridge Avenue at Glenfield had to be closed. Despite numerous representations to government and speeches in this House by many members for Werriwa, the road still remains a causeway. A major artery linking the growing cities of Liverpool and Campbelltown, the roads sits mere metres off the water line of the Georges River, and it is regularly blocked when it rains. The upgrade is listed as a priority initiative by Infrastructure Australia, who, unlike the government, recognises that with the development of the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal more congestion will be added to this already inadequate thoroughfare. As with so many other important infrastructure projects in south-western Sydney, I call on the government to get on with the job and fix Cambridge Avenue.

Robertson Electorate: Floods

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:37): I too extend my congratulations to you on your new role, Deputy Speaker O’Brien. I would also like to pay tribute to the hardworking emergency services people from the Central Coast, who have once again stepped up to protect our community amid another severe weather event. Just weeks after bushfires threatened homes on the Central Coast, our region was hit by torrential rain, flash flooding, damaging winds and abnormally high tides over the weekend. The Central Coast region received more than 200 millimetres of rain. Our State Emergency Service volunteers sprang into action, responding to almost 1,200 calls for assistance and bravely performing 35 flood rescues in challenging conditions. More than 65 volunteers were dispatched across the coast, completing more than 800 jobs. Generous locals also stepped up to help at the Gosford and Wyong SES headquarters, filling over a thousand sandbags to help residents protect their homes.

The weekend’s downpours and strong winds forced the closure of more than 40 roads and left 30,000 homes without power. Ausgrid crews are continuing to work tirelessly to repair power lines and reconnect properties. I am advised that it could still take a few days. At one of the local shopping centres, Kincumber Village, Coles was forced to close their doors on Sunday after a section of the roof caved in. Trains are back up and running between Hornsby and Gosford after cancellations yesterday, but there are still delays on the Newcastle and Central Coast line. The severe weather forced the closure of 11 schools across the Robertson electorate—(Time expired)

Port Milang Historic Railway Museum

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (13:39): Recently I visited the Port Milang Historic Railway Museum, which is managed by a group of volunteers who are keen to share the rich history of Milang and promote tourism in the region. During my visit I saw visitors of all ages and backgrounds, and they were enjoying the museum. They were exploring the fantastic railway memorabilia, playing with model trains—even very elderly people; we all love our model trains—and also driving a train through a simulator. I had some fun there. After, I had Devonshire tea and scones in the tearoom.

As part of the visit I got to experience a ride in an old munitions wagon which has been converted to a passenger vehicle. The museum has offered free rides in this vehicle once a month since August last year. The train ride has proved to be very popular, with the current record being 36 trips in one day. The museum is hoping to extend this service to operate every Sunday, as it serves as the highlight for many visitors. The locomotive is currently powered by 24 two-volt batteries. They're over two decades old and are badly needing to be upgraded. My office is working with the museum to source funding to keep this valuable asset running. So if you find yourself in Mayo—and I say this to all the people in the House—please pay a visit to the Port Milang Historic Railway Museum. It's a visit you won't be disappointed in. It's a wonderful day. Take the family, take a picnic—(Time expired)
Climate Change

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:41): The decision for a couple to have children is normally personal and private. However, last night, the national broadcaster put to air comments of a young lady who was saying that she was too scared to bring children into this world because of climate anxiety. Sadly, this is what hysteria, alarmism, propaganda and misinformation has brought about. The fact is that a child born today is 100 times safer from extreme weather than their grandparents were. And this trend continues: last year was the safest year in human history in terms of extreme weather events, and a child born this year will enjoy a life expectancy 25 years longer than that of their grandparents.

While we worry about the coronavirus, remember that our great-grandparents survived World War I and lived through the Spanish flu, which killed between 50 million and 100 million people—about three to six per cent of the world’s population. They then survived the horrors of the Great Depression and World War II. And, with the very real threat of nuclear war, our parents and grandparents maintained their optimism and decided to have children; otherwise none of us would be here today. The reality is that a child born today will inherit a world that is safer and more prosperous than ever before—and, given the freedom and opportunity, they will make it even better.

Dobell Electorate: Community Centres

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (13:42): Scott Morrison's $9 million a year cuts to emergency relief are a blow to my community. The Wyong Neighbourhood Centre will lose $140,089 each year. Dawn Hooper is a life member and retired president of the neighbourhood centre. She said the centre uses this funding daily to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women and children fleeing family violence. The centre also covers Toukley and Wyoming for emergency relief, with less than half the amount it previously needed to service Wyong alone.

In a crisis, emergency relief can keep food on the table, a roof over your head and the electricity connected. The San Remo Neighbourhood Centre Manager, Jillian Hogan, told me that their emergency relief funding stretches to Blue Haven, Charmhaven and The Entrance in my electorate. Scott Morrison's cuts mean the centre will need to help more people with $20,840 less each year. Jillian said there are more people, not less, living in poverty. Since 1 January the centre has provided emergency relief to families affected by the Charmhaven bushfire. 'We helped a 15-year-old Blue Haven girl who burnt her back trying to save her home,' Jillian said. As a pharmacist in Wyong, I dispensed prescription medication for patients paying with emergency relief vouchers. It was their only way to afford their medicine. Scott Morrison lavished millions on sports rorts but has forced local neighbourhood centres to turn away people in crisis. Scott Morrison should step up and reverse these cuts. (Time expired)

Road Safety

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (13:44): Tragically, over the first weekend of February four children were killed in Sydney in a horrific road accident. They were struck by an alleged drunk driver while on their way to get ice cream. It is every parent's worst nightmare. As a mother of four and also the ambassador for the Little Blue Dinosaur Foundation, this issue hits close to home. I have spoken previously in this place about the work of Little Blue Dinosaur. They work tirelessly to educate children and parents about road safety. This horrific event shows us just how dangerous our roads are for children.

One of the children killed was the vibrant Veronique Sakr, aged 11, who attended Santa Sabina College in Strathfield. She was killed along with her three cousins. As a former Santa Sabina student, I know how incredibly tight-knit the school community is and I know that the loss of one of its students has been devastating. The families affected by this horrific accident belong to the Maronite Catholic Church and are leaning on their faith at this difficult time. They have asked the community to remember to smile in Veronique's memory.

Reid has an incredibly strong Maronite Catholic community, and I have seen their outpouring of support and prayer in the last few days. I know that our entire community has been shaken and grieves alongside the families impacted, but we are also here to provide support and solace.

Workplace Relations

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (13:45): Congratulations, Deputy Speaker O'Brien, on your ascension. Once again labour hire firms are in the news for all the wrong reasons. This week we learnt that 70 migrant workers have been illegally accommodated by a labour hire firm in a five-bedroom house in northern Tasmania—70 workers in five bedrooms. Each of those workers had been told to hand over more than $100 a week in rent for the privilege of living in such disgraceful conditions. That's $7,000 a week in rent collected by the labour hire firm Owen Pacific, which is accredited by this government to bring workers into Australia under the Pacific workers scheme. As well as rent, the workers have been charged more than $100 a week each to be bussed to and from the
fruit farms they work at. That's another $7,000 a week. That's $14,000 a week in Owen Pacific's pocket, on top of what it is being paid by farmers for the labour. After rent, transport, food and airfares are taken out, these workers have as little as $150 a week remaining to send back to their families in Tonga and other Pacific island nations. This is happening because the Morrison government is happy to turn a blind eye to illegal and disreputable behaviour by labour hire firms. Why aren't these cowboys better supervised to ensure they meet their legal obligations? Where are the sanctions? Where are the consequences? Where is the ongoing oversight to ensure that these workers are being properly treated in the workplace?

Employment

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (13:47): Congratulations, Deputy Speaker O'Brien. I talk a lot about jobs and for very good reason: the 300,000 people commuting every single day out of Western Sydney deserve local jobs. In my electorate of Lindsay I'm working hard to make sure that we're creating local jobs for local people. That's why I created the Lindsay Jobs of the Future Forum, bringing together community members, schools, small businesses and industry to work out how we can get the best of the opportunities that are coming to Western Sydney so that our kids get those jobs in the future, particularly in the STEM industries.

It is really important to encourage children in our schools to study science, technology, engineering and maths. I would like to commend some of the schools in Lindsay that are doing this: Penrith South Public School, Jamison High School and Samuel Terry Public School. I am looking forward this year to visiting more schools and seeing great STEM programs in progress. Educating our kids in STEM is educating our kids for the jobs of the future. That is also why I, along with our Minister for Employment, Michaelia Cash, held the Penrith Jobs Fair—2,300 local jobseekers matching up with job providers and small businesses to make sure that our locals are getting local jobs. That is one of my top priorities.

Coalition Government

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (13:48): There's a question that many people on this side of the House would like to ask the Prime Minister, and it's whether he could update the House on how the Abbott-Truss-Turnbull-Joyce-Morrison-McCormack government's stable and certain approach to party leadership is paying dividends for the Australian people and whether he's aware of any alternative approaches. I mean, life really does come at you fast, doesn't it? The fact of the matter is that this government is anything but stable and anything but certain. Those opposite can't agree on deputies: they can't agree on who the Deputy Prime Minister is going to be and, sadly I've got to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, not enough of them could agree on the facts. A few moments ago you had a perfect example of it from the member for Hughes, who, on a daily basis, comes into this place and uses parliament as a platform to pedal the conspiracy theories of internet clowns. That is his stick, and he's protected by too many people on that side of the House. The greatest tragedy was this week when we saw the Prime Minister announce he was going to provide $4 million for a feasibility study on a power station that will never be built, while the people on the South Coast running businesses can't get the basic support to get them back on their feet.

Taylor, Mr Roger James Ernest

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (13:50): Roger James Ernest Taylor passed away on 18 January after tragic complications resulting from a snake bite on his property just outside Toowoomba on 10 January. Roger was the husband of Carol, Deputy Mayor of the Toowoomba Regional Council. At the celebration of Roger's life, on 25 January, we heard of him as the loved father and father-in-law of Lisa and Michael and their families and a much loved grandfather, beloved son, brother, brother-in-law, uncle and, as I can attest, a great mate to many. We heard of his life on the Darling Downs around Toowoomba, Dirranbandi, Goondiwindi and, in more recent years, Vale View, where he and Carol ran a very successful boarding kennel and cattery business. My wife, Anita, and I knew Roger best as a regular attendee at community events, where he devotedly supported and accompanied Carol. He was a quiet but jovial and gentle man whose company was always a pleasure and a refuge for those of us who knew him well. Toowoomba and the Darling Downs extend our condolences to Carol, her children and her grandchildren. Vale Roger Taylor.

Climate Change

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (13:52): I call on the government to commit to getting Australia to net zero emissions by 2050. The Prime Minister has said that he will not commit to that target if he can't tell the Australian people what it will cost, but what is blatantly clear to everyone except this government is the cost of inaction. Australians are crying out for leadership on climate action, particularly after this horrific summer of fires and now floods. Zero emissions by 2050 is the minimum we need to limit warming to below two degrees Celsius. In fact, the survival of our Pacific neighbours depends on limiting that to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius. Boris Johnson has
urged other nations to commit to zero by 2050, and yesterday, right here in this parliament, Joko Widodo called on Australia to do more.

The fact is that the government's own data shows that we're not on track to even meet the target of a reduction of five per cent by 2020. In fact, Australia will have a pathetic reduction of 0.3 per cent. On this trajectory, it will take 230 years to get to zero. This government is deeply irresponsible to ignore this. Those opposite also need to recognise the opportunities to come from investing in renewables. As Ross Garnaut outlines in his book *Superpower*, if Australia rises to the challenge of climate change, it will emerge as a global superpower in energy, low-carbon industry and absorption of carbon in the landscape. I call on the government to stop ignoring the science, stop ignoring the global community and stop ignoring— *(Time expired)*

**Cairns Men's Shed**

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) *(13:53)*: It gives me the utmost pleasure to rise and speak about the Cairns Men's Shed. During the election campaign, the Morrison government made a $1 million commitment to the members of the Cairns shed that would allow the club to purchase its existing premises and undertake further expansion. I've worked extremely closely with the Cairns Men's Shed president, Bob Lavington, over a number of years to secure the much-needed funding. I'd also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the previous work of Clive Lee and John King in securing the club's future. I can honestly say this investment will make a real and very significant difference to the hundreds of men who use the Cairns Men's Shed on a daily basis.

The Cairns Men's Shed has come along in leaps and bounds over the past few years and is widely regarded as one of the best sheds around. However, all men's sheds, no matter how big or small, offer fantastic support to men who might need space and friendly, easygoing company. Men are often the last ones to treat their health and wellbeing as a priority. It is imperative that we do what we can to ensure that they get the support they need and deserve. I'm very fortunate to have several wonderful men's sheds in my electorate, including Holloways Beach, Kuranda, Mossman, Cooktown, Trinity Beach and Aurukun. The Men's Shed initiative is something that both sides of politics should be extremely proud of because, put simply, it's saving lives. It is a wonderful initiative.

**Morrison Government**

**Ms SWANSON** (Paterson) *(13:55)*: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As we arrive to the capital with the new year ahead, We prepared for condolences but the Nats made news instead. A minister down before the week had begun, A ghost from the past decided he wasn't done. It was full steam ahead for New England versus Riverina, It was anyone's guess who'd win in that arena. Out walked the leader, he lives another day. And he pushed his rivals to the backbench just to make them pay. Thank God that's all over, the Prime Minister must have sighed. Little did he know, those backbenchers weren't onside. Out comes the ballot, he thought was just routine. And the member for Wide Bay was nowhere to be seen. After a ballot that didn't quite go to plan, The echo from the cabinet was: 'I think I can, I think I can.' A third-term government whose agenda isn't clear, The marketing man has run out of ideas. But the day is long and the bay is wide, The Deputy Speaker may have more on his side.

**Bennelong Electorate: Eastwood Lunar New Year**

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) *(13:56)*: Normally at this time of the year I stand up here and cheer on the great local new year festivities that take place in Bennelong every year. On a normal year I would talk about the food and the incredible linedancing, and I would congratulate the organisers, including Hugh Lee and Anthony Ching and the AAAB, for all their hard work. This year I can't do this because the events have, regrettably, not gone ahead. In the context of the coronavirus outbreak, the council decided to shut down the event, as it considers it a risk to have so many thousands of people in a close space.
I would like to reiterate at this time that, despite some local media reporting to the contrary, there is no evidence that coronavirus has appeared in Eastwood, but the fear of this virus has kept crowds away. However, the fact is that business in Eastwood is hurting. I was down there for lunch last Friday with state member Victor Dominello and local business leaders. The food was as great as ever but the streets were unusually silent. But we'll be back again this Friday and we're calling on anyone who can come down and join us to join us. Eastwood should be booming during the Lunar New Year but unwarranted fear is hurting the culinary heart of our community and Australia. Join us, get out there and grab a bite at a local restaurant. It's safe, healthy and—most importantly—delicious!

**Coronavirus**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (13:58): Nothing is more important than keeping Australians safe. Labor welcomes the measures to protect the public health and safety of all Australians in response to the coronavirus outbreak. For those affected, both in Australia and overseas, I wish you and your loved ones a speedy recovery and a return home. This is a tough time for many members of our Australian community. It's also particularly a tough time for members of the Chinese Australian community and Asian Australians more broadly.

The fact is that there has been a rise in racism as a result of the coronavirus. The fact is, any racist language or behaviour must not be tolerated and it must be called out. Chinese Australians helped build this country. They are our teachers and nurses, our neighbours, our business owners, our hairdressers. They are proud Australians. All of us must stand up and speak out against the ugly, divisive and racist behaviour that has been directed to some of our fellow Australians, whether it's on social media or on the streets, at school or at work.

Labor has always stood against all forms of discrimination and we always will. To our Chinese Australians: Labor stands with you—and I'm sure the whole of this parliament stands with you—in standing up against the increased racism and expresses solidarity with you. I encourage people to support our businesses in places like Ashfield and other places right around the nation.

The SPEAKER: It being almost 2 pm, the time for members' statements has concluded. The Prime Minister on indulgence.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (13:59): on indulgence—I would like to endorse the Leader of the Opposition's comments and also extend, as I have on a number of occasions, my great thanks to the Chinese Australian community for the way that they have dealt with what has been a very challenging time for them, whether it's in Ashfield, Box Hill, Hurstville or any part of the country.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: Sunnybank, sure. I want to thank the Chinese Australian community for the way they've supported each other. So many other Australians have supported them—those who might have been involved in self-isolation and the medical professionals working within these communities. This is a very significant challenge, and the Chinese Australian community has risen to that challenge. They deserve our great appreciation and support. Going forward, I know that that will continue. The House stands as one on this matter.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Morrison Government**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): I thank the Prime Minister for that expression of bipartisanship on this issue. The fact is that the House is very much united in this. My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister agree with the Father of the House, the Liberal member for Menzies, who said today, 'If you can't govern yourselves, you can't govern the country'?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): I can assure the House that this government is united on the need to lower taxes. I can assure the House that the government are united on the need to build infrastructure, as we are, and we are united on the need to build the dams—that's climate action now. I can say that the government are united on the need to continue to expand our trade borders, as we have done. We've increased under this government the amount of two-way trade that is subject to export agreements from 26 per cent to 70 per cent. I can say absolutely that this government is united on the need to bring our Defence Force funding and spending to two per cent of GDP.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: Yes. I didn't ask whether the government was united.

The SPEAKER: No. You go to the point of order.

Mr Albanese: We know the answer to that, Mr Speaker.
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: I asked him whether he agreed with the comments of the member for Menzies.

The SPEAKER: That last bit wasn't broadcast, because I asked the Leader of the Opposition if he was rising on a point of order and he has not stated what the point of order is. I'm going to give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to state what his point of order is, not to restate the question. Okay?

Mr Albanese: Relevance, Mr Speaker. We didn't ask about the unity of the government. We know the answer to that.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I'm just going to say to the Leader of the Opposition—and I'm still pondering whether the question is strictly in order—that, being the generous person I am, I refer you to—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I don't have to be generous, if you're going to complain. I've made the point before when questions of this sort of wide-ranging nature are asked that you can't demand the responder simply give a 'yes' or 'no' answer, so I think it did open the gates quite wide. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr Morrison: I can tell you that we're united on the need to take action on the drought and support drought funds. I can tell you that we're united on the position of having temporary exclusion orders for terrorists and mandatory sentencing for paedophiles and on cracking down on farm invaders. I can tell the House that we're united on the need to ensure that we meet our emissions reduction targets, not by increasing taxes on people, not by putting up people's electricity prices and not by walking away from the jobs of Australians in rural and regional areas. That's what we're united on.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned.

Mr Morrison: We're united on what we took to the Australian people. What we took to the Australian people was an economic plan to create jobs, and that's what's happening. That's what we took to the Australian people. Once upon a time there was a Labor government that actually did believe in creating jobs. It was the Hawke-Keating government. Given he is referring to a comment that was first made by the former Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, I will refer to what the Leader of the Opposition used to say about the Hawke government. He said, in an article quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald, 'The Hawke government had lost touch with people. When they talk about wages and budget deficits, they talk about it like it's out of a text box. They appear to have an absolute contempt for working-class people. Someone like Keating can put himself up as the possible Labor PM but he is more comfortable mixing with millionaires and business executives than he is with working-class people.' This mob are not a patch on Hawke and Keating. They have nothing in common with them.

Mr Burke: I'd ask the Prime Minister to quote the article from the previous millennium that he was quoting from.

The SPEAKER: You can't do that, unfortunately.

Mr Burke: Any in the previous century that he was quoting from?

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. Was the Prime Minister quoting from a confidential document?

Mr Morrison: Yes.

Economy

Mr Pearce (Braddon) (14:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the Morrison government's economic plan is creating more jobs for Australians?

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:06): There are a lot of things that are discussed in this chamber: important matters of national security, important matters—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: It's pretty straightforward: the member for Griffith has been asked to cease. That's a good idea—just walk; it's quicker. That is a 94(a).

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr Morrison: There are many important matters that members who are elected as part of our government come into this chamber to pursue: our national security, our engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and keeping Australians safe. But one of the key matters that this government was elected on was on the basis of ensuring that we continue to create jobs for Australians right around the country. Whether it is up there in Tasmania, up there in
North Queensland, out in the suburbs of Sydney or Melbourne or Brisbane, or in the great state of Western Australia our government was elected on the platform of doing what was necessary to create jobs. More than 1.5 million jobs have been created since this government was first elected. We're going to create another 1.25 million jobs. That's what we took to the Australian people.

Unemployment, since we were first elected—and I note it was rising at the time—has fallen from 5.7 per cent to 5.1 per cent. In 2019, 260,000 jobs were created by the hard work of Australian businesses and Australian men and women going out there and making things happen in an Australian economy that has been supported through the proactive and enlightened economic policies of this government, which is about ensuring that this government lives within its means and Australian businesses can get out there and make things happen and create jobs right across our economy.

It is true to say that the youth unemployment rate is lower today than it has been at the past three federal elections. We have a plan to deliver employment to another 250,000 young Australians, because if a young Australian gets a job it changes their life. One of the greatest achievements of this government is reducing the level of welfare dependency in the working-age population to the lowest level in 30 years. Do you know how you do that? You get young people into jobs, and that's what our government is committed to doing. That's what our government is passionate about: creating jobs. They don't happen by accident. They happen by getting the tax burden down. They happen by ensuring that the government lives within its means. They happen by rolling out $100 billion infrastructure plans, ensuring we are delivering the projects on the ground. They happen by expanding our trade borders. They happen by investing in skills education and making that a priority, as we took to the last election. They happen through projects like the Youth Jobs PaTH, which was opposed by those opposite, which gets people into jobs and gives businesses the opportunity to put people in regional areas into jobs. Our government is about jobs. The opposition spends each day talking about petty politics.

**Economy**

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:09): My question is to the Treasurer. Why does the Treasurer pretend that weakness in the economy is entirely due to the fires and coronavirus when, before they hit, this Liberal government was already presiding over weak and slowing growth—with a one in front of it; stagnant wages growth; high underemployment; declining business investment and falling productivity; well below average consumer and business confidence; and record net debt and record household debt?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:10): I'm pleased to inform the member for Rankin and the House that we have the first current account surplus in more than 40 years, we have the lowest welfare dependency in 30 years, we have the biggest tax cuts in more than 20 years; and we have the first balanced budget in 11 years. The member for Rankin referred to the time before the coronavirus. That includes the month of December. That includes the job numbers for the month of December. We created 29,000 new jobs and unemployment fell to 5.1 per cent.

What was unemployment under Labor? It was 5.7 per cent. Employment growth today is at 2.1 per cent. What was it under Labor? It was 0.7 per cent. Today employment growth is around three times what it was under Labor and around double the OECD average. Under Labor, the gender pay gap was 17.2 per cent and rising. Today it is now 14 per cent, and we are seeing that women are about $1,000 a year better off in that particular bracket. Under Labor, non-mining investment was in freefall. It fell 10 per cent over their six years in government. Since we've come to government, growth in non-mining investment has been over 30 per cent. Under Labor, in their last year, 62,000 small businesses shut their doors. Under us, in the last reported year, 75,000 small businesses were created. Under Labor, living standards, as measured by real net national disposable income per capita, had fallen by 1.2 per cent. They are 3.3 per cent higher through the year today. Under Labor, in their last four budget outcomes, the budget deteriorated by about $80 billion; whereas, in our last four budgets we've seen an improvement of over $10 billion.

Growth in the Australian economy continues and we've seen more jobs created. Under Labor, you'll always see higher taxes and fewer jobs.

**Regional Australia**

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison-McCormack government is building resilience in regional Australia? Is he aware of any alternatives?

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:13): 'Resilience' is a very important word, and the people of Mallee are very resilient, and they need to be. Regional Australia can be its best self, and it will be under our policies and the development that we are putting into it as Liberals and as Nationals.
The Sunraysia Modernisation Project No. 2 is delivering for the people of Mildura and the Sunraysia area. I see the member for Watson nodding. He says that it's a good project. It is, and that's why we backed it. This $6 million project is creating 33 full-time equivalent jobs. It is going to improve the amount of table grapes grown in the Mildura, the Sunraysia area. Indeed, it is going to increase citrus. It's creating jobs. It's creating confidence; it's creating optimism; and it's creating hope. That's what our policies do.

When it comes to water, the Scottsdale dam in north-east Tasmania started in late 2018, and that 8,600 megalitre facility is going to be fully on line, fully commissioned, in the next few weeks. The people of that area have backed themselves, and we've backed them too. It's a $57 million project, and we've put $25 million towards it—because we are building dam infrastructure. We're putting in the pipelines; we're plumbing Australia. Right across this nation, we're doing it everywhere.

I'm asked about alternatives. Many of those on the front bench were in the government in June 2011 when the then Labor government, as a kneejerk reaction, shut down the live cattle trade. I know yesterday the Indonesian President Widodo was here, talking up trade, as you would expect the President of Indonesia—our near northern friends—would be. Those people opposite, who were in that government at that time, as a kneejerk reaction to a television program shut down the live trade just like that—overnight. They didn't even bother to pick up the phone to the Indonesian government and say that they were doing it. And there are people in northern Australia and Western Australia who still are not back in full employment because of that decision made by many of those opposite in that particular government.

We don't make decisions like that on a whim. We are clear, practical, pragmatic thinkers. We are certainly there for regional development, and we're getting the job done. We don't make kneejerk reaction decisions to television programs. We get on with the job of building the irrigation projects for the people of Sunraysia and Mildura and elsewhere across this nation. We're in there fighting hard, as part of the $100 billion infrastructure program right across this nation. And you're all benefiting from it; you should get on board and talk it up.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister's time has concluded. The member for Rankin.

Economy

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:16): My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer confirm that, since the election, the government has downgraded its own forecasts for growth, the IMF and OECD have downgraded Australia's growth forecasts more than those of other advanced economies, and the Reserve Bank has downgraded its forecast for growth three times? Why has the government refused to provide support to an economy that was already floundering even before the bushfires and coronavirus hit?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:16): I can confirm to the House that the International Monetary Fund has the Australian economy growing faster this year than the economies of the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The honourable member—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my right!

Mr McCormack: They like to talk down the economy. They like to talk down Australia.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister!

Mr FRYDENBERG: It's a very good point. The honourable member asked about the support that we were giving to the Australian economy. I can confirm that, in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, which was released just prior to Christmas, we announced the bringing forward of $4.2 billion in funding and spending on infrastructure. And we announced more than half a billion dollars extra for aged care. And, since the election, we've announced about $1.3 billion of commitments over and above what had previously been announced in relation to responding to the drought.

Those on this side of the House know that we announced a $2 billion national bushfire recovery fund, which was on top of the payments and allowances which we provide from the Commonwealth through the states. That $2 billion was announced without increasing taxes. And I remind the House that today unemployment is at 5.1 per cent. When we came to government, unemployment was at 5.7 per cent. I remind the House that employment growth today is at 2.1 per cent—around three times what it was under the Labor Party and around twice the OECD average. I refer to the real minimum wage. It has gone up every year under the coalition, whereas, under the Labor Party, it went down in three out of their six years in office. The Labor Party are in favour of higher taxes, they're in favour of fewer jobs and they're in favour of stronger unions. What we on this side of the House are in favour of is more jobs, lower taxes and a stronger Australian economy.
Tasmania: Bushfires

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. Hobart is the most bushfire vulnerable capital city in Australia, and there is still the possibility of dangerous bushfires this summer and autumn. Indeed, the University of Tasmania's Professor of Pyrogeography and Fire Science David Bowman has likened Hobart's fire threat to playing Russian roulette with a half-loaded chamber. Prime Minister, can you assure my community that the federal government has adopted a forward-leaning approach, is liaising with the Tasmanian government and has Commonwealth resources positioned and ready to respond? Moreover, will the federal government seize the opportunity for an apolitical climate change policy reset and allow the coalition a free vote on the member for Warringah's climate change bill?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:20): I thank the member for his question. I can assure him, yes, we have adopted a forward posture when it comes to the bushfire risk in Tasmania. I particularly want to take this opportunity to put on record my great thanks to the former Premier, Will Hodgman, a great Premier of Tasmania through whom most of that summer I was working with very closely before he announced his retirement. I am now working closely with Premier Peter Gutwein on exactly the same issues.

I can assure the member that the commissioners and chief officers of the strategic committee and the emergency meetings have met on nine occasions. It's brought together by the Director-General of Emergency Management Australia, who chairs that meeting. The Tasmanian chief officer, and/or the deputy, has been represented at all meetings, which have been conducted over the course of this terrible season. The Director-General of the EMA has also been in regular contact with Chief Officer Chris Arnold on several occasions to ensure that they have absolutely factored into pre-planning and decisions the advice that they're providing to the federal government.

I can also advise that the Australian Defence Force established a joint task force responsible for Tasmania and South Australia on 3 January 2020. It was then responsible for deploying personnel in response to the compulsory evacuation order. ADF capabilities available to support. A proactive and forward-leaning ADF posture was adopted in this state. Joint Task Force 1111 is based on South Australia and Tasmania's 9th Brigade, and a reserve unit was spread across both states, commanded by Brigadier Damian Cantwell. An ADF emergency support force was stood up in Tasmania, responding to JTF 1111, which was based in South Australia.

On 9 January the commander visited Tasmania to conduct reconnaissance and brief the Tasmanian Premier on ADF capabilities available to support. A proactive and forward-leaning ADF posture was adopted in this state. The 17th Sustainment Brigade formed a force support team based on the 2nd Force Support Battalion and augmented with medical and communications staff from the 1st Close Health Battalion and the 145th Signal Squadron to provide the major logistics, assets and personnel to support a Tasmanian based response. The 145th Signal Squadron undertook state-wide communications checks—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The member for Clark, on a point of order?

Mr Wilkie: It's on relevance. The community would be keen to hear the Prime Minister's response to the second part of the question about whether or not he will allow a free vote on the climate change bill.

The SPEAKER: This is the problem when you have a long preamble. As you acknowledged, you asked two questions. The Prime Minister is entitled to address it. If the member for Clark wants a more precise answer to his second question, I suggest that he just ask that next time. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: The government's response on a forward posture has been quite significant. The ADF teams conducted a route analysis of likely evacuation locations, including an amphibious landing zone, which obviously proved so critical in the evacuations that were taking place out of Victoria. Briefings on ADF capabilities available to state authorities were provided by the commanding officer of the 12th and 40th Royal Tasmania Regiment and Commanding Officer 24 Support Battalion to the state and regional emergency committees. Detailed planning was undertaken for a number of potential evacuation scenarios. (Time expired)

Economy

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (14:23): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Morrison government's responsible budget management is providing tax relief to families in my electorate of Longman, while ensuring the economy remains resilient in the face of future challenges? Is the Treasurer aware of any threats to this approach?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasury) (14:24): I thank the member for Longman for his question and also for his extensive experience in small business. He understands that small business is the backbone of the Australian economy. He was talking to small businesses across his electorate, including in Caboolture, and they
were saying that in the lead-up to last year's election fear of a Labor Party victory saw the phones go silent, but after the coalition's victory they have been as busy as ever in Caboolture, including the removal business that has bought a $120,000 truck, and including the garage and shed business that has employed a new crew. Those businesses are getting the benefit of the coalition's tax cuts for small businesses—legislated tax cuts to reduce the tax rate down to 25 per cent—and the instant asset write-off to companies with a turnover under $50 million, and up to $30,000, has been extended. The tax cuts we are providing, including the income tax cuts, have seen more than eight million Australians receive more than $6 billion in the first six months of those legislated tax cuts. This has helped with creating 1.5 million new jobs since we came to government, and in bringing the unemployment rate down from 5.7 per cent to the 5.1 per cent it is today.

We're on the side of lower taxes, but not everyone in this place believes in lower taxes! At the last election, those opposite promised $387 billion of higher taxes and to whack the so-called top end of town, the retirees, the mums and dads and the families businesses. So, you can imagine my surprise when I saw that the Leader of the Opposition being interviewed by Andrew Clennell on Sky News. He was asked a very direct question: 'Would you envisage no new taxes?' Here was his big chance to learn the lesson of the last election. This is what he said, 'We will consider them in terms of what revenue is required.'

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Barton!

Mr Frydenberg: But, for Labor, there is never enough revenue! Andrew Clennell asked, 'Would you envisage no increase in taxes?' Here was the Leader of the Opposition with his big opportunity to rule them out and he said, 'I'm not about to make those sorts of announcements.' The Leader of the Opposition knows that the Labor Party can't manage money, and when they can't manage money they come after the Australian people's money. The Labor Party took $387 billion of higher taxes to the last election; it's still on their books. The Labor Party will always be the party of higher taxes.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney! I call the member for Rankin.

Economy

Dr Chalmers (Rankin) (14:27): My question is to the Treasurer. Last week the Reserve Bank said that 'very low levels of investment' are a very significant issue for the Australian economy. Given that business investment is down 20 per cent under this Liberal government, and is now at its lowest levels since the last recession, three decades ago, why doesn't the government have a plan to lift business investment and get the economy going again?

Mr Frydenberg (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:27): Under the coalition, investment outside the mining sector has increased by 34 per cent since we came to government. Under Labor, investment outside the mining sector fell by 10 per cent during their time in office. The member for Rankin refers to the governor of the Reserve Bank. The governor of the Reserve Bank made a very interesting speech last week. He said that the fundamentals of the Australian economy were, in his words, 'very strong'. He further said:

The strong fundamentals include: world class endowments of natural resources; a highly skilled and innovative workforce; an established and predictable regulatory system; sound public finances; a diverse and growing population; and being well placed to benefit from the strong growth in Asia, not just in China, but also in the populous countries of Indonesia and India.

This is what the governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia said. So, we have a lot to feel fortunate about. We enjoy a set of fundamentals and a standard of living that few other countries enjoy. It's important that we do not lose sight of this.

Why is it only the Labor Party that is constantly talking down the Australian economy, when the governor of the Reserve Bank is saying how strong the fundamentals are? It's because the Labor Party is interested only in the politics of the economy, not the jobs that the economy creates, not in boosting the livelihoods of hardworking Australians.

The reality is that when we came to government we inherited a budget that was in a mess: $48½ billion, or around three per cent of GDP, was the deficit the Labor Party bequeathed the Australian people and the coalition. Well, we have seen, over the past six years, a turnaround. We have now delivered the first balanced budget in 11 years. When we came to government, unemployment was 5.7 per cent; today it's 5.1 per cent. As the Prime Minister has said many times, including yesterday, when we came to government two free trade agreements covered two-way trading relationships—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin on a point of order?

Dr Chalmers: Yes, on relevance. If he doesn't have a plan for business investment he should just say so.
The SPEAKER: No. The member for Rankin will resume his seat. That was not a point of order. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr FRYDENBERG: Our plan for business is creating more jobs, including through free trade agreements—and yesterday was a historic day—through lower taxes for small businesses and income earners and from a 10-year $100-billion rolling infrastructure program. Only those on this side of the House will reduce people's taxes and create more jobs.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the next question, I'm just going to say—and I've made the point before—that I'm not going to allow frivolous points of order. If that practice continues—it's happened a couple of times—what I'll do is take the approach that former Speaker Jenkins did, and that is to simply rule on the point of order without hearing from the member. It's not a great path to go down, but, if you leave me with no alternative, that's what I'll do. If you want to know how that works, you can ask the Minister for Home Affairs, who was the subject of it in opposition.

Energy

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is lowering energy prices for hardworking Australians while not increasing taxes? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (14:32): I thank the member for Moncrieff for her question. She, like all of us on this side of the House, is committed to affordable, reliable energy for her constituents. This is so important because affordable energy means that households have more money in their pockets to spend on other things. It also means that small businesses and energy-intensive industries are able to invest and grow jobs.

In the past 12 months we've been taking strong action. We've imposed price caps that are crucial for the most-vulnerable Australians. We're encouraging new supply into the market through the Underwriting New Generation Investments program and the Retailer Reliability Obligation. We're helping customers get the best possible deal through reference prices, and we are seeing results. For the past four consecutive quarters, for the first time since the CPI began, we have seen electricity price reduction—a total 3½ per cent reduction in retail prices.

It goes much further than that, because we have also seen, in the past three months, a 35 per cent reduction in both electricity and gas prices, through the toughest months of the year—35 per cent reduction in wholesale prices: 30 per cent in Queensland, 50 per cent in South Australia, 38 per cent in Victoria and 42 per cent in Tasmania. Why is this so important? Wholesale prices make up a third of the bill for retail customers, for residential customers. They make up much more of the bill for small business and industry. They are all getting a break on their energy costs as a result of this government's actions. The job now is to make sure that those wholesale price reductions are passed through to customers and the big-stick legislation, which they opposed many times over, will be there to ensure that it happens.

But worse than that, at the last election, those opposite took to the Australian people economy-wrecking targets that would raise the price of electricity and raise the price of gas for all Australians. The Leader of the Opposition has now declared that those policies were a mistake. The member for Hindmarsh's policies were a mistake. They have no policies, no plans and no idea.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:34): I would like to inform the House we have present this afternoon a parliamentary delegation from Cyprus led by Mr Demetris Syllouris, President of the House of Representatives of Cyprus. On behalf of the House, I extend a very warm welcome to you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:35): My question is to the Treasurer. It follows his earlier answer about public finances. Can the Treasurer confirm that net debt has just reached a new record high, and that most of that is Liberal debt accumulated under the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:35): I can confirm that net debt is $392.3 billion in 2019-20. That is 19.5 per cent of GDP. But I can also confirm to the House that when we came to government, debt was rising by more than 30 per cent per year. Guess who was chief of staff to that economic genius, the former member for Lilley, Wayne Swan? The member who wants to tax a lot; the member who likes to tax a lot: the member for Rankin.
The reality is that Labor inherited a pristine balance sheet. After the coalition, with John Howard and Peter Costello, had managed the public's finances, there was a $20 billion surplus and no net debt. By the time Labor left office, it had left behind $240 billion in accumulated deficit, with debt growing by almost 35 per cent. The reality is that it's been hard work and it's taken us six years, but we have delivered the first balanced budget in 11 years. I'll say that again. When we came to government, we inherited a budget deficit of $48½ billion: around three per cent of GDP. We have now banked a balanced budget. Could you imagine responding to the challenges we face, with the fires, the virus, the floods, the drought and the ongoing trade tensions between the US and China, with a $48½ billion deficit? We would have had to put up taxes. The Coalition doesn't do that. Only the Labor Party does that. The reality is that the Labor Party had $387 billion of higher taxes that they were going to whack on the Australian people. They would have been whacking it on the Australian people at the same time that we were dealing with these challenges. No wonder former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating said that the Labor Party had lost the ability to talk about aspiration and to speak to aspirational Australians.

Who is to blame for Labor's train wreck of economic policies? It was the member for Rankin who, with the member for McMahon, was the co-architect, the genius who came up with $387 million of higher taxes; the geniuses who came up with the attack on the top end of town; the geniuses who came up with the attack on retirees, mums and dads who wanted to have an investment property and family businesses who wanted to create more jobs.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney's interjections are the problem. She's warned.

Agriculture

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management. Will the minister outline to the House the importance of agriculture to jobs and the economy, and how the Morrison-McCormack government is supporting the future of farming in Australia?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (14:39): I thank the member for Cowper for his question and I acknowledge the rich history that the Cowper electorate has in contributing to our agricultural sector, particularly through beef and dairy, but also the important agricultural sector that underpins a lot of our economy, a contribution of 2.2 per cent of our GDP. We've signed up proudly to reaching an agricultural output goal of $100 billion by 2030, working with the industry and understanding the challenges we face. We've faced many of the challenges. In fact, the electorate of Cowper has faced up to many of those challenges, both through drought and fire. And, proudly, this government, where those disasters have intersected, hasn't skimmed. We've made sure that we've contributed not only to those communities through our recovery through the fire programs but also through the drought with over $2 billion in addition to the here and now payments, which are giving dignity and respect to those people who lost it all and those who have been impacted, to make sure that they have the essentials of life. Now we're making sure that they can recover, with $75,000 grants to be able to rebuild. We've also partnered with the states and say we're going to do the clean-up for them. We're going to take that burden off them and take that away so that insurance companies can put more into the rebuilding. That's an investment in their future.

Then, with the drought, understanding the importance of the recovery will take some time, because we have had some rain. Proudly, we have had some rain. But one rain event does not break this drought. While it's pleasing to see that we've now got tractors and planners moving and we've got people buying stock—the psychology of regional and rural Australia has changed on a dime from rain—more rain will continue to drive the agricultural sector. That's why it's important that our programs look not only to the recovery just here and now—supporting those families that are doing it tough through drought—but also to the future in reaching that $100 billion goal.

We've now made sure that the Regional Investment Corporation will give working capital. Working capital will allow them up to $2 million to be able to replant and restock, because we understand that it takes time to grow a crop, to harvest it and to get the cash flow in the bank account; or to be able to grow the progeny, to be able to sell them at market, to rebuild your cash flow and to rebuild your business, to rebuild regional and rural Australia.

We've done that with the trade agreements. We're putting the environment around them with our trade agreements to allow them to be able to access markets around the world. Now, with the Indonesian Pacific agreement, the TPP, Peru, China, Japan and Korea, we are empowering the agricultural sector to recover—to not just survive this drought but thrive after it. These are the actions of a responsible government: understanding how regional economies work and understanding that this investment is not just in agriculture; more importantly, it's in its people. Its people, its human capital, is the most precious resource the Australian agricultural sector has, and this is an investment and a down payment in them and this country.
The **SPEAKER**: I'll just say to those members who were holding up bits of paper at the end, it's a sure way to be ejected under standing order 94(a). I say to the member for Chifley, it also, coincidently, for some reason, makes me fail to recognise them when they jump at various times!

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (14:42): My question is to the Prime Minister. Young Australians in my electorate have faced the stress and trauma of bushfires for weeks and weeks and weeks, yet the government's only promised one headspace satellite service for my entire electorate, and it still hasn't opened. Will the government listen to the calls from my community to upgrade the Katoomba headspace to a full centre and get it up and running immediately?

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:43): I want to thank the member for her point. Only yesterday, I met with Pat McGorry as well as spoke with the head of headspace for Australia, Jason Trethowan. We discussed a number of needs across Australia, and, whilst they didn't raise this one, I can say that this is one of 30 new services which the government is funding. And, more significantly than that, we know that the Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is working closely with the local community to ensure that the new headspace is established. In particular, in addition, the PHN is receiving funding of $500,000 to support young people aged 12 to 25 in bushfire-affected communities. This is in addition to the headspace funding. So we are supporting headspace, by establishing one, and we're providing right now, at this moment, $500,000. Unfortunately, that important detail was omitted from the question. As well as that—and I make this commitment to the House—there is additional funding for those PHNs and those headspaces which require additional services. If demand exceeds what is provided for, then we will provide that additional funding; so that will be demand driven in the case of Katoomba. It's one of 30 around the country. It's supplemented by $500,000 specifically for the PHN. Again, I realise that that was an omission from the question. As well as that, the commitment is that, if demand exceeds what is currently provided, we will meet that demand in full.

**Economy**

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is creating a stronger economy by providing practical support and assistance to help small businesses succeed and create more jobs?

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (14:45): I thank the member for Bass. While she has been a member in this place for only a short time, she is a long-time fighter for small businesses in Tasmania. She knows, as does everyone on this side of House, that small businesses are the backbone of our economy in the cities and, importantly, in our regions. Small-business owners work hard; they face risks. They're the ones who are out there innovating, investing and, importantly, generating jobs. And the Morrison government knows that the best thing for small businesses is a government that responsibly manages the economy and delivers some real, practical outcomes and support for those people who have a go.

Delivering for small businesses is a whole-of-government approach. The assistant minister to the Prime Minister is further cutting red tape through our deregulation agenda. The Treasurer is delivering lower taxes, including the hugely popular instant asset write-off which has been extended and increased to $30,000. We have the energy minister, who is delivering lower power prices, which I know is a major concern for our businesses and for industry. We have the education minister, together with the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, delivering record funding to ensure small businesses have the skilled workforce that they need for the future. And the Deputy Prime Minister and the urban infrastructure minister are delivering better roads and infrastructure links that are going to help our businesses, because it's going to save them time and money. And we know that every dollar that a small business saves on dealing with red tape, taxes, bills or transport is a dollar that they have to spend on expanding their business, and that will lead to them being able to create more jobs.

In my own department, we've revamped and simplified our business one-stop shop: business.gov.au. This is a great resource. In the last year alone, there have been 9.5 million clicks on the website and 65,000 calls made to the helpline. Over 4,300 businesses have had contact with our AusIndustry outreach staff.

**Opposition members interjecting—

**Mrs ANDREWS**: And it's fine for those opposite to heckle, but if they had been elected at the last election with their almost $400 billion in taxes, they certainly would have damaged small businesses—

**The SPEAKER**: The minister's time has concluded. The Leader of the Opposition.
Energy

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. I refer to his new resources minister's statement:

We have got a real risk particularly with solar panels and lithium batteries that they could turn out to be this generation's asbestos.

Does this statement reflect his government's policy?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:49): Under our government, we have now one of the highest rates of solar panels on people's roofs of any country in the world and, under our government's policy, we know the future of emissions reduction and renewable energy is achieved through technology, not taxation. We know you achieve it not by putting people's electricity prices up. We know that you don't put more taxes on it. And we know that you don't wipe out jobs in regional Australia, because of the approaches that those opposite would have applied to the Australian people had they been elected at the last election. The Minister for Resources and Northern Australia is an electrical engineer. He could write on a postage stamp what the Leader of the Opposition would know about this issue compared to the new minister. What we have in the minister for resources is someone who understands the importance of our resources industry.

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

Mr Albanese: On relevance. It was a very specific question. It was about the comments that solar panels and lithium batteries are this generation's asbestos. Is that the government's policy?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. It is a specific question. The Prime Minister has been entitled to a preamble and is entitled to address what the government's policy is, and he's been doing that. I think that the difficulty, when it comes to answering questions, is that the questioner can't demand, essentially, what's a yes or a no answer. In being asked, 'Does this represent the government's policy?' the Prime Minister's entitled to say what the government's policy is. I'm listening to him very carefully, but beyond that and the specifics of the question he can't stray into other areas.

Mr MORRISON: I can confirm that the small-scale renewable energy technology package remains part of the government's policy and will continue to remain part of the government's policy. I've been asked about comments by the minister for resources. He has a lot of common sense—and I quote: "As an electrical engineer I can tell you solar panels don’t work in the dark," Mr Pitt told the ABC in July 2019. "We can’t have the entire Australian economy be reliant on the weather. Otherwise you’d only be working between 11am and 3pm in the afternoon if it’s just on solar. You won’t do anything in the dark."

The minister for resources is making the point—which seems lost on those opposite—that, if you're putting all your eggs in one basket on intermittent renewables, you cannot support jobs and heavy industry. The Leader of the Opposition needs a GPS to explain his policy.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs.

Mr MORRISON: He's got one policy on climate in north Queensland and another one down in Melbourne, just like the former member for Maribyrnong. He needs a location services enabler to define the climate policy of the opposition. Mr Speaker, they can't even tell you what their 2030 target is, and if you ask the deputy leader of the Labor Party—normally so eloquent at this dispatch box, as he comes and gives each audition without notes—about coal—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned. He's not going to bellow at me. I've warned him before about his incredibly loud voice. It penetrates my ear. If you keep going, I'll be deaf in this ear; then I won't hear anything you say. And I can assure the Prime Minister he doesn't need to talk to me about the allocation of the call. I've got it all in hand. Simple. Just go from one side to the other and—the member for Herbert.

Economy

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is securing the future of regional Australia by backing our resource industry and creating Australian jobs?

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) (14:53): Thank you for the call, Mr Speaker, and it's great to be back. I thank the member for Herbert for his question. And how good is the member for Herbert? The member for Herbert knows, and I know, is how important the resources sector is to this country. He knows how important the resources sector is for jobs. He knows how important the resources sector is for jobs.
sector is for growth in our economy. Mr Speaker, as you know, I'm an engineer. I do tend to like numbers, and the numbers for the resources sector are incredibly important: $281 billion into the economy—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! The member for Maribyrnong. The minister will pause for a second. I need to be able to hear the minister. The member for Chifley and others: it's fine to have a joke, but it sort of ends; it doesn't go on uncontrollably. The minister has the call.

Mr PITT: As I was saying before we were so rudely interrupted, the resources sector delivering $281 billion is expected in 2019-20. The Minerals Council estimates that they have contributed $243 billion in royalties over the last 13 years. They are royalties that build schools, hospitals and roads. They are royalties that help deliver things for Australians. It is an incredibly important industry, and the member for Herbert knows it. The member for Herbert knows all about the resources sector and how important it is. They have new investment of $33 billion in 2018-19, and they are on track, as I've said, for $281 billion into the future.

What we know is that 245,000 Australians are employed in the resources sector, and I say to each and every one of them: 'If you get up in the morning, you put on your steel-cap boots, you put on your high-vis shirt, you get your helmet out of your locker and you go to work, regardless of whether you drive the tip truck or you drive the tip truck, you work in the pit or you work in administration, this government is on your side. The member for Herbert is on your side. The Prime Minister is on your side.' We will support the resources sector. We want more growth. We want more jobs. They will deliver, and I am 100 per cent with them.

Dairy Industry

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:56): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister consider the implementation of a minimum farmgate milk price to help our desperately struggling dairy farmers?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (14:56): This is nothing more than a cruel hoax—a cruel hoax to dairy farmers that have been doing it tough. This should be above politics and cheap politicisation. In fact, the member for Hunter is not promising a minimum milk price. What he said was that he'd get the ACCC to investigate. Let me save the Australian taxpayer a couple of million dollars. The ACCC gave back a report that actually said that it shouldn't do that but we should have a dairy code of conduct—one which this government is putting in place and for which we are making sure there is a time line of transition, complemented by a market mechanism to allow growth like that which other commodities enjoy.

This is about ensuring that populist politics and the policies of One Nation are not adopted by the Labor Party. This reckless, cruel hoax to dairy farmers that are doing it tough is something I didn't think I would see. The last time that we had a floor price was for wool. And how did that work out? There ended up being a stockpile—an oversupply. And all economists say exactly the same thing. This is a perishable product. In fact, I remember the member for Hunter coming into this chamber and espousing the fact that it was a Labor minister that got rid of the floor price on wool. But now they've turned around and gone with the economic advice of One Nation. That is what the economic credentials of the Australian Labor Party have become—nothing more than a cruel hoax.

Defence Industry

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is building a stronger defence industry and creating more Australian jobs?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:59): I thank the member for Stirling for his question. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank him for his outstanding former service to the ADF and also for his strong passion for the defence industry. Because we have a strong economy, the Morrison government is investing a record $200 billion in our defence capability. This is creating jobs and backing small business right around the country. In the last financial year alone, $8.1 billion worth of defence contracts was awarded to Australian small and medium-sized businesses. Just last week I had the pleasure, together with the member for Capricornia, to announce a $125 million contract for upgrades to the Shoalwater Bay training area in northern Queensland. It is a significant contract. In fact, 80 per cent of the work under that contract will go to local industries, with $70 million flowing to those local companies, creating some 220 jobs right across Mackay, Gladstone, Emerald and Rockhampton.

Recently I joined Luerssen Australia at an event in Perth to recognise the Australian small businesses that are contributing to the build of the 12 offshore patrol vessels. I had the pleasure to meet representatives from around 100 small and medium-sized defence businesses that are part of the build of our offshore patrol vessel project. In a win for the Tasmanian defence industry, Taylor Bros Marine were recognised for their contribution to this $3.6
billion project. As part of Taylor's $89 million contract they will design, produce and install the accommodation spaces for all 12 of the OPVs. Penske Power Systems were also represented at the Luerssen event. Penske has been contracted to supply the MTU engines for all of the 12 OPVs.

It's small, highly-skilled businesses like Taylor Bros and Penske that are contributing to the creation of over a thousand jobs on the OPV projects. We're delivering thousands of jobs right across Australia, opening up new opportunities in the defence industry, and we're building new skills and sovereign capability. Our policies are backing small businesses to help us deliver $200 billion worth of defence capabilities.

In the time remaining I'd like to draw to the attention of the Australian small-business community the fact that our government has just announced the beginning of the Land 400 phase 3 roadshows. This program, worth up to approximately $15 billion, will create Aussie jobs and opportunities for many small businesses who aren't already in the defence industry, as we deliver our 450 infantry fighting vehicles for our ADF men and women.

**Energy**

**Mr BUTLER** (Hindmarsh—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. The proponents of the Collinsville coal power plant have said it will require a taxpayer indemnity from carbon risk, which the Australian Industry Group says could cost taxpayers $17 billion. Will the Prime Minister provide that indemnity?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:02): Our government believes in jobs. We believe in jobs in North Queensland, we believe in jobs in northern Tasmania, we believe in jobs in Western Australia. Right across the country, we believe in jobs and we believe in ensuring that manufacturing continues to be able to get access to the reliable power it needs to ensure that it can support jobs and livelihoods into the future. So, before the last election, our government committed to undertake to look at what the reliable power generation options were to support heavy industry in North Queensland. That review then led to the series of options that were put before the government, for which the government has agreed to support undertaking feasibility studies to assess those options and how they can support jobs in North Queensland.

We are technology agnostic when it comes to ensuring we have reliable power generation in this country. We want to ensure that electricity prices come down, not go up. We want to ensure the lights stay on, not go off. We want to ensure that industries, whether they be in North Queensland or anywhere else, that provide the livelihoods for Australians continue to be maintained. We will assess the options that support those jobs. The simple question I have for those opposite—

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

**Mr Burke**: On direct relevance. The question goes specifically to the indemnity and the taxpayer funded indemnity. It is in two parts. Both only go to that point, and that's the one point the Prime Minister hasn't touched.

The **SPEAKER**: I do have to say that I agree with that, and the Prime Minister's had more than a preamble. The question was very specific indeed and, whilst the Prime Minister is entitled to talk generally at the start of his answer, he needs to either come to that question—but he certainly can't have a question for the opposition. The member for Dawson on a point of order.

**Mr Christensen**: The point of order is that the question is purely hypothetical. There is no carbon price, unless they're proposing to bring in a new tax.

The **SPEAKER**: I thank the member for Dawson, but the question is in order. If he thought it wasn't in order, the time to raise it was when it was asked, not when it's been half answered. The Prime Minister has the call.

**Mr MORRISON**: The feasibility study I am talking about was for the Collinsville project, which is what I assume the questioner was referring to and the matter that he raised with me.

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Mr MORRISON**: I know where Collinsville is; you mightn't. I also know where the jobs are in Collinsville. They're the jobs you want to take away, Leader of the Opposition. That's what the Leader of the Opposition—

The **SPEAKER**: No, just a—

**Mr MORRISON**: Mr Speaker, I was simply responding to the interjection and I will cease doing that. We have committed to the feasibility study on the Collinsville project. We have not considered anything beyond the feasibility study.

The **SPEAKER**: The Prime Minister—

*Mr Burke interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: I am not going to hear from the Manager of Opposition Business. As I've said, the Prime Minister, for more than two minutes now, has addressed the general topic of that, but the question was very specific about an indemnity and whether the government would provide that indemnity. The Prime Minister—

An honourable member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Sorry? I've actually got a copy of the question because we take notes. It was a very specific question. The Prime Minister's entitled to have a preamble. He's gone well beyond the normal preamble. He needs to address himself to the specific part of the question or wind his answer up.

Mr MORRISON: What I was seeking to do was to say that the feasibility study of the Collinsville project is what the government has committed to undertake. The matter that the member has raised with me, in this question, is not currently before the government. It's not currently before the government. It's not before us. What I know is our government will always stand up for jobs. The Leader of the Opposition wants to have it each way on every bet, and when it comes to the resources industry in North Queensland and the jobs of North Queensland, he's nowhere to be found.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. Manager of Opposition Business, I'm about to go to the next question.

Trade

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. Will the minister please update the House on what the Morrison government is doing to secure new trade opportunities for Australian businesses and how this is creating more Australian jobs?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (15:08): I thank the member for Sturt for his question. He knows that trade means jobs. Australia has 13 free trade agreements in force. Another two are concluded but not yet in force, including the historic agreement with Indonesia. We know what that is going to do: help build trade between Indonesia and Australia and create more jobs. Four are being negotiated, and there's a prospective UK-Australia agreement in the pipes, which will also be incredibly important, given Brexit.

Since coming to office, the coalition government has started and concluded seven free trade agreements. More than 50 per cent of the free trade agreements that this nation has concluded have been concluded by our side in our term of government. Where does this count? ABS data last week showed Australia posted its largest ever calendar-year trade surplus in 2019—$67.6 billion. It also marked a record-breaking run of 24 consecutive monthly trade surpluses. You have to go back to 1972-73 to get such a run. That is what our government has delivered. What does it mean to important sectors of our economy? Resources are up over 17 per cent. Manufacturing exports are up over nine per cent. Rural exports are up $225 million to almost $48 billion. And what about our services exports, which grew by 8.9 per cent? For the first time, our services exports are over the $100 billion mark. That is what our government is doing.

Why are we doing this? We are doing this because we know that trade creates jobs. That's why we are doing it. One in five jobs in Australia are reliant on trade, and, for regional and rural Australia, it's one in four jobs. That is why we want to make sure that we are putting the trade agreements in place.

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat for a second. The member for Lyons, on a point of order?

Mr Brian Mitchell: I really am finding it very hard to hear the minister. He continually turns away from the microphone, and we cannot hear his answer. It's a fascinating subject matter, and we can't hear him.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lyons can resume his seat. I don't need your commentary—I really don't. It is true that, when ministers turn, the noise is not there through the microphone. But can I point out to the member for Lyons—I am trying to keep a straight face—that mostly we can't hear because of your interjections. So I tell you what; I'll do a deal with the member for Lyons: he can never interject again and I'll make sure ministers speak directly into the microphone. The minister has the call.

Mr TEHAN: That sounds like a good deal, Mr Speaker. It is incredibly important how this government is focusing on jobs. There are now 53,000 businesses in our nation exporting, and that includes 46,000 small businesses. That's up 18.5 per cent since 2014. We're focused on jobs. Those on the other side can be cynical—and you can smirk and be smarmy and smart. But over this side we are focusing on the Australian people and creating jobs through trade—and we're proud of it. (Time expired)

Mr Morrison: I ask that further questions by placed on the Notice Paper.
DOCKETs
Presentation
Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:12): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Aged Care

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

The Government's failure to deliver adequate aged care services to older Australians.

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 COLLINS (Franklin) (15:13): This government continues to fail older Australians. Many older Australians and their loved ones are still desperate to access care in this country. This is despite this government calling a royal commission and saying that it would implement the recommendations from that royal commission. Indeed, the very first interim recommendation—and royal commissions don't usually make interim recommendations—was to fix up the home care waitlist. And what do we have today? We have over 100,000 older Australians who have had an assessment for care, who are eligible for care, who have been deemed as needing care, who are not getting the care they need under this government.

It is shameful that, after calling for a royal commission, after pressure from the public, and after saying that they would implement the recommendations, we still have no plan from this Prime Minister about how he is going to properly fix the home care waitlist. Instead what we have seen is a bit of smoke and mirrors and a bit of marketing saying, 'Yeah; we've got this.' When you release only 10,000 packages when 110,000 people are waiting, you ain't got it at all. In fact, older Australians are still wondering when they are going to get their home care package. The Productivity Commission's recent report said that the mean wait time for someone waiting, you ain't got it at all. In fact, older Australians are still wondering when they are going to get their home care package. More than 25,000 older Australians have died while waiting for their home-care package. The transition to the Commonwealth Home Support Program, which was supposed to be integrated into home-care packages, was first supposed to happen in 2018; it was delayed to 2020 and now to 2022 because the government can't get its act together. We've got growing concerns that rural, regional and remote residential facilities are at risk of closure. We had a motion in the Senate amending a bill about transparency, and the government didn't support it. We've got workforce issues that the government has not addressed. Recommendation after recommendation, from report after report, is sitting on the minister's desk, still not fully implemented, including from the report on elder abuse. None of the aged-care recommendations have been fully implemented, more than 2½ years after the government got that report—2½ years! We're talking about aged care's part in elder abuse. This is just disgraceful. They clearly have no plan to deal with it.

The government keep saying, 'We can't do anything before the royal commission,' but they have done something. Just before Christmas, up on their website was a little notice:

New aged care assessment arrangements will provide streamlined consumer assessment for access to aged care services from April 2021.

They're actually going to privatisate the aged-care assessment teams. It's absolutely outrageous. This is a professional workforce of almost 1,000 workers around Australia—professionals, registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists—who are qualified to do proper assessments of what type of care older Australians need, and what are those opposite going to do? They're going to privatisate these assessments. It's not just Labor that's been critical of this. Even the Liberal health minister in New South Wales, Brad Hazzard, has come out and said:

NSW has major concerns … It seems pre-emptive and unreasonable to be effectively privatising health aged-care services while the royal commission into aged care is still underway.
When the federal minister was questioned about it he said, 'The royal commission supports us.' But, unfortunately for the minister, he was wrong. The aged-care royal commissioner had to slap the minister down and say, 'The royal commission has not at all considered what should happen to the aged-care assessment teams.' The minister was not telling the truth, something we're used to from this government, which is totally loose with the truth every single time. They pretend they're fixing home care; they haven't done it. They say they can't do anything because of the aged-care royal commission, then they privatise the aged-care assessment teams—or try to. They're under criticism for it, and they still will not prioritise and come up with a plan for dealing with the aged-care system in Australia today. It is outrageous that older Australians—100,000 of them—are still languishing on the waiting list for home care. I have raised it in this place time and time again, but it is still an issue that the government doesn't have a clear plan for.

There are many things they could do, because they actually have a whole heap of recommendations that tell them some of the things they could do. Some of them don't even cost the government very much money and could be done quite quickly and easily, in terms of the home-care waiting list. But those opposite still haven't done any of those things. They could prioritise older Australians who have a terminal illness and only a short period of time before they die. Surely those older Australians who have had that type of diagnosis deserve some care at home.

It is appalling that we're getting 93-year-olds being told they have to wait three years for their home-care package. What does the minister think is happening to these older Australians as they languish at home waiting for care? It is not good enough in Australia today for the Prime Minister to get up here and pretend everything is wonderful. We get the big marketing ad: 'How great is Australia today? How good are we?' It's not good for older Australians. It's not good for their loved ones and their families, who are trying desperately. They ring my office and the offices of the members on this side—and I'm sure they're ringing the offices of the members on that side too—to try and get some care for these older Australians. It is not good enough that they have to ring members of parliament and beg to get care for their loved ones.

Some of the stories that I and other members in this place get about older Australians would bring you to tears. There are so many personal stories. I have been fortunate to meet some of these older Australians who are at home waiting for care. Of course, we can't give them any comfort at all, because the government said it would respond to the royal commission's interim recommendations—and the first one was to fix home care—and we got 10,000 packages, but only 5,000 packages straight up in November, and there are 110,000 people on that list. So, even if the whole 10,000 packages were delivered, there would still be 100,000 older Australians waiting.

Then we have the obfuscation with not releasing data on time and dropping the data on Friday afternoons when they think nobody is looking. Then we can't get an answer to how many Australians died whilst waiting for care. You get huge obfuscation by this government when they should be trying to come up with a plan to fix aged care in Australia today. Older Australians and their loved ones can't afford to wait. Older Australians in their 90s and older Australians who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness do not have the time for this government to keep sitting on its hands. They don't have the time to deal with all the bureaucracy that this government puts in their way. Certainly they don't have the time to deal with aged-care assessment teams being privatised.

The aged-care assessment teams are actually the only part of the aged-care system that hasn't been widely criticised during the royal commission. It's probably the only part that's working well. So what's this government's great plan? 'We'll privatise that bit. We'll try to save a little bit of money here. We'll outsource it to some mates of ours'—that seems to be what happens over there. This privatisation should not go ahead. The government should stop the privatisation at least until it gets the royal commission's recommendations. As I said, it has been widely criticised. None of the states and territories are supporting this. There's a COAG meeting at the end of the month, and I'm sure that they're going to put to the minister their views about the aged-care assessment teams.

They are professional, hardworking teams who have all the qualifications to do the assessments properly. Labor, of course, are supportive of streamlining assessments for the Commonwealth Home Support Program and home-care packages, but we will not sit idly by while this government tries to privatise a workforce of at least 1,000 people, who are currently working for state and territory governments and local governments. We will not stand by while they try to do this, because it will hurt older Australians. Not only that; who is going to actually provide these assessments? They will be organisations that will then go out and provide care. What will happen is these organisations will then bid and will be doing that care.

They should not be privatising these aged-care assessment teams. Most of them are actually located in hospitals. They're dealing with some of the bed block that this government has created by not providing home-care packages, by increasing waiting lists in residential care and by increasing waiting lists in home care. The government needs to act and the government needs to do something today, particularly about home care. It said in its response to the royal commission that it would respond. Clearly it is not doing anywhere near enough when it comes to supporting older Australians at home and in residential aged care.
Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (15:23): I'm delighted to take this MPI, because since the 2018-19 budget this government has invested in an extra 44,000 home-care packages, at a cost of $2.7 billion. When the opposition had the chance to be an alternative government, how much did they allocate at the last election, less than a year ago? Zero places. So 44,000 versus zero places. That's the reality. It's important to remember that they had $387 billion in extra taxes, but not 10,000, not 8,000, not 6,000, not 4,000 and not 2,000 places—zero places. We've invested in an extra 44,000 places since the 2018-19 budget. For all of their hyperbole, when they believed that they were about to become the government and were preparing to be in government, they had not one extra home-care place. If you want an example of extraordinary hubris, systemic hypocrisy and an utter failure of policy and priority, the Australian Labor Party's zero home-care places at the last election stands as a totemic failure and a totemic figure.

In addition to that, we've taken—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

Mr HUNT: I'll take the member for Maribyrnong on, because he was the leader at the time: Mr Zero, when it comes to home care places. We have gone from 60,000 places, when Labor was last in, to 150,000 places at the moment. That's a growth of 150 per cent, dramatically outstripping the increase in the population in that age group. In the last two years alone what we've seen is a dramatic increase in the places and a 13 per cent decrease in waiting times. These are our tasks and our responsibilities, in our time, and absolutely we take those on. Sixty thousand to 150,000—that's 150 per cent growth, dramatically outstripping the rate of growth of those in the aged-care cohort.

In addition to that, we did call a royal commission. We called a royal commission for a very real reason: we looked at the systemic challenges over decades. That royal commission has made a series of interim findings, and we've accepted all of them and we've acted on all of them. We've taken, immediately, an investment decision of $537 million, including an additional 10,000 home care places at $496 million. We've also had $25 million to improve medication management. We're the ones that have taken this challenge on—nobody else at no other time—and we've embraced and accepted the recommendations and the findings of the royal commission through the interim process. There's $10 million to increase support for dementia behaviour management through advisory services; $4.7 million to help younger people, under 65 years, to move from residential aged care to more age appropriate support.

These are things that are actually happening. At the very moment when the member for Maribyrnong and the shadow minister sought to take control of the country and sought to take control of the aged-care system, they gave zero: zero, zero between them. That's an extraordinary indictment on the priorities that they have. Over the period, we've put in 44,000 and they've put in zero. Over the period since we've been in government: 60,000 to 150,000 home care places. Calling a royal commission: with all of the reality that it will make difficult findings for Australia, and we embrace what they have done.

Let me look at what we've also done. In terms of residential aged care, when Labor was in power there were 186,000 places. We have increased that now to this year 219,000 and next year 226,000 or from $9 billion to $13.3 billion of investment. Those increases are significant. It's part of a much broader increase from $13 billion to almost $22 billion, $23 billion, $24 billion and $25 billion, a near doubling of funding over the course since Labor left government. This is at a faster rate than inflation, at a faster rate than the vast majority of areas of government investment. We did inherit a system with great challenges and we have made, successively, very significant increases: a near doubling of funding, a 1½-fold increase in the home care places.

Let me ask the opposition this question: what was the rate of home care per person, over the age of 75, under you as opposed to us? It's been dramatically higher under this government. It's not just the raw numbers; the rate is dramatically higher. We are providing higher numbers, a higher rate and a reduction in the waiting times. Those are the important things. At the same time, we are investing in younger people living in residential aged care. The royal commission identified what has been a longstanding challenge over some decades now. It set out three goals, and we have accepted all of those: no people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022, no people under the age of 45 living in residential aged care by 2022 and no people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025. These are all extremely important things.

One of the other things I want to deal with, because it's been raised on a number of occasions, is some sort of indication—this is the first time I have had these figures, so I think they will be very important and informative to the House. The opposition has tried to indicate that people who were looking to be on a home care package had not been receiving them. In fact, the latest advice that I have is that 98 per cent of senior Australians who are waiting for a package at their assessed level had been offered support from the government, and that continues to be the case. Most significantly, the opposition has tried to indicate that, in some way, that led to people dying. That is a shameful accusation. But what I have not had before is a comparison of the figures of the average rate of
death for those in the general population who are 75 years and over, and the average rate of death for those who are 75 and over and who are looking for home care support. At this point in time, there is a six per cent general population loss of life for those 75 and over and 5.2 per cent for those who are actually seeking additional home care support. I say that because we have a great task, but I wanted to deal with what has been a shameful, disgraceful, disgusting and dishonest accusation. I think it is time to deal with that; I had not previously seen those figures and I had not previously received those figures.

Let us set out what is an important matter. Firstly, we called a royal commission that nobody else had ever done before. We called that royal commission on our watch, in our time, because we believed that historic challenges needed to be addressed and they needed to be addressed in a way which had never been done before and on a scale which had never been done before. As a consequence of that, we accepted all of the findings of the interim report. We have acted on those findings with over $500 million of investment, including younger people, including medication management and including home care.

More broadly, in terms of home care, what have we done? There has been an up to 150 per cent increase so far from 60,000 places under Labor to 150,000 places now. And, as we've done that, we've made sure that 98 per cent of those people seeking places have been offered support. But we are doing more work—44,000 place since the 2018 budget versus zero. I think that's the thing that this House must recognise more than any other. The two people with responsibility and control when Labor went to the last election are sitting there on the front bench opposite at this moment: the member for Maribyrnong and the shadow minister. At the time that they had the capacity to invest, they chose zero—zero places, zero investment. And that is what they will have to live with. In our time, on our watch, there have been 44,000 places and $2.7 billion extra since the 2018 budget—a 150 per cent increase since we came to government, and all up, going from $13 billion—

Mr Shorten: Fake news there, mate. You're making it up.

Mr HUNT: All of these are facts, and, if you want to challenge any of those facts, you are entitled to. But it was $13 billion under them, and what we see now is almost $22 billion, $23 billion, $24 billion and $25 billion, over the course of the forward estimates—a near doubling of funds and a 150 per cent increase in places. They're the things that make the difference. (Time expired)

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (15:33): We just had 10 minutes of nothing—no response to what we know is a crisis. The Minister for Health has nothing to offer. This House has heard before that a government can be judged on how it cares for its most vulnerable. Think of our children, think of young people, think of people with a disability, think of our aged: this government fails on every score. They have no commitment to early childhood education. Families are struggling to pay for child care. They're failing to deal with the youth unemployment crisis. The member for Maribyrnong will tell us that the NDIS is a mess. These are all travesties, yes, but can anything be more shameful than the way they are failing our elderly? Is there any more concerning indication of the fact that they are failing as a government than what they are failing to do for our elderly citizens? Billions and billions have been cut from the aged-care budget. The litany of failures is longer than your arm. Sadly, so many of us have all had the experience of worrying about our loved ones, struggling to care for them while we work, knowing they're at home alone during the day, and struggling to juggle care for our children as well.

Aged-care packages are supposed to help with that stress. They should help a little bit to relieve some of that worry—to perhaps keep mum and dad in their home just that little bit longer. But, no, this government can't even do that. We've heard from our shadow minister that 100,000 people are on a waiting list with a wait time of almost three years. We've heard that 30,000 people on that list have died and 25,000 people have been driven prematurely into residential aged care, and, even then, the waiting list for residential aged care is 152 days. What of residential aged care?

I would like to make the point that there are so many wonderful people trying their hardest to care for their charges. I give a big shout-out to the aged-care workforce. But, so many terrible stories are coming our way. Complaints have doubled in one year alone. Right now people are fearful. My dear father-in-law, in his 80s, cannot bring himself to watch the reports on television. He told me it terrifies him. How good is that? We have an elder generation that is terrified. We, their children, are terrified. The situation is so appalling that the government called a royal commission, pretty much into themselves and their lack of commitment to the aged-care sector.

Associate Professor Sarah Holland-Batt is a concerned citizen who gave evidence at the royal commission. She gained some public attention. She wrote about her father. She said: 'He was a brilliant, kind and educated man who lives with a greatly diminished quality of life due to the physical and psychological injuries he sustained in aged care. He contributed much to Australia during his working life as a brilliant metallurgical engineer. Now it's very sad to see that he has experienced the full force of the catastrophic failures that regularly occur in our aged-care system, such as major injuries due to chronic understaffing; misdiagnosis; inadequate clinical care due to an

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undertrained, casualised workforce; deliberate mistreatment and cruelty; and indifference and neglect.’ She also noticed that the royal commission’s interim report has revealed that this government’s inertia has played out against a backdrop of escalating failures in the sector with a 170 per cent increase in risk notices and a 292 per cent increase in serious noncompliance. Between 2003-13 there was a 400 per cent increase in preventable deaths in aged care—disgraceful.

In 2017-18 alone there were 3,773 reportable assaults in Australian aged care. This sector is in crisis. There’s no transparency and accountability of funding and we don’t know if taxpayer funds go to care or to the Cayman Islands. There are not enough resources for monitoring compliance and there’s little response when the problems are found. Their response? Some crumbs of funding for aged-care packages that will nowhere near meet the demand and privatising the aged-care assessment services. As the shadow minister has pointed out, this is about the only part of the system that is working okay and the government lied, blatantly, about it being a recommendation of the royal commission. The commissioners were obliged to publicly say that they, in fact, did not make that recommendation. The system is in crisis, and this government’s response is a total failure because they simply don’t care.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (15:38): It gives me real pleasure to rise today and speak on this topic of aged care. The member for Franklin and the member for Cooper may not realise it, but parents and family of people on our side of the House age as well. Every single member of parliament in this House has people that age and often need looking after as they get older.

But let me say a little about aged-care facilities. The staff at aged-care facilities play a very important role. Nursing staff and lifestyle staff are really important. Relationships between aged-care staff, the residents and the residents’ families are also extremely important. Aged-care facilities, I’m sure, do a very good job on the whole in trying to help those people. I would say to the member for Cooper and others that there are plenty of good places out there, and we shouldn’t be coming to parliament and making out that the whole sector is not looking good.

Openness and communication, to ensure that all needs are met, is important to families in aged-care facilities. Not all residents have many visitors. We know there are many lonely people, and lifestyle staff in aged-care facilities play a very important role. The staff at aged-care facilities, I’m sure, do a very good job on the whole in trying to help those people. I would say to the member for Cooper and others that there are plenty of good places out there, and we shouldn’t be coming to parliament and making out that the whole sector is not looking good.

Last month the Morrison government announced a $50 million grant for aged-care providers to access targeted business improvement resources. This grant program is aimed at directly supporting facilities and improving business operations, because we know that providing quality care comes at a cost, and if some providers require assistance with that, we’re here to help. Applications for this fund are expected to open later this month, so all members should let their providers know.

Mr HOWARTH: Absolutely! I can tell you that in my marginal seat my providers will know about it, because as a member of parliament, that’s what I do. You may have the luxury of being in a safe Labor seat, member for Jagajaga, but I assure you that my members will know about it.
In my electorate of Petrie I celebrate aged-care facilities that are making a difference for people who need care. There's a whole list of them. I recently had awards at Azure Blue at Redcliffe, BallyCara at Scarborough and the North Lakes Retirement Resort, to name a few. There are so many good aged-care providers in Petrie. I want the people of Petrie to know that yes, we've had a royal commission, and yes, there have been some issues in some of those places—and the government is acting—but there are many, many great aged-care facilities, including Seabrook aged care, Opal at North Lakes, Palm Lakes aged care at Deception Bay, Compton Gardens at Aspley, BallyCara and Azure Blue, just to name a few. (Time expired)

Ms McBRIIDE (Dobell) (15:43): As I rise to speak today my thoughts are with the residents and staff of Wyong Aged Care in Mardi. Flooding has meant that local roads are underwater, isolating residents and staff. State Emergency Service volunteers are using punts to get staff in and out. My grandmother Mollie passed away at Wyong Aged Care. I know it well. Staff assure me that there is no damage to the facility and that everyone is safe and well. I am relieved. But I wonder what would happen if the facility had to be evacuated. The reality is that the Central Coast community could not cope. We need the beds. There's a shortage of aged-care places, particularly for those living with dementia. This government does not have a plan to properly look after older people on the Central Coast or anywhere in Australia. This government's track record on aged care is of cuts and crisis. It's failed to deal with Australia's aged-care crisis for seven years. Older Australians can't afford to wait any longer for the care they urgently need and deserve now.

Let's not forget it was the current Prime Minister who, as Treasurer, ripped $1.2 billion out of aged-care funding. Last year, before the government announced its response to the interim report of the royal commission, two aged-care facilities in my electorate—The Orchards' memory unit, at Lisarow, and Henry Kendall Aged Care, in Wyoming—announced they were closing their doors. Moving aged-care residents is like kicking them out of their own homes. It's a strain on them and their families—more so when the person is living with dementia. Given the ageing population on the coast and the lack of home care packages, the closure of a dementia unit and of an aged-care facility is adding further strain to a system in crisis.

In November, I hosted a forum on aged care in my community, along with the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party and the mayor of Central Coast Council. We heard from so many people, of their experiences, their challenges and the hardship they face in aged care. Leanne came to the aged-care forum because her mother lived in the dementia unit that was closing at The Orchards. Five weeks before its closure, Leanne received a call—that the unit was closing. She was given just five weeks to find her mum, Shirley, another home and to transfer her to a new facility. When Leanne tried to contact The Orchards to meet, they refused. Eventually, they told her that the decision to close the dementia unit was a business decision. Later, Leanne was told, 'The unit was not set up to be permanent, but the operators would see how it went.' What's worse is that Shirley paid a bond of $325,000 and was then forced to move because the place she'd invested in was not permanent. Three hundred and twenty five thousand dollars is a lot to invest. It's invested because people like Shirley need security. They're looking for a home, only to be told they have to leave.

This government responded to the interim report of the royal commission by providing 10,000 home care packages, when we know that over 100,000 people are waiting and that 30,000 people have died in two years whilst waiting. On the coast, the number of people waiting is growing year on year. One thousand three hundred and thirty three older people are waiting right now in my community. They have no care. They are the most vulnerable people and are most likely to end up in emergency departments and, prematurely, into residential care. This is up from 1,286 in December 2018. Either this government doesn't get it or just doesn't care.

Almost one in five people in my community on the Central Coast of New South Wales are aged over 65. This is higher than both the state and national average. In communities like mine in regional Australia, aged care matters. Aged care matters more in communities like mine. Older Australians deserve to live with dignity, especially vulnerable older Australians living with dementia. I lost my father to younger onset dementia—it's his anniversary this week—and my grandmother to dementia. She was in the aged-care unit that I mentioned that's now flooded. This government has to act. It's callous. It is cruel. This indifference is cruelty. It is elder abuse to the person is living with dementia. Giving them a small amount of money to pay for someone to look after them is not enough. People like Shirley need proper care.

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (15:48): I have spoken previously in this place about the government and how it's made improvements to the aged-care system for senior Australians. Over 1.3 million Australians are using some form of aged care, including two-thirds who have access to basic in-home supports. As of June 2019, there were over 220,000 places in Australia's aged-care system, across 873 residential providers, 929 home-care providers, and
1,458 organisations funded to deliver Commonwealth home-support programs. The government is delivering a record amount of funding for the aged-care system. It is up from $13.3 billion in 2012 to $21.4 billion this year.

One of the Prime Minister's first actions when he took office was to call for a royal commission into aged care, and I commend the Prime Minister on his leadership. The findings of the interim report of this royal commission were distressing for everybody. Because of this, we are taking action to improve the quality of care for older Australians and to provide older Australians with the support services they want and need.

Our response to the interim report was swift and substantial. We provided $25.5 million to improve medication management to reduce the use of chemical and physical restraints. We provided $10 million for better support for dementia behaviour management. We provided $4.7 million to help young people move from residential aged care to more age-appropriate support and to stop new younger Australians from entering aged care by the end of 2022.

Like my grandmother, more and more older Australians are choosing to stay in their homes, and the Morrison government is committed to providing the support for older Australians who make this choice. Since the 2018-19 budget, the government has invested in providing 44,000 new home-care packages at a cost of $2.7 billion. Home-care packages have increased from 60,308 under Labor in 2012-13 to a projected 158,030 in 2022-23—an increase of over 160 per cent. And for higher level packages funding will increase by 249 per cent over the same period.

In January, we announced support for struggling aged-care providers with the Business Improvement Fund providing grants, particularly for aged-care providers in regional, remote and rural communities. Every year, under us, home-care packages are up, residential-care places are up and, every year, aged-care funding is up.

Beyond providing funding for the aged-care sector, the government has introduced the new Aged Care Quality Standards and Charter of Aged Care Rights, which commenced last year and apply to all aged-care services. The standards focus on quality outcomes for consumers rather than on provider processes. The new charter of rights provides the same rights to all consumers, regardless of the type of aged-care funding or the services they receive. As our population ages, the government will continue to provide funding and support for the aged-care sector.

Reforming the aged-care sector in this country is a serious matter, which will not be solved overnight and which does not benefit from a knee-jerk reaction. Despite Labor's plans for $387 billion in new taxes, Labor, at the election, provided no additional funding in their costings for home-care places or any additional funding for aged-care quality, workforce or residential aged care.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (15:53): Since 2013, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government's treatment of vulnerable older Australians has been nothing short of disgraceful. They have tried to cut pensions by changing the indexation method. They've cut a billion from pension concessions; axed the $900 seniors supplement to self-funded retirees receiving the Commonwealth seniors card; changed the asset test, cutting the pension of around 370,000 people; tried to cut pensions by limiting overseas travel to six weeks; tried to cut the pension for over 1.5 million Australians by scrapping the energy supplement for new pensioners; tried to increase the pension age to 70; continued to rip off pensioners by charging high-interest rates through the Pension Loans Scheme and applying high deeming rates; bungled the NBN rollout, regularly leaving older Australians disconnected and frustrated; left people waiting for months before processing their pension applications; and left people, mostly older Australians, waiting for years for elective surgery. Even this week I received a letter from Meals on Wheels arguing for some fairness in respect to the government's payment for the meals that the people on Meals on Wheels received.

This is a government that simply does not care about older Australians and the services they need. Not surprisingly, we have had a revolving door of aged care ministers, none of whom have been in cabinet. That says it all when it comes to knowing what this government thinks of older Australians. They don't have a voice in cabinet, albeit, as we know, over 15 per cent of Australians are over 65. This is a government that, since 2016, has cut $1.2 billion from the aged care budget alone and then a further $110 million from the residential aged care dementia supplement, when we know that of the 200,000 people who are in residential aged care facilities, about half of them suffer from a dementia related illness.

Aged care across this country is at a crisis point. As a member of the House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport, which inquired into this very issue, we heard firsthand, time and time again, stories about the suffering of people in those places. The 14 recommendations of that committee are still sitting on the shelf, yet to be acted on by this government.

There are over 100,000 Australians still waiting for an approved home care package, and the waiting lists are up to three years. Around 10,000 of those are in my state of South Australia, and can I say to members in this House that we regularly receive representations from them to try to fast-track their application. The median
waiting time to get into a nursing home is now 152 days. In South Australia, in particular, that is clogging up hospitals because older Australians, who would otherwise be in a residential aged care facility, if a bed were available, are having to be kept in hospitals, and in the process, people who need urgent care in those hospitals are being discharged earlier than they should be, because the hospitals cannot cope and they need the beds. That in itself is disgraceful. Can I say that in South Australia the bed block time is 2½ times worse than it is for the rest of the country.

Older Australians are suffering because the Morrison government is simply sitting on its hands. The stories of abuse, restraints, poor meals, poor medication delivery, poor care, assaults, neglect and so on, we've heard them all. I'm sure members opposite have equally heard them and probably seen them for themselves. Yet, they're doing nothing about it. One of the critical concerns I have—and this was a matter put to the committee—is this: we now have doctors who simply won't go to residential aged care facilities because the Medicare payments are inadequate for the services they have to provide. So, we are having people left in these places who cannot access a doctor. In a country like Australia, that is absolutely disgraceful. We could do better and should do better.

The government has certainly set up a royal commission. My view is that most of the things that need to be done are known by the government and form part of the recommendations the House committee put to the government. They are matters that were also the subject of previous inquiries. So, it's not a case of having to wait for the end of the royal commission before delivering the services that people know are needed, that people have been waiting on for years and that this government knows about. The reality is that this government has failed older Australians because it simply won't treat them with the dignity they serve.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (15:58): Aged care is so important. It is really important in the Lyne electorate, because we have one of the oldest demographics in the country. Over a quarter of my constituents are aged over 65. There's also a huge base of people who work in aged care, way greater than the average across the country. In fact, residential aged care employment is the biggest employer in Lyne electorate. Certainly, federal funding for the aged care system in Lyne electorate has grown in the years from 2013 to 2016, then again in the last parliament, and in this parliament it's also budgeted to increase. When I was first given the honour of representing Lyne, there was $19 million a year in recurrent funding. That is now up to $160 million a year, in 2020. We have been investing in a range of expansions of existing aged care, as well as an expansion in home care. Aged care in the residential space is being expanded, as we speak. There will be another 10 places at Banyula Lodge, in Old Bar, and eight in Taree, at Alkira Lodge. Construction of the Gloucester seniors living complex state-of-the-art aged-care facility is underway. Pacific Cape is being expanded by GLAICA, with 144 new residential aged-care places. The Salvation Army is due to commence construction of an expansion in Taree, with a whole new facility there as well. And Bundaleer home care has a state-of-the-art expansion planned for Wauchope.

Some of the previous speakers have focused on complaining about surgery lists, the NBN, the NDIS and pensions, but I want to focus on what this MPI is about—the really important stuff—and that is aged care and home care. We have had announcements made as a result of the royal commission, and everyone is really committed to making things better. There are obvious deficiencies, but one would think that every aged-care facility is bad. There are some people who don't meet the standards. There are some people, who we have seen on TV, who obviously shouldn't have been working in the industry. But everyone is committed to improving the case. The people who are working in aged care in my part of the world at all the facilities I visit have an enormous commitment to deliver high-quality care. They all work under pressure, and they deliver as good as they can.

In the home-care space, we have delivered a record expansion in home care packages—44,000 and $2.7 billion extra. When we were first given the responsibility of governing after the 2013 election, there were only 60,308 home-care packages in the system. By 2022-23, the end of this term, that will have expanded to 158,000 home-care places. The funding is increasing gradually because the workforce has to increase gradually. Otherwise, you have the case where you get inflated fees. I know the minister and many of us who have people in the home-care space are looking at the charging of administration fees, because we want all the money that the taxpayers are committing to be delivered to the people—not sitting in the accounts of businesses providing home care, using so much of the critical funding on administrative charges rather than care.

At the last election there was no commitment, as far as I could see, from the other side for an expansion of home-care places. Those opposite are big on complaining about everything—but it isn't about what they say; it's about what they do. They promised taxes upon taxes. Almost $390 billion of taxes were promised, but they failed to mention what they were going to do. But they come in here and complain and complain.

There were some things that were pointed out in the royal commission. We are addressing that with a $537 million package and 10,000 more home-care places. We're trying to get medication management under control and we're addressing the problem of young people in— (Time expired)
Dr MULINO (Fraser) (16:03): I commend the shadow minister for raising this motion here today. I believe this is one of the most important issues that this parliament and the parliaments following it will face. I also commend the speeches made by others on this side, which I think have highlighted the abject failure for the last seven years on the part of this government. I would particularly highlight the speech by the member for Dobell. There are a lot of statistics in this space, but it's critical to remember that, behind each of these statistics, there are real people. I think her speech highlighted in a very compelling way what it means for real people when a government fails to deliver services, as this government currently is.

I, like the member for Dobell and other members in this place, have a personal connection with the sector through members of my family. But I also have a personal connection in that my main area of research when I lectured in economics at Monash University was the impact of an ageing population on our economy and on our society. It was interesting to me to reflect on the Intergenerational report most recently published by this government, which highlighted that this government isn't looking at its own published documents closely enough.

We are an ageing society. This has been happening for decades and it will happen for decades to come. It's very hard to make projections, but if there's one set of projections that you can be confident about it is demographics, with their great inertia. We know that our society will be far older in 30, 40 or 50 years than it is today. That's a good thing. It's an opportunity more than anything, but it also creates challenges. In 1974-75, 8.7 per cent of our population was over 65. Today it's a bit over 15 per cent. In 2050 it's going to be over 22 per cent. That is a transformational change in our society. This is one of the great transformational changes societies are going through as we speak.

In 1974-75 there were 120 centenarians. In 2054-55 there will be over 40,000. We are talking about a transformational change both in the need for service delivery in our society and in the way that they will need to be funded. This is also reflected in the relationship between those who are old and the number of working-age people. In 1974-75 there were 7.3 workers for each person over 65. Now it's around 4½, and in 2054 it's going to be 2.7. This is something the government needs to be creating visionary policy for, holistic policy. Instead, all we've had is budget cuts that use the aged-care sector almost as a balancing item.

We can look at the 2014-15 budget—a horror budget, the first budget of this government, the budget of broken promises. What did we see with aged care? We saw that the government took measures to adjust the real rate of growth in the Commonwealth Home Support Program, which slashed billions upon billions of dollars. Their first reaction to this complicated policy challenge was to cut. We've seen this in so many subsequent budgets. In the 2015 budget half a billion was cut from MYEFO. In the 2016 budget over a billion was cut.

The minister came here today cherry-picking statistics, trying to say that on this or that statistic things might have been a little bit better than at some point in time when Labor was in government. He must have had the Parliamentary Library working overtime trying to find any way in which this government looks good. But let's look at statistics which are unambiguous and clear and relate to how people are actually experiencing this sector. Let's look at the fact that there are 100,000 older people on the waiting list. Let's look at the fact that 30,000 older Australians died waiting. That's not implying that the deaths were caused by waiting; it's simply saying that this is a horrific circumstance to be in. For those opposite to be quibbling about the technicalities of that statistic shows how little they are in touch with what's going on on the ground.

More than 25,000 older Australians entered residential aged care prematurely. Again, any government with a sense of how to treat older Australians' complex needs in a holistic way would understand that forcing someone into residential aged care early by not funding in-home care is not only an inhumane way to treat their need; it hurts the budget bottom line because it's not treating them in a way which creates the least cost to the community and to the government.

Let's look at the fact that not only are we getting older, but the needs of our older cohort are getting more complicated. We have growing numbers of people with a non-English-speaking background, and we know how complicated that makes aged-care services. I visited Fronditha Care in my electorate and saw how complicated it was to provide aged care to people who were reverting to their first tongue. We know dementia has all sorts of complicated challenges around workforce needs. That was raised by both the minister and the assistant minister earlier. We know that the needs of very old people are greater than those just post retirement. This is an area which requires vision. Instead, all we get is cuts after cuts.

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (16:08): I want to agree with the member for Fraser on one thing: the importance to the Australian people of this issue and how we deliver services to older Australians. I listened very carefully to his statistics and the fact that we have an ageing society and government needs to address it. With regard to the personal stories told today, none of you said that those members of your family who were treated were treated badly. In fact, every one of you said they had the best of care—the best of care.
I've got a good story to tell. That story is this: from Koo Wee Rup to Korumburra to Leongatha to Foster to Warragul to Moe to Drouin and up to Neerim South, my aged people are getting the best of care from talented people who know how to deliver a service to those of us that are growing older and need that care. Yes, I've experienced aged care in its rawness with my own parents. I know what dementia is all about. I know the difficulties that families face. I know what my mum went through, hiding it for many years before it was so exposed that my father couldn't be hidden anymore. We've all been through these issues. It's not about bringing our personal responsibilities or experiences into this place; it's about good policy and delivery.

You can all criticise one another for failing, but let me give you some history. When I first came to this place—after a long time in aged care and disability, by the way—the outlay of the government of the day, a Labor government, was less than $2 billion. After I was thrown out and came back the next time, it was $4 billion. Then, when I was thrown out again and came back again, aged care was on the agenda again, and it was $8 billion. The executive was starting to complain, whether it was a Labor executive or a Liberal-Nationals executive, that these outlays could not go on; the need was exponential. So members like myself—and yourselves—were coming in and pleading with the executive for more money, more money, more money. We had to have greater outlays in this area. The system that serviced our parents was now broken; the model was gone, because people were going into aged care at a much older age and, therefore, leaving aged care and having greater difficulties. Then we had low care and high care, but I won't go into all that with you.

My job, as the local member, was to go to Korumburra and realise their need and deliver the $1.2 million that got their aged-care centre up and viable. It was capital outlay, but they've got really strong community support. Ageing in situ is really, really important for country and regional people. You who live in the city can hop on a tram and visit your older people. But, if you have an aged person in a facility, it's got to be in your community. So here am I, standing in this parliament after all these years, saying: we need to put money into these nonprofits in small communities so people are being cared for in their communities and can be visited. They do well in that system. So I talk about those small communities, and I put it to the executive.

I say to the Labor opposition: had you won the last election, you would have been having exactly the same struggles that we've had. I sat with the Prime Minister immediately after the royal commission's interim report. I travelled to where he was. We went through the way ahead. We have a plan for the way ahead, and we're working through that plan. We're all in this together. Every one of us is going to have an aged parent. Every one of us is going to be there ourselves one day. I know we can always do better. Every one of us can do better in everything that we do. I don't like the system. I didn't like the system when it was changed under John Howard so that the minister doesn't have an input into the AKAR. This is an abrogation of the responsibility of government to manage the thousands and millions of dollars that are outlaid. It shouldn't be about the department; it should be the government of the day making decisions. If I can get that legislation repealed before I leave this place, I will. I want government and the minister to have direct involvement in the outlays in aged care. That's crucially important. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien): The discussion is now concluded.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House criticises the Government and the responsible Ministers for their mishandling of and delays to the reforms to professional standards for financial advisers, resulting in significant uncertainty for both members of the industry and consumers".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien) (16:14): In accordance with standing order 133, I shall now proceed to put the question on the motion moved earlier today by the honourable member for Whitlam on which a division was called for and deferred in accordance with the standing order. No further debate is allowed.

The SPEAKER: For the information of honourable members, this is a deferred division from earlier in the day. The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Whitlam moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. So the immediate question for the House is that the amendment moved by the member for Whitlam be agreed to.

The House divided, [16:19]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 66
Noes ...................... 77
Majority ................. 11

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

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (16:24): by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) and (2), as circulated in my name, together:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (at the end of the table), add:

8. Schedule 4 The day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Page 71 (after line 3), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 4—Removing conflicted remuneration exemptions

Corporations Act 2001

1 After subsection 963B(1)

Insert:

(1A) Despite paragraph (1) (e), regulations made for the purposes of that paragraph have no effect to the extent the regulations prescribe a monetary benefit relating to any of the following:

(a) interests in a managed investment scheme that are, or are proposed to be, quoted on a prescribed financial market;
(b) interests in a listed investment company (within the meaning of section 115-290 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997).

2 Application provision

The amendments made by this Schedule apply in relation to monetary benefits given on or after the commencement of this Schedule.

The amendments before the House deal with the issue of conflicted remuneration, specifically conflicted remuneration in respect of listed investment trusts and listed investment companies. Section 963A of the Corporations Act defines ‘conflicted remuneration’ as:

… any benefit, whether monetary or non-monetary, given to a financial services licensee, or a representative of a financial services licensee, who provides financial product advice to persons as retail clients that, because of the nature of the benefit or the circumstances in which it is given:

(a) could reasonably be expected to influence the choice of financial product …

In 2012 the FOFA reforms banned this type of remuneration for the sale of future financial products. This was fiercely resisted at the time by many but not all within the industry. Many advisers understood the long-term implications and were aware of reforms occurring in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand and could see the writing on the wall. Regrettably, in 2014 the Abbott government amended the FOFA laws, winding back a number of provisions, including the conflicted remuneration provisions of the FOFA act as they relate to stamping fees. We propose appending a new schedule to this bill that amends the Corporations Act to remove the current legislative exemption from conflicted remuneration rules for financial advisers in relation to the selling of units or shares in listed investment trusts and listed investment companies.

Listed investment trusts and companies are financial entities that are listed on a securities exchange, such as the Australian Securities Exchange. They operate in a similar way to a managed fund except for the fact that they're a listed security. The existence of these funds has almost doubled since the exemptions were put in place as a result
of the FOFA reforms. As a result of these changes, lots of mum-and-dad investors have been sold into listed investment companies and trusts, and this has created a significant distortion in the market. As a result of these changes—and we say as a result of the conflicted remuneration—there has been a massive increase in these funds. In fact, The Australian Financial Review reported:

… there has been a tsunami of new listed investment companies (LICs) and listed investment trusts (LITs) launched since 2017, raising more than $6 billion for fund managers who have paid brokers/advisers enormous sales commissions of up to 3 per cent of the value of the capital contributed by mums and dads.

It is creating a distortion in the market. It is also creating an enormous risk for mum-and-dad investors.

We have recently read through documents that were provided to The Australian Financial Review as a result of an FOI request that show that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has significant concerns about this and has advised the government of its significant concerns. It said that 'it is difficult to justify the existing exemption from the FOFA laws for the selling and the stamping fees that are provided through listed investment trusts and companies'.

It is worth noting that the Financial Planning Association of Australia supports the amendments. In a recent survey conducted by Morningstar of over 670 financial planners, over 71 per cent said that they supported an end to the stamping fees for these financial products. ASIC, in its research, showed that the LICs and LITs were significantly underperforming in the market—they were trading at a significant discount—and that there was a correlation between the poor performance of these investment products and the size of the stamping fees or commissions that were being paid.

An amendment was made to the FOFA act back in 2014. It has had adverse consequences. It is creating distortions in the market and significant risks for mum-and-dad investors. We know that the government share some of our concerns. The process they have put in train will not lead to a swift closure of this loophole. We commend the amendments to the House.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (16:30): We don't support the amendments moved by the member for Whitlam. This is just another example, perhaps quite understandably, of the opposition trying to get ahead of an area that the government has already taken action on. As the shadow Assistant Treasurer referred to, on 27 January the Treasurer announced that Treasury will undertake—and, therefore, is in the process of undertaking—a targeted public consultation on the merits of the current stamping fee exemption. These amendments really undermine that review by predetermining its conclusion and its ultimate recommendation. We believe that thorough public consultation will allow the government to make an informed decision on whether to retain, remove or modify the stamping fee exemption, ultimately to ensure that the interests of investors are protected and, of course, that capital markets remain efficient and globally competitive.

The opposition should know that failing to take the temperature of the public has contributed to the lack of faith that so many in the business community have in the Labor Party in particular. We won't go down that path. We believe that this targeted consultation is important. As we saw with director identification numbers, the government's quite ambitious project with MBR, this is just another example of Labor trying to get ahead of what is obviously an area where the government is taking action. We don't support the amendments moved by the shadow Assistant Treasurer.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (16:31): I thank the Assistant Treasurer for his comments. In reply, I hope we can persuade government members of the wisdom of what we are putting. The first point I want to make is that the risk is known: the risk to mum-and-dad investors, who are being convinced by certain financial advisors—not all of them—to invest in what is, by its very nature, a very opaque form of investment instrument, one where it's almost impossible for a retail investor, an ordinary mum-and-dad investor, to properly analyse the value and underlying risk in the instrument that they're investing in.

The risk has been known to the government for quite some time. In the documents discovered through the FOI process, it is now known that the government was warned by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission at least six months ago, if not longer. For at least six months the government has known about this. I wrote to the Treasurer on 23 January urging an immediate bipartisan approach to this. In that letter I pointed out that, the longer we wait, the market will respond by rushing to the door. We are concerned that the longer this process goes on, the more those that have benefited enormously through the stamping fee process will rush through the door. There'll be listings and there will be commission based sales of these innately risky products to mum-and-dad investors, and it will be too late to unwind that. I seek leave to table a copy of that letter.

Leave not granted.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: In addition to writing to the Treasurer, I wrote to the Commissioner of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. I pointed out that there was a significant concern amongst Labor
members about this continuing loophole. I referred to the documents and ASIC's own research, which pointed out the poor performance of these funds; the fact that these trusts and companies were trading at large discounts to the net tangible assets; that there were high, significant management fees that were being charged; and that the conflicting selling arrangements in 42 of the 48 listed investment companies, that have been listed since the loophole was opened up, were directly related to the higher stamping fees. That is to say, ASIC's own research showed that there was a positive correlation between the amount of stamping fees, the amount of commissions that were being paid on an issuance and the poor performance of that fund.

Against this background, I don't think anyone can stand here and credibly say the public wants us to let this loophole continue. I don't think anyone can say it is in the public interest to let this known risk continue. And it'll be on all of our heads, if, against this background—against the known risks, the deep concern within the financial advising community, indeed the support for the majority of people within the financial advising community; and that there are further issuances and further listings and commission based selling of these products—we let this risk continue and we have not acted. If one of those companies or one of those trusts falls over, it will be on our heads, because we will not have acted. I don't think there's anybody in this place who wants to look back in 12 months or 18 months time and say, 'We had the opportunity to close this loophole down, and we did not act.'

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (16:36): I'll be very brief. I, again, thank the shadow Assistant Treasurer but reiterate to him that the Treasurer announced, on 27 January, that a four-week consultation period would open. If, as the shadow Assistant Treasurer says, the evidence is overwhelming and compelling, then that will of course come out in that process. But we believe it's good governance and good practice to conduct that, and the outcome of that consultation will inform the next steps to be taken, if any, by the government.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments moved by the member for Whitlam, detailed amendments (1) and (2), be agreed to.

The House divided. [16:41]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
Question negatived.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (16:45): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read third time.
Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) notes that Labor created Australia’s superannuation system so that every Australian can have dignity in retirement;
(2) criticises Government members who would see Australia’s world class superannuation system become voluntary for working class Australians; and
(3) further notes that too many Australians retire without adequate retirement savings, which is why our superannuation system needs to be strengthened and protected, not undermined”.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:46): My remarks on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020 will not be brief, as some members may wish them to be, because this is an incredibly important piece of legislation for the security of the retirement of millions of Australians, whether they're retired now or are seeking to retire in comfort in the future. We know that at the last election retirement security was core to the reason this coalition government, led by Scott Morrison, was re-elected. At the heart of it the Morrison government's focus is to make sure that every Australian, at no matter what stage of life, has the best opportunity to build a success of a life—to get a job and a good education, to have a family and build and own a home and to make sure that they can retire with dignity and security at the latter stages of their life.

That's one of the reasons we oppose the $387 billion in new taxes put before us by the opposition. It's why we stood up against their insidious retiree tax that sought to raid the retirement security of millions of Australians for no purpose other than their own benefit—to give them more resources should they be elected to government and to splurge as they see fit. At the heart of it, the Australian Labor Party does not look at Australians as individuals with dignity and a sense of purpose and choice in how they live their own lives. The Australian Labor Party looks at Australians as though they're a piggybank ready to raid. In the end, they don't respect hard work and sacrifice. In the end, they don't understand the pride and dignity that comes with standing on your own two feet. In the end, the Australian Labor Party has nothing but contempt for Australians and our way of life.

The point of this legislation is to respect the effort of hardworking Australians who have put their money in superannuation on trust that when they go back to collect their funds on retirement or before, or if they seek to roll their money from duplicate accounts into single accounts, it will still be there, and if there is a low balance it won't simply be eaten away by fees—that it will be there so that they can roll it into funds and be in a position to hold the value of the work and their retirement security.

It might shock some people to know that during the Economics Committee hearings into the superannuation sector we uncovered a disturbing and worrying truth. As chair of the committee, I was asking questions of various superannuation funds, particularly industry funds, and talking about what it is they do when there is a low-balance inactive account. The current law says that that money should be rolled into the Australian Taxation Office so that it can be reallocated and reunited with its recipient. But it can't become yet another piggy bank to be raided by industry funds, through fees, through insurance premiums and through a loss of retirement security, to the benefit of the few.

What we uncovered in our Economics Committee hearings when we grilled industry superannuation fund and retail funds was that some were using an eligible rollover fund, a system designed to protect consumers, as an opportunity to roll the funds into a new account, which effectively reactivated them, which enabled the industry super funds to then go on and charge a new round of fees and exempt themselves from the law. It is one of the most disgraceful things that I have ever seen—a deliberate and malicious attempt to circumvent the law, to the benefit of organisations that are supposed to be entrusted with money. At the time I called it the equivalent of a 'fees for no service' moment for the industry super industry, and I don't take a single step back.

That's why I am so glad this government is closing this loophole, among many others that should be closed in the superannuation system. The advantage is not felt from having eligible rollover funds as a pathway to reactivate accounts for Australian superannuants, for people who are saving, for people putting themselves forward and standing on their own two feet. The only benefit is to those funds and their capacity to take from people's savings in order to increase their cashflow. What we are requiring is that rather than allowing this pathway where industry funds can roll money into eligible rollover funds or, equally, for the small number of retail funds to do the same, that money should be reunited through the Australian Taxation Office with the people who own it. It's a pretty basic expectation, and that reunification, whether it's through multiple or duplicate accounts, will help build the strength of the system so that when Australian retirees turn to their funds at the end of their working lives, it's still there and hasn't been siphoned away without their knowledge. Frankly, it's disappointing that we have to pass laws along these lines. But that is not our choice; it is our responsibility in confronting the misconduct that has been occurring. That's why this legislation matters.

But it sits across a backdrop of many other pieces of legislation, debates and topics around superannuation that deserve further scrutiny. Why? Because people should want, and Australians do want, a superannuation system with integrity, a superannuation system that enables choice and a superannuation system that doesn't unnecessarily raid the wages of Australians. On the other side of this chamber, they are completely married to the idea that there is no cost consequence on wages from increasing superannuation rates and the compulsory superannuation guarantee. They are literally staring at facts and evidence and expert opinion and denying the link. And when the evidence is presented before them, their only response is slurs and slander, because they have no argument left.
You just need to look at research produced only recently by the Grattan Institute. It highlights that, when they actually went down and did the analytical research about the impact of superannuation, it came at the cost of deferred wage increases. So, Australians today, in their hip pocket, are poorer because of deferred wages in the superannuation system.

There's an entirely legitimate case to be made for compulsory superannuation. We can have philosophical debates about whether it should be where it is or not, but to deny that reality, as many members on the opposition benches do—in fact I suspect all of them do in unison, because dissent or difference of opinion are not allowed. One of the first preconditions of joining the Australian Labor Party is to take a full frontal lobotomy in terms of your opinion and conform to the collective. It's to deny that reality. Only last week the Reserve Bank of Australia and the governor appeared before the almighty Economics Committee. When asked about these issues, the governor again confirmed, as did other deputy governors, that increasing the compulsory superannuation guarantee would cost Australian wage growth. So, if you're an Australian in a job today, you will have slower wage growth over future years because the compulsory superannuation guarantee is increasing.

Again, it's a pretty straightforward proposition of economics, but it's denied by the Australian Labor Party. They come into this chamber and lecture every member on this side—and anybody else who bothers to waste their time listening to their rhetoric—that they are standing up for higher wages while concurrently actively promoting a pathway to make sure wages don't go up. That is hypocrisy writ large, and it goes to the heart of the empty rhetoric and ideas that sit at the heart of the modern Australian Labor Party. In the end, this isn't a debate about retirement security for them and for the members of the opposition. Just as we saw with this piece of legislation and how industry funds are conducting themselves around eligible rollover funds, it's about power for them—how they can amass and accumulate the wealth and savings of the Australian population within their influence and in their hands. Anybody who doesn't understand that fundamentally misunderstands the approach.

These days the Australian Labor Party never stands up for workers. They never stood up against Bill Shorten and negotiating lower wages for casualised staff in certain retail sectors. They never stood up against that. Whenever there's been some sort of misbehaviour by one of the unions, they don't stand up against that either, including when it affects the health and welfare of unionised labour. But watch them spring to their feet as soon as there is any threat to the cash cow and the influence they have through industry super. I have never seen anybody move so fast as many members of the opposition. And earlier in the chamber, we saw the member for Kingsford Smith do exactly that. Of course, amongst the grand rhetoric that he threw out about various members in this chamber and how awful they all were, the dark heart of what he was speaking about is how to protect the interests of themselves and the Australian Labor Party in spite of the interests of the Australian people.

That's why this bill matters: it stops them raiding the retirement savings of millions of Australians for their own benefit—to accumulate wealth and position that they control. That's why the minister deserves to be congratulated for bringing this piece of legislation to this parliament. It is a nefarious agenda that has been run, and the way they have sought to use low-balance, inactive accounts to roll over and to reactivate so they can take more fees and more income is not just inconsistent with the spirit of the legislation, although it is, and it isn't just that it's irresponsible, although it is; it's that it's morally wrong, and they know it. The law is not always a good guide to morality, but, in this case, closing down the pathway for various superannuation funds to exploit the interests of Australian savers and workers who are building their own future is morally right. That's why this bill matters. That's why it enjoys the support of the government and so many members in this place.

My only hope is that the Labor Party will start to recognise that and support this legislation. If they don't, the clear intent and the loud message that will resonate outside of this chamber is that they would put themselves ahead of the interests of the Australian people yet again. This won't come as a shock to many Australians, particularly the millions of people who voted for members to sit on this side of the chamber, but we need to call it out, because this is the conduct that Australians elected this government to stand up against. This is the conduct for which we must hold the opposition and their interests to account. That is the basis on which I support this bill.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (17:00): We are not supporting the second reading amendment moved by the opposition to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020. I want to thank all those members whose have contributed to the debate. As has been outlined so eloquently by members on this side, the bill will facilitate the exit of all eligible rollover funds from the superannuation system by 30 June 2021. This builds upon the policy intent of the Protecting Your Super reforms to reunify lost and unclaimed super with its rightful owners. Importantly, it also gives effect to recommendation 5 of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into super. This bill will contribute to the government's work on building a stronger, more efficient superannuation system and of course improving outcomes for all members. We don't support the amendment. I commend the bill to the House.
The SPEAKER: The original question was this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Whitlam has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the amendment moved by the member for Whitlam be agreed to.

The House divided. [17:05]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 67
Noes ...................... 76
Majority .............. 9

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliott, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Tuesday, 11 February 2020

NOES

Liu, G  Marino, NB
Martin, FB  McCormack, MF
McIntosh, MI  McVeigh, JJ
Morrison, SJ  Morton, B
O'Brien, LS  O'Brien, T
O'Dowd, KD  Pasin, A
Pearce, GB  Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC  Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)  Robert, SR
Sharkie, RCC  Sharma, DN
Simmons, J  Steggall, Z
Stevens, J  Sukkar, MS
Taylor, AJ  Tehan, DT
Thompson, P  Tudge, AE
van Manen, AJ  Vasta, RX
Wallace, AB  Webster, AE
Wicks, LE  Wilson, TR
Wood, JP  Wyatt, KG
Young, T  Zimmerman, T

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

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (17:11): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Australian Research Council Amendment Bill 2019

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment.

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Cross-boundary Greenhouse Gas Titles and Other Measures) Bill 2019

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (17:12): This is a highly technical bill but an important bill. The opposition will be supporting it, but I move:
That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes the Government's failure to adequately promote the development and commercialisation of carbon reducing technologies".

We know, if we're being honest, that often second reading amendments are designed to launch an attack on the government or highlight a failing. That's not my intention on this occasion. My intention is really to lament that more is not being done on the technology side of the equation to deal with the very serious challenges we have in climate change and the challenge of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

I don't propose to repeat the details of this bill. The minister in his second reading speech has laid out the intentions, objectives and details of the bill. Suffice it to say that this bill removes impediments to and facilitates the storage of greenhouse gas emissions offshore, largely by dealing with a number of state-Commonwealth jurisdictional issues and other legislative impediments. On that basis we support the bill, and I acknowledge the
work being done by the Commonwealth and Victorian governments to further the important cause of offshore storage of greenhouse gas emissions. It is very, very important. Alone, of course, it is very small. I lament the fact that we're not doing more as a country in the area of technology in our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is interesting that, given that we spend so much time in this place, both here and in the Senate, in our various media interviews et cetera talking about the challenge of the changing climate and the need to act meaningfully in making our contribution to global efforts, we spend very little time talking about it in this chamber. That is somewhat strange. It should change. If we're going to identify it as such a significant challenge, and it is, and as such an important challenge, and it is, and a challenge so in need of a response, then we should be talking about it more in this place. We should be talking more on an economy-wide basis. We should be talking more about mitigation on an economy-wide basis.

At the moment, we don't really have a carbon constraint. We have a safeguards mechanism, which is very soft and very ineffective. Since the government gave up on any form of a NEG, then that's it in this country. On electric cars, we're way behind the rest of the world. Carbon capture and storage has had its funding cut by this government and is behind the eight ball. In forestry we could be doing more on abatement, if the government would only change the water rule and allow investment to flow further into plantations. There is so much more, such as in hydrogen. I know we've had the Finkel report, and I know the government is doing some things to further progress the opportunities the hydrogen sector presents to us, but, still, we are moving at a snail's pace.

I thought that, if there were an issue that called upon bipartisanship, it would be this one. We've been in climate wars for almost all of the time I've been here, and that's a long, long time—for at least two decades. The community is crying out for us to do something collectively, and I think it's past time we put those wars behind us and found some bipartisanship, a political sentiment, on this issue and acted meaningfully. I think that we would be well rewarded in all sorts of ways by the Australian community, including in the area of our own credibility in our community.

We need economy-wide action. We need at least as much focus on technology as we have on mitigation. We need more focus on abatement. We need to be spending as much time on abatement as we spend on mitigation. There are opportunities here. We extend together a hand of bipartisanship here. Let's not be so reliant on the mitigation side, as important as that is. Let's continue to work on the adaptation side. Let us get focused on the wonderful opportunities we have in the technological area. Sadly, in the past we've seen this government attempt to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and abolish ARENA. I've said they've cut the funding to the carbon capture and storage program. I think it's time for the government to rethink its approach and get some money flowing into these programs—the sort of money we need to make them successful and to allow us to strut the stage as a small country, sure, but as a country that's leading the world on climate change action.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Hunter has moved as an amendment that all words after 'that' be omitted, with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the amendment be agreed to. Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Keogh: I second the amendment just moved by the member for Hunter, and I reserve my right to speak.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (17:18): I rise to speak on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Cross-Boundary Greenhouse Gas Titles and Other Measures) Bill 2019 and the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2019, with mind to the fact that the world is moving towards a carbon-neutral future and we, in Australia, need to be on the front foot to lead the way in new technology to get there quicker.

There are two parts to these bills. The first is that the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Cross-Boundary Greenhouse Gas Titles and Other Measures) Bill 2019 amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, OPGGS Act to enable title administration and regulation of a greenhouse gas storage formation that straddles the boundary between state and Northern Territory coastal waters and Commonwealth waters. It is bills like this that will help Australia lower emissions and facilitate carbon capture and storage that will benefit the environment and create jobs. This is economically sound climate action.

The world economy is transitioning to a carbon-neutral future in a bid to protect future generations from the effects of climate change. Most countries with the strongest ambitions for a carbon-neutral future rely on more renewables and other technologies, such as hydrogen and other technologies, to get there. As a smart country with willing citizenry, we are poised to identify new economic opportunities for Australia, particularly for technologies providing storage and backup to the electricity, industry and transport sectors. Last year the Morrison government led the National Hydrogen Strategy and increased our commitment to $500 million to support the development of this new industry, to ensure a sustainable, competitive and commercial hydrogen industry that will benefit all
Australians and will be a major global player by 2030. The Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel, calls it 'shipping sunshine in a bottle'. The second half of this legislation ensures greater powers for the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Environmental Management Authority to respond fully during any oil spill emergency. Australia's natural resources mean it could become one of the first countries to create a hydrogen export market. This means jobs, especially in my home state of Victoria in the Latrobe Valley, which desperately is in need of more good, well-paying jobs.

To lead the way in hydrogen and carbon capture and storage we need to facilitate new technology projects being investigated and the feasibility being understood. These bills seek to allow for cross-boundary single gas titles, particularly from state and territory coastal waters to Commonwealth waters. This will unify two greenhouse gas titles where a titleholder has reasonable grounds to suspect that there is a geological formation that sits on either side of two title areas. The bills seek to simplify and enable cross-boundary titles and allow the Commonwealth to facilitate this. I thank the member for Hunter for his comments endorsing this. Upon passage of these bills, the title area will become Commonwealth waters for the purpose of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act. This will put the responsibility of any greenhouse gas titles in the hands of the Commonwealth, meaning a simpler process when seeking to begin a project, such as CarbonNet or another resource project.

Greenhouse gas storage, also known as carbon capture and storage, is the process of capturing carbon dioxide from industrial processes and then transporting and injecting that CO2 into a secure geological formation for long-term underground storage. This is about carbon abatement. This prevents large amounts of CO2 from being released into the atmosphere. This aids in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change. Currently there are four active greenhouse gas assessment permits in Commonwealth offshore waters. All four permits are located in Victorian offshore waters.

The CarbonNet project is related to another project—the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project. This project in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria is described as a world-first trial to demonstrate hydrogen production from brown coal and the safe and efficient transport of liquefied hydrogen to Japan. Hydrogen has many potential uses, including heating buildings and powering vehicles. Many countries, including Australia, are investing in and supporting hydrogen due to its potential for decarbonising our energy systems. Hydrogen can be produced in a number of ways. Clean or green hydrogen is produced using renewable energy or by using carbon capture and storage.

The Morrison government has released the National Hydrogen Strategy. This will help to unleash the opportunities of clean hydrogen exports. Investment in hydrogen will be even more cost-effective if, as expected, gas infrastructure can be modified for hydrogen usage in the future. In fact, town gas is the old form of hydrogen and gas together and it used the same infrastructure. Grasping early potential trade opportunities with both hands, Australia has already signed the Joint Statement on Cooperation on Hydrogen and Fuel Cells during the recent Australia-Japan Ministerial Economic Dialogue in Melbourne in January this year.

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety Environmental Management Authority advises that there have been two greenhouse gas acreage release rounds by the Australian government for offshore greenhouse gas storage exploration—one in 2009 and the other in 2014. Currently there are four active greenhouse gas assessment permits in Commonwealth offshore waters. The four Victorian permits are related to the CarbonNet project. The network would involve multiple carbon capture storage projects transporting CO2 via a shared pipeline and injecting it underground. The amendments relating to the creation and administration of cross-boundary greenhouse gas titles will enable projects like the CarbonNet project to proceed with its proposed site in the Gippsland Basin, in offshore Victoria. The project could also facilitate a future commercial-scale hydrogen energy supply chain project, which will produce hydrogen from brown coal resources. This is investment in new technology to help us to get to a carbon-neutral future.

The second half of this bill will also strengthen and clarify the monitoring, inspection and enforcement powers of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority so that, during any oil pollution emergency that originates in Commonwealth waters, things can happen quickly. It's so incredibly important to make sure that the authority can enter or inspect the site of any pollution emergency without a warrant. This will seek to mitigate time wasted obtaining a warrant in the event of an oil spill emergency and allow clean-up to begin very quickly. During an offshore incident, inspectors need access to real-time information, including monitoring of enforcing compliance across premises, and the ability to take enforcement action in the event of noncompliance.

In conclusion, this bill supports the Morrison government's ongoing commitment to the maintenance and continuous improvement of a strong and effective regulatory framework for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage but also the government's continued commitment to exploring and enabling ways to lower emissions.
It is worth keeping an open mind when it comes to developing opportunities for future energy generation and storage. After all, this space is moving rapidly, and we wouldn't want to miss any opportunity to lead the energy technology revolution in the world's bid for a carbon-neutral future.

Mr KEOGH (Burr) (17:26): I stand to speak not only on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Cross-Boundary Greenhouse Gas Titles and Other Measures) Bill 2019 but also on the amendment that was moved by the member for Hunter earlier. This is important legislation because, as the member for Hunter observed earlier, it's one of the few pieces of legislation that actually goes to dealing with some of the issues that we're confronting in this nation and globally in respect of climate change, and it also provides a great opportunity for economic efficiency in the management of these issues.

This legislation follows on from some legislation that we dealt with not that long ago in respect of carbon capture and storage and its regulation through the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage legislation. In particular it deals with an important issue that comes up time and time again in respect of the oil and gas industry: titles that cross over that very critical three-kilometre mark that delineates state and Commonwealth waters. This legislation will create a unified title opportunity to be administered through the Commonwealth, through this legislation, so that there is a singular point of regulation for greenhouse gas capture and storage operators in this country. That's very important. It's important that we have regulators that are able to do this job properly. It's important that we have regulators that are empowered with all the powers they need not only to make sure that these projects are done in an environmentally responsible way but also to make sure that the workplace health and safety requirements, which ensure that our Australian workers are protected in the workplace, are correctly and strongly enforced and that we have a regulator that is able to go in and enforce the regulations.

There are obviously powers that will come, under this legislation, with respect to the use of warrants to get access to sites—not just the offshore sites and the head offices but also the suppliers and contractors and the documents. Mandatory-provision-of-document powers are also included in this legislation. It is important to make sure that a regulator is able to get access to all the information they need when things go wrong, to make sure that we protect the environment, to make sure that we protect workers and to make sure that, where things do go wrong, people don't get off scot-free and companies don't get off scot-free. It's also important to make sure that we get these things right in the first place. That's what this legislation is critically about.

We will have a unified regulator and we'll have this Commonwealth title that will apply across state and Commonwealth boundaries. This is particularly important, as I mentioned, to that critical three-kilometre line of state waters and Commonwealth waters. A particularly pertinent example where this will apply is in Bass Strait, off Victoria, where the Victorian CarbonNet and Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain projects will be operating.

This is particularly important because this project is not only about the sequestration of CO2 being emitted from Latrobe Valley power stations but also about the future opportunity for a future hydrogen industry. A zero carbon emission fuel—the export opportunity of that fuel around the world is a great opportunity for Australia and something we need to continue to explore, and this legislation will allow that to be pursued. It is important that we have all options on the table when it comes to looking at ways in which we can reduce our carbon emissions and manage, in an economically responsible way, a movement towards low-carbon and no-carbon energy sources. It's great to see the opportunity of a hydrogen project—joined with the sequestration of carbon—coming from our existing coal-fired power plants.

But it's crucial that we also acknowledge the context within which this legislation sits. It's great that we are spending a minuscule of time debating this legislation here and that we are spending time debating some legislation that will actually help us address issues of climate change in this nation and for the world. But it sits within a vacuum from this government—a government that is completely without policy and bereft of opportunity when it comes to dealing with climate change. Climate change is an issue that is of such great importance, not just here in Australia and not just for a segment of voters but around the globe.

And when we look at the context of a lack of policy—I should point out there were some policies from this government in this area. They tried to abolish ARENA. Then there was the CEFC. There was the cutting of funding of $500 million for ARENA, and, crucially—when we look at the context of this legislation—a removal of $400 million that was to assist with carbon-sequestration projects. The consequence of all of this is Australia—a country that is bathed in sun, with numerous areas of strong wind—has continued to slip back and back and back when it comes to critical investment in renewable-energy opportunities.

There are funds that have been established in Australia by Australians that are wanting to invest capital in renewable-energy opportunities, that have had to go offshore to find those renewable-energy investment options because they haven't been available here in Australia. So when the government talks about wanting to be economically responsible, you would think it might consider how it can capture its own capital—Australian
capital—to invest in those projects here. This legislation will actually help with that. But we need to be doing so much more.

As we have now for so long, the Labor Party joins with the government in a bipartisan way to support this legislation, because it is going the right way. It is, at least, a small step in the right direction, but it cannot be ignored at all that the context within which this legislation is being presented today is one of absolute failure—that is, absolute failure by this government when it comes to dealing with carbon abatement, absolute failure when it comes to dealing with the issue of climate change and absolute failure when it comes to properly dealing with a long-term, sustainable, reliable energy future for this country.

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (17:33): The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Cross-boundary Greenhouse Gas Titles and Other Measures) Bill 2019 amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, the OPGGS Act, to enable title administration and regulation of a greenhouse gas storage formation that straddles the boundary between state and Northern Territory coastal waters and Commonwealth waters. It also amends the OPGGS Act to enhance the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority's, NOPSEMA's, ability to respond fully during an oil spill emergency.

The recently announced National Hydrogen Strategy highlights the economic opportunity the hydrogen export industry has for Australia. Australia's abundant natural resources mean it could be one of the first countries to create a hydrogen export industry, helping to generate a significant number of Australian jobs and lay the foundations for a new hydrogen industry. This bill aims to help realise this opportunity for Australia. The Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project relies on suitable carbon capture and storage, that the CarbonNet project will provide. This is the cheapest way to produce clean hydrogen.

The CarbonNet project is investigating the feasibility for a commercial-scale multiuser carbon capture and storage network in Gippsland, Victoria. The proposed storage site under CarbonNet's project is one such site that straddles the boundary between Commonwealth waters and state and Northern Territory coastal waters. The Australian government has invested heavily in both the CarbonNet and hydrogen energy supply chain, providing total funding of almost $150 million. The two projects are highly independent.

To kickstart our new hydrogen industry, the bill will improve the current regulatory framework by amending the OPGGS Act to provide for single greenhouse gas titles that are partially located in Commonwealth waters and partially located in state and Northern Territory coastal waters. These amendments will further realise the benefits of Australia's resources sector and unlock the development of future resource projects that identify potential storage formations that straddle the jurisdictional boundary. Once these amendments have passed, together with supporting state and Northern Territory legislation, a cross-boundary regulatory regime will be ready to be triggered. This regulatory regime starts with the creation of a cross-boundary authority consisting of the responsible Commonwealth minister and the relevant state or Northern Territory resources minister. This is similar to current joint authority arrangements for petroleum titles in Commonwealth waters.

The cross-boundary authority will make decisions by consensus about the granting of cross-boundary greenhouse gas titles. Upon the granting of the cross-boundary title, the title area becomes Commonwealth waters for all purposes of the OPGGS Act. The title area will be regulated under the act in the same way as other greenhouse gas titles located in Commonwealth waters. NOPSEMA will have regulatory responsibility for environmental management, safety and well integrity. Titles administration will be undertaken by the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator. The existing protections for pre-commencement petroleum titles and existing petroleum production licences, in both Commonwealth and state and Northern Territory waters, will be maintained. The amendments will also enable the unification of adjacent Commonwealth greenhouse gas titles where a titleholder has reasonable grounds to suspect that there is a geological formation that straddles the two title areas.

Through its other key measure, the bill will also strengthen and clarify the monitoring, inspection and enforcement powers of NOPSEMA within state and Northern Territory jurisdictions during an oil pollution emergency originating in Commonwealth waters. The OPGGS Act currently does not provide adequate monitoring, inspection and enforcement powers within state and Northern Territory jurisdictions for NOPSEMA to ensure compliance by a titleholder with its environmental management obligations. The extension of NOPSEMA's powers in the bill is confined to the event of an oil pollution emergency originating from operations in Commonwealth waters.

The bill amends the OPGGS Act to enable NOPSEMA inspectors to enter premises used for the implementation of oil spill response obligations without a warrant in the event of an oil pollution emergency arising from operations in Commonwealth waters; 'premises' also includes an aircraft or vessel. NOPSEMA will
be able to enter premises whether they are located in Commonwealth, state or Northern Territory jurisdictions. The delay caused by obtaining a warrant or consent can significantly impede compliance monitoring in such emergency situations. During an offshore incident, NOPSEMA inspectors need real-time regulatory intelligence in dynamic situations, including monitoring and enforcing compliance across premises.

The warrant-free oil pollution environmental inspection powers will be exercisable only if the CEO of NOPSEMA is satisfied that there is an emergency that has resulted in or may result in oil pollution and declares an oil pollution emergency. NOPSEMA must publish a copy of the declaration on its website as soon as practicable after the declaration is made and must give a copy to the relevant titleholder. When the CEO of NOPSEMA is satisfied that the emergency no longer exists, the CEO must revoke the declaration and publish a copy of the instrument of revocation on NOPSEMA’s website as soon as possible after making it. A copy of the revocation will also be provided to the relevant titleholder.

The amendments will enable NOPSEMA to monitor whether a titleholder is in compliance with its oil spill response obligations and take enforcement action in the event of noncompliance. The bill will also amend the OPGGS Act to extend the operation of polluter-pays obligations and the application of significant incident directions that may be given by NOPSEMA to areas of state and Northern Territory jurisdiction.

Finally, the bill makes minor technical amendments to improve the operation of the OPGGS Act. Overall, the bill underscores this government's ongoing commitment to the maintenance and continuous improvement of a strong, effective regulatory framework for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage. Further, the bill ensures the regulatory framework's alignment with international best practice and aims to attract investment in new technologies and industries for Australia.

I acknowledge the recommendation made in the Senate Economics Legislation Committee's report on this bill to address issues raised by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association in its submission. These matters are appropriately dealt with in guidance rather than legislation. The guidance and protocols will ensure clarity and procedural certainty in the unlikely event that the provisions need to be activated.

I commend this bill without amendment to the chamber.

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

The House divided. [17:44]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................69
Noes .................73
Majority ............4

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Payne, AE

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Eliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD

CHAMBER
AYES

Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Andreas, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wood, JP
Young, T

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (17:49): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (17:51): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (17:52): I'm pleased to be speaking on this bill and also on the second reading amendment that has been circulated. I formally move that amendment now:
That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:
(1) notes that too many Australians retire without adequate retirement savings; and
(2) reaffirms its commitment to the legislated superannuation guarantee rise to 12 per cent by 2025".

Labor has a very proud track record when it comes to superannuation and we'll continue to fight for a stronger and fairer superannuation system. Because a few things have been said in this parliament today about the role of the Australian trade union movement in respect of superannuation, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the great contribution that the Australian union movement has made, together with the Australian Labor Party, in establishing our modern superannuation system.

Labor and the union movement won compulsory employer-paid superannuation through national worker-led campaigns, together with legislative action in this parliament to put together what today is a universal workplace right to occupational superannuation—a right that, in my lifetime, was once available only to politicians, public servants, senior managers and long-serving employees in certain industries, such as the banking and financial industries. Today, it is a universal right and one that is enjoyed by the people who attend us around this parliament, whether they're cleaning our offices or helping us here in the chamber, by the members of parliament, and by other parliamentary staff. It is a universal right.

Labor supports the objects of this bill which are to provide choice in superannuation, but we're committed to ensuring that every worker is in a high-performing fund and that adequate information is available to empower consumers with the information that they need to make choices that are in their own best interests. What is clear is that people do want to make the right choice and do want to have the right to choose their super fund, and the law should support that. But we also are very cognisant of the fact—a fact brought into stark relief by the Hayne royal commission into the financial services industry—that, often, a lot of evil can be done in the name of choice. We want to ensure that workers are not forced into funds either ill-informed of the consequence of those choices or because some other contrary or corollary arrangements have been made by an employer in a workplace with a proponent of that fund which is not in the worker's interests. People are already voting with their feet. In the last 12 months, $20 billion has moved into the not-for-profit sector, with consumers in search of lower fees and higher performance. Choice is already happening.

The Senate Economics Legislation Committee is currently inquiring into the provisions of this bill, and Labor reserves our position on the proposed choice of fund changes until after the Senate committee has reported. We are using the Senate inquiry process to ensure that there are no unforeseen consequences. A lot of evil has been done in the past in the name of choice. It's blatantly obvious that if a consumer, if a worker, is to have choice then that should go hand in hand with them having all of the information available to them. The choice has to be a genuine one. We want to ensure that consumers are empowered with the information they'll need to make choices.
in their best interest. I foreshadow that Labor will be moving amendments to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill in the Senate at the conclusion of the ongoing Senate inquiry.

This bill has a single schedule providing that employees under workplace determinations or enterprise bargaining agreements made on or after 1 July this year have the right to choose their superannuation fund. The amendments do not apply to workplace determinations or enterprise agreements made before that date. Enterprise agreements that were made before that date but which apply after that date will also not be affected by these amendments. The default arrangements that apply if any employee does not choose a fund are unchanged. This is a very important point, and I want to re-emphasise it. The bill does not prevent a workplace determination or an enterprise agreement collectively determining the default arrangements which will apply to employees at that workplace—a very important distinction.

Labor note that in the 2014 Financial System Inquiry there was a recommendation that all employees will be provided with the ability to choose the fund into which their superannuation guarantee contributions are made. That said, in a submission on the bill to the previous Senate inquiry, Industry Super Australia indicated that, of those employees covered by an enterprise agreement, only 7.4 per cent have no choice of superannuation fund, which represents something just short of two per cent of the workforce—about 1.9 per cent of the workforce. The industries which have the highest percentage of people who have no choice of fund are education, retail, construction, public administration, wholesaling, electricity and agriculture.

It is worth pointing out that in some but not all of those sectors the collective agreement or workplace determination has provided a superannuation contribution in excess of the current level of 9.5 per cent of employee earnings. I look at public administration as an example of that. In the Commonwealth Public Service and related entities, collective agreements provide arrangements for superannuation to be paid at the rate of 15.4 per cent of an employee's earnings. In the school education sector, in many states around the country, rates are paid in excess of the 9.5 per cent. In higher education, in the university sector, it is not uncommon for workers to receive 19 per cent of their earnings as superannuation through arrangements that have been negotiated collectively with their employers through their union representatives and enshrined in collective agreements. One can only assume that certain bargaining trade-offs have been made to achieve those excellent superannuation arrangements.

The second reading amendment before the House invites all members of this parliament to affirm their commitment to 12 per cent legislated superannuation guarantee amendments. We'll be putting the amendment. I hope it will be carried on the voices. I hope, when the amendment is put, that each and every one of those members opposite say, 'We support the legislated SGL increases moving from 9.5 per cent to 12 per cent of earnings.'

We move this amendment quite deliberately, because there's been a lot of noise and debate in the parliament, even in the previous debate. There's been a lot of noise and debate in the community. We've had the Prime Minister stand here and say he supports the legislated SGL increases on the very same day that members of his backbench have been out there running a campaign to have those increases cancelled, along with other radical changes to our superannuation system. So we're going to invite members opposite to vote on a resolution of the House, an amendment to the second reading amendment, which will affirm this parliament's support for 12 per cent superannuation. It's very important, because the community needs to know where everyone stands and where this parliament stands.

Today more than 15 million Australians have superannuation accounts with assets totalling nearly $3 trillion. That's about 140 per cent of GDP. This will grow to $9.5 trillion by 2035, expanding the pool of funds available for local investment and creating a stream of foreign earnings from overseas investments. Under current policy settings, the policy settings which I'm inviting all members of this House to affirm their commitment to today, the median balance on retirement for full-time workers will be around $310,819 for women and around $628,634 for men.

Deputy Speaker, you'll note there's a gap. The gap is intolerable. The gap requires a serious policy response. Labor went to the last election with some propositions about how to close the gap. To date, we've heard nothing from the government on this. I'd warrant that this is a far more serious issue than that being advocated by members of the government who are advocating a freeze or a reversal of the current superannuation guarantee provisions.

Despite the low level of engagement, superannuation is popular. There's not a member of this place that wouldn't be happy if they had a 91 per cent approval rating from all Australians. None of us can boast that we have that, not even the member for Grayndler, who's pretty popular at the moment. But 91 per cent of Australians

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support superannuation despite the low level engagement. That's a higher rating even than the ABC, and that's probably, along with Medicare, two of our most popular national institutions.

Australians now have access to retirement savings accounts that have on average returned somewhere between 6.1 per cent and 8 per cent per annum over the last 10 years. That is a rate of return that I warrant nobody would be able to achieve through a passive investment, such as those that are available as alternatives to superannuation, and certainly not with the security and certainty that superannuation has provided.

The result of Labor's reform is that ordinary workers near retirement today have options that they simply never would have had. And if the Liberals had maintained their comfy, sleepy, pre-King, corporate dystopia, those retirement savings would not be there, except for the very, very wealthy or in those occupations I described earlier.

Sadly, the Liberals, the coalition, the government, aren't tackling the issues that really do need to be tackled. They aren't tackling underperformance within some of the sectors of the industry. If that was dealt with in a thorough and ongoing way it would ensure that some workers who were operating in underperforming funds could literally double their retirement savings on current settings, just by lifting the performance of their fund up to the performance of the mean or even the higher-performing funds.

They aren't tackling the issue of excessive fees, which affect about 15 per cent of APRA-regulated member accounts. They aren't tackling adequacy. In fact, many of the coalition backbench want to take the issue of adequacy backwards. They have already said that they want to ensure that the people who clean their offices don't get anywhere near the same superannuation that they enjoy, and that just strikes me as simply unfair. They've got a job ahead of them, I've got to say. How they can go and argue to people in the community that it is fair for them to receive 15 per cent superannuation but the cleaners, the people who make their coffee, the people who look after their kids in childcare centres and the teachers at their kids' schools are only entitled to 9.5 per cent or less.

I encourage any of them to go out there and make that argument: 'It's fair for me to get 15 per cent, but you— know your place; you're entitled to just 9.5 per cent.' That's literally what is being argued by many of the rebels on the government's own backbench. We'll enjoy that debate. They certainly aren't interested in tackling the issue of superannuation theft. In fact, they're bending over backwards to make things easier for employers who have stolen superannuation funds out of their employees' pockets. Don't get us wrong. We're willing to tackle the issues that are currently before the parliament in this bill. But there's a much bigger agenda that needs to be dealt with, and the government simply isn't focusing on it.

A few moments ago the member for Goldstein stood in this place and made all sorts of wild, frothy allegations about participants in the superannuation system. In his peripatetic fashion, he made all sorts of allegations about the motivations of people within the superannuation sector and the opinions held by members on this side of the House and others. I just want to set the record straight on a few things, and it goes to all of these proxy arguments that are being run about why we shouldn't stick with the commitment the government made going into the last election that they'd leave superannuation alone. It is a known fact that wages have been flagging under this government's watch—a known fact, and they have no plan to deal with it. This is a matter of concern to everyone, from the Reserve Bank board to the Reserve Bank governor to senior Treasury officials to even the Business Council of Australia to welfare agencies—in fact, anybody who understands that if people don't have money in their pocket then they're not spending it in shops, they're not spending it on services and they're not spending it in the broader economy. Unless we get wages moving, we simply are not going to do anything about boosting the level of demand in the economy.

After five years of sitting on top of a flagging economy and wage increase levels that are in the doldrums, these guys have finally lighted upon an idea that the way a worker can get a wage increase is to pay for their own wage increase. It's extraordinary, isn't it? You can imagine how members of this place would react if a proposition was put to them that for the next five years the only way they would get a wage increase would be if their superannuation was cut. I can just imagine the conversations they'd be having in the halls around this joint, if that proposition was put. But somehow the member for Goldstein over there, the member for Mackellar and others of their ilk—some of the rebels upstairs in the other place—think that is a reasonable proposition.

They are quite literally saying to Australians: 'We have not got a clue when it comes to how we increase wages in this country, but the only proposition we're going to put on the table is that we cut your superannuation payments'—not in the guarantee that it's going to flow through to wages but on a wing, a prayer and a wet finger in the air. I could not walk into a workplace in Australia—and I've walked into many workplaces in Australia and have had to put tough arguments to people around wages negotiations—and say: 'We're going to cut your superannuation payments as a way of funding your next pay rise. Nothing else is on the table. And, by the way, your penalty rates have been cut as well.' No worker is going to see that as a good deal. They're going to see it
coming. They'll say, 'Why is it good enough for the government to keep their benefits but we've got to cut ours to get a pay rise?' I'd like to see the government make that argument, but that's—quite literally—what they're standing here in the parliament today making out.

In a few moments, when we vote on the second reading amendment, members of the coalition parties will have their opportunity to affirm their commitment to this proposition and reject the proposition that the workers of Australia, somehow, are not as good as them and not as entitled as they are when it comes to superannuation payments. There is a cost to what the government is proposing. It means a person on average earnings will lose somewhere between $60,000 and $80,000 on their retirement savings on what the government has already done. I'm talking about their existing freezes to the superannuation guarantee levy. Those losses will be compounded if these nutters on the other side get their way. We will resist it. We are giving all right-thinking members in this place the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment.

I want to say one final thing on the issue of the link between wages and superannuation. I want to clear a few things up. Labor has never argued that there's not a link. It just beggars belief that when the first accord was made there was a wages superannuation trade-off. In my contributions today I have spoken about unions, which, on behalf of their members, have negotiated wage increases and superannuation increases above the superannuation guarantee level. It beggars belief, if you're sitting around a negotiation table and arguing for both wage increases and superannuation increases, that they're not linked. Of course they are. They're linked in exactly the same way that total wage costs are linked, whether it's payroll tax or any of the other costs that are imposed upon employers and businesses in respect of their workers.

What we simply don't accept and what we simply can't accept is that the only way a worker today is going to get a wage increase under this government—that hasn't got a clue when it comes to economic policy—is if we cancel superannuation increases. We reject that. We also reject the argument that, if you cancel modest superannuation increases, somehow businesses around the country are going to say: 'You know what? I'm going to give all of my workers a wage rise.' It's just simply nuts, and it's not going to happen. But that's what some of these clowns are trying to get us to believe. Let me spell out what these modest superannuation increases are: in June next year, 0.5 per cent; in July next year, 0.5 per cent; in July the year after, 0.5 per cent; and 0.5 per cent for each and every year until 2025. That's five instalments of a very modest 0.5 per cent spread over five years.

We don't argue that there's not a link between wages, superannuation and total employment costs. Of course there is. It beggars belief to argue otherwise. It's not one for one. In some industries, as a result of the bargaining power of workers either collectively or individually, in some labour markets where workers are in hot demand and attractive employment packages need to be offered, in some demographics—senior management are very good at this. Senior management within corporate Australia are very good at ensuring they've got all of these bases covered. Often, the contributions into their superannuation far outweigh their contributions into their fixed wages. So we don't argue there's no link. That beggars belief. What we do argue is that it is a hopeless government, divided and without a clue. It's clueless when it comes to stimulating wage growth in this country and it's clueless when it comes to economic policy in this country. What we do argue is that such a government does not have a right to go raiding workers' superannuation to make up for the fact that it is absolutely clueless when it comes to how to give workers a pay rise in this country.

We are inviting all right-thinking members of this place to come into this House this afternoon, reject the calumnry of the other side and vote in favour of the policy that they took to the last election—the policy that the Prime Minister says he supports and that the Treasurer says he supports. Here's their opportunity to come into the House today and affirm that very thing.

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

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

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (18:15): As I was saying earlier to the member for Whitlam, I had to say some nice things about him earlier; I might have to retract some of those. It's interesting, once again, to listen to his contribution. He seems to forget that his side of politics—those opposite—went to the last election with a proposal for $387 billion of new taxes across the Australian economy. That is a very convenient oversight by the member for Whitlam, and it behoves us to continue to remind the Australian people, each and every day, that those opposite proposed to hit our economy with the sleigh hammer of $387 billion of new taxes. Towards the end of his contribution, he did properly recognise that the policy that we took to the election around superannuation hasn't changed. It is what it is.

The bill before us today, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019, is about ensuring that Australians have choice with regard to their superannuation. The bill amends the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act to give Australians employed under industry awards or enterprise
bargaining agreements the choice, from 1 July 2020, to nominate their own superannuation fund. As I discussed in my earlier contribution on the previous bill to do with super, this is about ensuring that we minimise the risk of Australians having multiple superannuation accounts. Given the importance of compulsory superannuation contributions to Australians’ retirement incomes, they—and only they—should be able to decide where their money is invested. Yet there are still around 20 per cent of workers who can’t make that simple choice because their 9½ per cent super guarantee must be paid to a fund listed in their award agreement under some industrial laws.

I remember hearing, when we had this debate a couple of years ago, the story of a gentleman from, I think, Perth who actually went to court to try and have his super put into a different super fund from what was mandated in the award, and he was unable to do so. So this legislation is very timely and very appropriate. It is about the capacity of Australian people to maximise their superannuation savings and ensure they’re not diminished. Very often this occurs for young people who might have a variety of different jobs, those on lower incomes who have small amounts going into super under our current superannuation system or those who have changed jobs over the course of the years and might have a variety of funds. Prior to being in this place when I had a financial services business, I remember at one stage having a potential client come to me who had eight different super funds. It took us nine months to work through those various super funds to get them amalgamated into a single fund so that they could then fully see what they had in their super.

That is why we need this bill and the previous one that we spoke about today: to give all Australians the ability to choose their fund, to protect young and casual workers employed under specific agreements from being pushed into having multiple, often underperforming, funds because of outdated laws. This bill is for the retail employees working at our local Coles stores, like the ones at Ormeau and Park Ridge; the truckies transporting stock to our local businesses; the nurses and midwives working at Logan Hospital; teachers at Windaroo State School or Boronia Heights State School; and the two million Australians employed under enterprise agreements. Currently employees in the aforementioned and other sectors have their superannuation guarantee paid into employer nominated funds instead of funds of their own choosing. These workers are denied the choice to pick the superannuation fund into which they want their hard earned funds paid. This puts them out of step with the majority of workers and prevents them from having the control over their retirement savings that they desire and need. The lack of choice and control over superannuation means that these Australians are paying unnecessary fees and insurance premiums and, as I touched on before, run the risk of accumulating multiple superannuation accounts, all of which have the potential to erode their hard earned retirement savings. Importantly, one of the issues—and I have seen this firsthand—is that they actually lose interest in their various superannuation accounts. This is one of the problems that I’ve seen professionally prior to working in this place. People don’t pay attention to the multitude of superannuation funds, and that adds to the risk of the money that has been invested on their behalf being eroded and frittered away. The Murray review found that lack of choice is a barrier to Australians engaging with their superannuation and this barrier should be removed. That is what this legislation is about.

On this side of the House we advocate for and support choice and freedom for all Australians. It is a fundamental principle which coalition governments believe in. We believe that denying Australians a choice over their super is fundamentally unfair, anticompetitive and inefficient. Under this proposed legislation employers would no longer be able to deny their employees the choice of superannuation on the grounds that they are employed under an enterprise agreement or workplace determination that, importantly, still specifies a default fund. New employees to whom such a determination applies should be able to decide where their super is fundamentally unfair, anticompetitive and inefficient.

On this side of the House we know that Australians work hard to build their nest egg for their later years. We believe they should be given the opportunity to maximise the value of those retirement savings that they accumulate. After all, it is their money, not the employer's money and not the superannuation fund's money. Giving them the choice over their super fund will hopefully help reduce the perennial problem of people racking up multiple accounts, paying multiple fees and insurance premiums.

Under this bill an employer will need to ensure that that choice option is provided. If the employer makes non-compliant contributions in relation to superannuation funds, they will have increased their superannuation guarantee shortfall over the quarter. This provision increases employers' liability to superannuation guarantee charges, which are paid to the Commissioner of Taxation in respect of each employee. These notional contributions for an employee are in relation to defined benefit schemes and will not cause the employer to have an increase in a guarantee shortfall if the employee's benefit in the scheme would not be affected by the employer making contributions to another fund. To be clear, the bill does not prevent enterprise agreements specifying a particular fund; it just provides additional choice.
Since the last time this bill was considered, we've seen the evidence from the Productivity Commission's report about the negative effects of multiple accounts on retirement savings, estimated at $2.6 billion a year in unnecessary fees and insurance premiums. The Commission also found that legislative change was needed to remove the restrictions on Australians being able to choose their own fund.

The government has already taken action through the Protecting Your Superannuation package. This was introduced last year to cap fees on low-balance accounts, remove the existing stock of multiple accounts and consolidate low-balance accounts into active funds. As we saw earlier today with the previous piece of legislation, closing down eligible rollover funds and moving those to the ATO is now a further step in consolidating lost superannuation. This bill is another step in fixing the problem of multiple accounts by seeking to prevent Australians from being forced into default funds that are specified under enterprise agreements or workplace determinations.

Most of all, we want the settings that underpin our superannuation system to be focused exclusively on the interests of members of these funds and on giving them the framework to maximise their retirement savings from the first contribution and throughout their working life. I commend this bill in its original form to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (18:26): Labor is referring the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019 to a Senate inquiry for good reason. There are still question marks about whether or not Australian workers will actually be disadvantaged through this legislation, which seeks to require that employees under workplace determinations or enterprise agreements have the right to choose their superannuation fund. There's a risk that vulnerable employees may be forced into funds that are underperforming and may actually end up worse off. So Labor's referring this bill to a Senate inquiry.

Nonetheless, I do wish to make some remarks regarding the bill, and, importantly, the second reading amendment that's been moved by the shadow minister, the member for Whitlam. The amendment points out this government's atrocious track record when it comes to supporting superannuation in Australia and the fact that many Australians will retire with inadequate superannuation balances. The government is seeking to undermine boosting those superannuation balances by questioning whether or not the staged increases in compulsory superannuation should go ahead. That's been the view of some MPs, and you might call them rebel MPs—certainly a sizeable number of backbench MPs on the coalition side.

This bill amends the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act to require that employees under workplace determinations or enterprise agreements have the right to choose their superannuation fund. It would apply to new workplace determinations and enterprise agreements made on or after 1 July 2020. Some employees are covered by enterprise agreements or workplace determinations that do not allow choice of which super fund their compulsory superannuation guarantee contributions are paid into. In terms of the number of people, Industry Super Australia estimates that, of those employees covered by enterprise agreements, only 7.4 per cent have no choice of superannuation fund, which represents just about 1.9 per cent of the workforce.

When it comes to superannuation, Labor has a very strong and a very proud track record not only of fighting for a better superannuation system but also of introducing necessary reforms to strengthen the superannuation system and ultimately ensure that people who are members of superannuation funds—particularly low-paid and vulnerable workers—are in the best fund possible and get the best deal that maximises their retirement incomes into the future.

While the Senate Economics Legislation Committee is currently inquiring into this bill and Labor has reserved its position on the proposed choice of fund changes until the committee has reported, we do, of course, support choice in superannuation. Not being able to choose a person's own fund can mean that employees who've changed workplaces can end up with several superannuation accounts, leading to higher fees and charges and potentially paying multiple insurance premiums.

Labor is committed to ensuring that every worker is in a high-performing fund and that adequate information is available to empower consumers with the information that they need to make choices that are in their best interests. Getting stuck in an underperforming superannuation fund remains a real risk for many Australians. It's a risk not only to their wellbeing and their retirement but also to the wellbeing of their families and their next of kin. An underperforming fund can cost an Australian worker the equivalent of 13 years of lost wages, and regulators and consumers need to be able to identify those funds that are charging too much and delivering too little.

Millions of Australians are being ripped off by underperforming accounts, and it's critical that these funds are forced to report their performance and lift their game. We've seen recently the MySuper heat maps that have been released by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, which is a good start. It puts the performance of the $2.9 trillion superannuation industry in Australia and their funds under the microscope and allows consumers to access, in a timely manner, information that's easy to understand and to make their own decisions about the
But there is more to be done, including the extension of heat maps to the choice sector and ensuring that the data is presented in a way that's more easily understood by consumers. It's time those opposite stopped some of their ideological attacks on the super system and got on with the difficult work of fixing some of that underperformance. We all know that the government doesn't have the best track record when it comes to delivering on some of those changes to superannuation around performance. We remember its disastrous 2016 superannuation tax changes. After Labor led the way from opposition in 2015 and proposed policies to reform superannuation tax concessions, the government spent much of 2015 and 2016 arguing against those sensible reforms to tax concessions that had been put up by the Labor Party, particularly those for people on higher incomes.

Then, in its 2016-17 budget, the government announced that it planned to make changes to some of those tax concessions for high-end super. But it was the way it went about it. It was done in a hurry, without consultation with the industry and, you might say, without due diligence, and the government's proposed $500,000 lifetime cap on non-concessional contributions triggered widespread concern that the government was making retrospective changes. The government didn't respect those calls and arrogantly ploughed on, and we saw several members of the coalition raise concerns about that notion of retrospectivity, which saw the member for Dawson threatening to cross the floor and oppose the government's budget proposals if changes were not delivered.

As with a lot of reforms that were put forward by this government in respect of superannuation, they reluctantly scrapped the changes. And that was only after it had undermined confidence in the retirement system and sparked a civil war inside the Liberal Party. Fast-forward to 2020, and now this fighting is continuing within the coalition around the notion of the level of compulsory superannuation contributions.

Mr Tim Wilson interjecting—

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: And one of those who have been involved, as the rebel MP, is the one across the chamber there who's rudely, once again, interjecting. We all know that the member has been out there trying to undermine government policy, trying to claim that people who are on low incomes will lose out if Labor's legislated increases in the compulsory superannuation guarantee are increased into the future. All it's going to mean—if the government listened to the likes of Mr Wilson—is that low-paid workers, particularly women—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): The member for Goldstein on a point of order?

Mr Tim Wilson: The member should refer to other members by their correct titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Goldstein.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: I won't refer to you anymore. There you go!

If those rebel MPs get their way, what it will mean is that vulnerable Australian workers are going to end up with less in their superannuation retirement savings at the end of the day and will potentially have to rely on the age pension to fund a comfortable retirement. That will increasingly put pressure on the Australian budget as our population ages. And it's more than a few rogue players on the backbench; it's a reflection of the ideology that many in the coalition have around the notion of universal superannuation in this country.

The retirement income review shouldn't be a stalking horse for further delays to the legislated increase in the SGC to 12 per cent. Too many Australians retire without adequate retirement savings, which is why our super system needs to be strengthened and protected, not undermined. Labor created a world-class system so that every Australian could have some dignity in retirement. We will always fight to protect that system, including against the remarks by members opposite that are seeking to undermine that compulsory increase from nine to 12 per cent into the future.

Once again, Labor issues caution with respect to the passage of this bill. That's why we have referred it to a Senate inquiry to look at whether or not Australian workers are actually going to end up worse off if they are forced into underperforming funds. That's something that we need to be satisfied with before we offer wholehearted support for this bill.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (18:36): In speaking to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019 I'd like to pick up where I finished on my earlier remarks on the previous piece of legislation, because what we just heard from the member from Kingsford Smith was, once again, a diatribe of allegations and a diatribe of justification about why industry super funds, in particular, should be able to squander and take possession and control of Australians' retirement savings.

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr TIM WILSON: I note that some of the members opposite chose to interject. In fact, one of them got outraged because I dared point out a point of order; one that they regularly make themselves, which shows the hypocrisy that's at the heart of the Australian Labor Party and their agenda, because they have no—nil, zero—concern for Australians and Australian workers. I make the remark because we often observe in this place that it's a choice for the Labor Party about what they stand up for. If you were here in the chamber in the last parliament, you would have seen the then Leader of the Opposition stand at the dispatch box, right opposite where I am standing now, and sell out Australian workers. Worse than that, he justified it every step of the way. If you work in retail, that's fine; your income and your benefits are there to be sold and traded away for the interests of power accumulation within the Australian Labor Party. That is the foundation of the Australian Labor Party. It is one giant corrupt patronage network.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): The member for Goldstein will pause. The member for Moreton, on a point of order?

Mr Perrett: It was a reflection on members here, and I would ask that he withdraw that comment.

Mr TIM WILSON: For the sake or the benefit of the member, I will withdraw, but I was reflecting on the sentiments of the Australian Labor Party, not on an individual member. I think I have every right to reflect on the sentiment of the Australian Labor Party and their motivating force. When it comes down to it, the Australian Labor Party have a long-term history of selling out Australian workers and selling out their retirement security. That the former member who stood at the dispatch box just then went around the country claiming to people everywhere that there was a justification for their giant $387 billion worth of taxes and a justification for the savings of a million retirees being hit is despicable. It's a despicable act.

I was the chair of the economics committee leading the inquiry that actually raised these issues—which those opposite did not want to hear. Those on the opposition benches kept saying that the only people who were going to be hit were those well off. But families, elderly people and people with a disability came before the committee and told their stories about how Labor would destroy their lives. Their response was to scoff with disinterest and to call it out as a lie. Some of us will never sit by and watch the conduct that they engaged in. For the member for Kingsford-Smith to stand up, to go to that dispatch box and to dismiss it, all when he was the front face, and to actually rationalise it to the Australian people, it was a despicable act then and it's a despicable act now.

This legislation is designed to stop Australian workers being ripped off. Now you'd think the members of the opposition would support it. If they had any integrity or if they had any credibility, they'd support it unamended. But, like every other piece of legislation, we go through the journey of them using it for a political windfall or benefit in the hope that they can claim relevance or obstruct or put hurdles up to its implementation.

The purpose of members on this side is to stand up for Australians. We're the only side of politics today that backs people who stand on their own two feet. We want people to work. We want people to be able to be successful. We want people to be able to provide the nucleus of a family and a community and a home as the foundations for a great country. That's what we stand for. What we despise is the hypocrisy of those who claim that mantle for themselves but only to enrich their own powerbase. I know members don't like for it to be told and to have it exposed, but it's the truth. Look at how fast they will race to defend the collective interests and corporate interests of industry super funds in the way they won't do for workers when they sell out their interest for industrial awards or to oblige people and remove their choice, their freedom and their opportunity by compelling it to go into the control of the people who put them in this place.

The modern Labor Party is not a labour party that reflects the interests of workers. The modern Labor Party is founded today to protect the interests of the accumulation of capital, capital that gives them control, particularly over industry superannuation funds. They scoff because they know that when it's exposed it becomes nakedly obvious to the Australian people that their motivation is not pure. It is not somehow to advance the collective interests. It is a great reminder of the chapter in The Road to Serfdom by Friedrich Hayek: it is a reflection of why the worst people get to the top. This is the spirit that sits behind their constant opposition for sensible, pragmatic reform so that money that Australians earn, that they put in their superannuation accounts, sits in their hip pocket at retirement and isn't raided by fees and by unnecessary insurance and isn't sold out to their industrial arrangements to advance the interests of the modern Australian Labor Party. That's why we stand up in this chamber for this legislation. That's why we stand up: because it reflects the type of country that we want to be—one where we encourage people to stand on their own two feet to save and sacrifice for their own retirement security so that they can take care of themselves. I can't think of a better emblem and ideal of the foundation of a country and a successful country than that. When you can't take care of yourself, then you ultimately fall on to the shoulders of others and deny the opportunity that you can turn around to others and help them too. That's the foundation of what we believe on this side of this chamber. You know it and I know it. The problem is the sentiment is not shared on the other side of this chamber. And of course we've also had the shadow minister and
the member for Kingsford-Smith go to the dispatch box in this debate and lecture people on this side of the chamber with straw man arguments about the costs of the policies that they rapaciously advance, because, in the end, they don't care about workers' interests. They don't care about workers' savings. In fact, the very policies that they will go and die in a ditch for, which accumulate the wealth and control in the hands of their friends—the RBA, the Treasury, the Grattan Institute and so many other groups—lower the incomes of Australians today. They scoff at that proposition, because of the economic illiteracy and disinterest of the workers who they claim to represent.

Mr Perrett: Disinterest means impartial, mate.

Mr TIM WILSON: Well, the member for Morton claims that disinterest means impartial. I would accept that as the basis of the greatest contribution that many members opposite have ever shown towards the Australian worker. But it's not just impartiality and it's not just disinterest; at times it's hostility to their interests because it undermines their own. That's why we stand tall and proud for this legislation. This is why we stand for closing loopholes that will actually advance the interests of Australian retirees. That's why we stand in this place against their retiree tax, which they wanted to use as a vehicle to undermine the retirement security of a million Australians. That's why we stand tall and proud for making sure that people are in the best position to save and sacrifice for themselves, because they, every Australian, can be part of the great foundations of this country. The only thing the modern Australian Labor Party does is look to workers and say that they want them to be the greatest foundation for themselves. Thank you.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (18:46): In Dante Alighieri's inferno he ranks the inner circles of hell. He puts the murderers and all sorts of horrible people in the outer layers, moving all the way in. The second last circle of hell he reserves for hypocrites. Some days I really understand why he went with that literal device.

I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019. This bill amends the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 to require that employees under workplace determinations or enterprise agreements have the right to choose their superannuation fund. This would apply to new workplace determinations and enterprise agreements made on or after July 1 2020.

Choice in where your superannuation contributions go is a good thing. Rather than just bombast, Labor actually are the party of universal superannuation and Labor supports fair dinkum choice in superannuation. Labor is also committed to making sure that the superannuation of every worker is in a high-performing fund and that every consumer has the information they need to make the best choice of fund. Labor is rightly proud of Australia's superannuation system. It's one of our most significant financial and social reforms. The Keating government's brave reforms in 1992 introducing the compulsory employer contribution scheme will continue to have life-changing impacts on Australians forevermore as they age and enter retirement.

Sadly, Australia's population is ageing. Despite the optimistic recommendations of Treasury there's actually no denying that. It's an empirical fact that every demographer will confirm. In 2017 there were 3,794,062 Australians aged over 65 and they accounted for 15 per cent of the population. If we fast forward or project forward it's estimated that by 2057 there will be 8,799,475 Australians aged over 65 and they will account for 22 per cent of the population. But it is because of the foresight of the Labor Keating government that many of these Australians will have a comfortable retirement funded through their own superannuation funds.

Older Australians deserve a dignified and comfortable retirement, so Labor will always support sensible reform to Australia's superannuation system. Australia's superannuation system currently has over 15 million members and over 80 per cent of Australians aged 25 to 54 hold a superannuation account. There are around 28 million superannuation accounts. When we break down the funds there are 217 institutional funds, which breaks down into 38 industry funds, which tend to be high-performing; 37 public sector funds; 24 corporate funds; and 118 retail funds. There are also 517,000 self-managed funds, with $697 billion in assets. The Australian superannuation system currently manages over $2.8 trillion in assets, more than 140 per cent of our GDP. What a proud legacy of the Hawke and Keating Labor governments. I should mention the Rudd and Gillard governments, which made some improvements there, as well. It is estimated that by 2035 the superannuation system will be worth $9.5 trillion—a small country, but an incredible amount of funds being managed by Australians, and managed well by Australians. That's an enormous asset, held by working Australians.

The provisions of this bill will give every worker under a workplace determination or enterprise agreement the right to choose their superannuation fund. In effect, this bill gives those workers the power to choose where they invest those funds—$2.8 trillion worth of power, and rising; the power to choose a fund that will give you the best return on your money so that your retirement is the best it can be; and the power to choose a fund that will invest your money how and where you want it invested. You can have total control, or limited control. You can make the decisions. That's why it's so important that Australians have choice in where they put their superannuation funds.
The power of your superannuation funds means you can effectively shape the world you live in. For instance, you can choose to invest in what is called an ‘ethical super fund’, which only invests in clean energy or sustainable products, medical solutions, innovative technologies, responsible banking, health care, recycling, energy efficiency, education and aged care. Take the time to look at what your funds are doing. Who wouldn’t want to invest in those things, especially when the returns are healthy? Imagine if our $2.8 trillion, and rising, funds were put into those investments right now. It is a power that Australians hold to change our world right now, a power that millions of Australians hold in their hands—just an ethical phone call away, or an ethical mouse click away.

Under current settings the median balance on retirement for full-time workers will be $310,000 for women and $628,634 for men. For median workers their average annual retirement income will be around $28,000 for women and nudging $34,000 for men. For those women, that’s only 65 per cent of the ASFA comfortable retirement income standard and for men it is 79 per cent of the comfortable retirement income standard. It’s even worse for workers who fall in the bottom 10 per cent of the income distribution. Women in that category will be only 21 per cent better off than they would be if they were receiving the age pension and men in that category will be 37 per cent better off, compared to the age pension. I’ll come back to that gender gap in a minute. So, although our superannuation system is working for many Australians, sadly it is also leaving some of our fellow citizens behind. The superannuation guarantee is currently legislated to increase to 12 per cent by 2025, although I would go on the record and say I’m a little wary of the machinations of some of those opposite. But, I live in hope. For average workers the balance on retirement for median workers will rise by 20 per cent for men and 19 per cent for women. The poorest workers, those in the bottom 10 per cent of income distribution, will retire with an additional 30 per cent in accumulated superannuation. For those workers, this will make a substantial difference to their comfort in their later years—to their health, to their retirement and to their quality of life.

The success of Australia’s superannuation system relies on employers paying the superannuation of their employees. That’s the contract—that’s the deal. But, sadly, underpayment of superannuation by employers is a significant issue in Australia. Industry Super Australia estimates that 2.85 million Australians were underpaid. That underpayment amounted to $5.9 billion of their super entitlements. This is a very significant problem. These are scary numbers—$5.9 billion—and, sadly, it is increasing. Superannuation theft has increased by 25 per cent over the three years from 2013-14 to 2016-17—under the coalition's watch, I stress. Australian workers need a tough cop on the beat, and what do we get? One who is asleep behind the wheel with their feet up and half a doughnut hanging out of their mouth.

As I mentioned previously, the amount of superannuation accumulated by women is less than that accumulated by men. The average balance for men is 63 per cent higher than that for women, and it's worse for older Australians nearing retirement, where the average balance for men is 72 per cent higher than for women. Of those people nearing retirement without any superannuation, 13 per cent of men and 23 per cent of women are in the 60 to 64 age group.

Our superannuation system is currently not working as well as it needs to for women. I hope that the coalition government have a plan to address this issue. But, in their seventh year, we're yet to see it, and I fear that they do not have a plan. Too many Australian women are retiring into poverty. Older women, particularly single women, are at a greater risk of experiencing poverty and homelessness in retirement. By the time they're 60, 34 per cent of single women in Australia live in poverty. Labor took to the election a plan to boost women's superannuation balances by paying the superannuation guarantee on paid parental leave and making it easier for employers to pay extra superannuation to women. Labor would be happy for the coalition government to adopt these policies. They’re good, sensible policies.

More generally, while the superannuation system delivers strong returns for many Australians, some are trapped in persistently underperforming superannuation funds. At least $269 billion in assets and five million members are stuck in underperforming funds—not industry funds, I would stress. Superannuation fees are higher in Australia than in other OECD nations. Australians pay more than $30 billion a year in superannuation administration fees—1.1 per cent of total assets. That’s why we’ve been happy to send this bill off to the well-respected Senate economics committee. We hope that this piece of coalition legislation doesn't make Australian workers who pay superannuation worse off.

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (18:56): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019. As my friend the member for Whitlam and shadow minister for financial services has indicated, Labor has agreed to support the bill in this House but to reserve our final position until after this issue is fully examined in the Senate. I support the amendment moved by the member for Whitlam.

This bill has a single schedule, providing that employees under workplace determinations or enterprise agreements have the right to choose their superannuation fund. The bill amends the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 to ensure employees under workplace determinations or enterprise agreements have
the right to choose their superannuation fund. This applies only to new workplace determinations and enterprise agreements made on or after 1 July 2020. Of course, over time all agreements would be covered by this new requirement as those agreements and determinations are renewed. The default arrangements which apply if an employee does not choose a fund remain unchanged.

Some employees are covered by enterprise agreements or workplace determinations that do not allow choice of which super fund their compulsory super contributions are paid into. In a submission to the previous Senate inquiry on the bill, Industry Super Australia indicated that, of those employees covered by enterprise agreements, only 7.4 per cent have no choice of superannuation fund, which represents just 1.9 per cent of the workforce. Labor is not against choice. For example, we appreciate that employees changing jobs may want to retain their current superannuation arrangements rather than have to start afresh in a super fund mandated by an enterprise agreement. That can lead to workers having multiple accounts and paying multiple lots of fees and insurance premiums.

However, choice can be a vexed issue and has varying results in different circumstances. For example, in the absence of the legislated but not enacted super choice product dashboards, many consumers may not have the information available to them to make informed choices that are in their best interests. I note that Industry Super Australia has highlighted that choice is attractive but has the potential for greater consumer harm if it is not accompanied by strong consumer protections and enforcement. Their support for this bill is conditional on the implementation of the legislated choice product dashboard.

I have to say that choice can be exercised in several ways. It isn't just about individuals making a choice. Choice can also be exercised where workers collectively vote to endorse or mandate a particular fund for a workplace or company in an enterprise agreement. Why is it that collective choice is not as valid as an individual choice? Collective choice is also a particularly valid form of choice in industries like transport and construction, where workers frequently move between employers or across locations. Having a commonality of fund can assist those workers as well as employers by easing administrative burdens and ensuring better compliance.

In the university sector, there is another complexity. University staff can choose their current scheme or elect to join UniSuper as the fund mandated in the National Tertiary Education Union's enterprise agreements. Some 400,000 university staff have chosen UniSuper. Members can then, within UniSuper, choose either a defined benefit or an accumulation option. The defined benefit scheme, which is the choice of 80 per cent of employees, needs certainty about the number of staff that will take up that option in order to survive. It is not guaranteed by employers or the government. It is a scheme that allows academics and other staff to move seamlessly between universities across Australia and remain in one scheme. The defined benefit scheme would be jeopardised if this legislation passes.

There is another issue. Many organisations say that any enterprise agreements that pay above the SGC should be exempted from this legislation. For example, the universities pay 17.5 per cent. The mandated funds which are mandated in enterprise agreements are almost always industry superannuation funds. While industry funds have varied performance levels—and these go up and down—one thing you can be sure of is that industry funds are well managed and well governed. They are subject to enormous levels of compliance. Within most industry funds, there are a range of investment options, including direct ownership of shares to suit the risk appetite of each member. So there is enormous choice within each fund already. Now is not the time for a chapter and verse comparison of the returns of industry funds versus retail funds. However, I would refer to the minister's statement in the second reading speech in which he said:

And most of all, we want the settings that underpin the system to be focused exclusively on the interests of members—on maximising their retirement savings from the first contribution and throughout their working life.

However, in reality, this choice legislation doesn't actually realise that admirable ambition. The McKell Institute, said in its submission to the inquiry of the Senate Economics Legislation Committee that after examining the breadth of mandated funds:

Overall, we found the fewer the restrictions or limitations placed on individual choice, either by employees or by employers, the worse the overall performance outcomes were for employees. Of the six main cohorts identified, employees under agreements with 'collective choice' or 'group choice' were the most likely to be placed in high-performing funds and almost the least-likely to be placed into under-performing funds.

Call me cynical, but the choice argument can be seen as a mechanism to give the retail funds, which are generally poorer performing, an opportunity to undermine the industry funds in those remaining areas where funds are mandated. With more money to burn on glitzy advertising, there is a good chance that those without good information will make a poor choice. Even worse, there is a whole industry out there selling self-managed superannuation and charging high fees in the process. Worse still, in some industries, the removal of mandated funds means that the fund the worker ends up in will be the choice of the employer, not the employee. This means
employers will simply railroad employees into a super fund choice that is consistent with their interests rather than the interests of the employee.

We know that, in some instances, it is a case of, 'If you want the job, this is the fund that you're in.' I know that the ACTU and unions fear that, if this legislation goes through, the next point of attack by the antisuper warriors within the coalition will be mandated default super schemes. Nominated default schemes in cases where the employee doesn't nominate a fund within 28 days are exempt from this legislation. However, it isn't hard to see this bill as the thin edge of the wedge. We know through enterprise bargaining that some employers already want to change the default fund to one that suits them, not the employees. We also know that this government loathes industry funds. They have never got over the fact that industry funds are there to benefit the members and don't charge the high fees that retail funds do.

The coalition also hates the fact that trade unions are equal partners with employers in governing those funds. It's a fact that, over a working lifetime, industry funds perform better than retail funds. The average annual net rate of return for retail funds is 6.37 per cent over five years and 6.11 per cent over 10 years to September 2019. For industry funds, that average annual net return is 8.42 per cent over five years and 8.3 per cent over 10 years. That is a massive difference of two per cent a year, on average, and equates to tens of thousands of dollars over the long term.

On this side of the chamber we're proud of the industry superannuation system in this country, set up in 1984 by workers sacrificing wage increases for superannuation. Soon after, trade unions invited employees to join them on the boards of new industry funds. Labor then legislated the super guarantee in 1990 and, by and large, it has been one of the great postwar social and economic reforms. Increasing super contributions from three per cent to nine per cent by 2002, our national savings of $3 trillion is almost among the highest per capita in the world, and our potential investment pool is massive. But for Labor, it would simply not be here. And remember, it was opposed by those opposite at every step of the way.

Industry super has given the 60 per cent of workers who had no super in the mid-1980s access to decent retirement savings outside the pension. It also gave the other 40 per cent who did have super a real choice, rather than being trapped in substandard company schemes. But over the last six years this coalition government has refused to do the big things that would have improved super and retirement incomes for everyone. In 2014, they put a freeze on the super guarantee at 9.5 per cent. Nationally, that has meant a loss of around $14.2 billion for 8.7 million workers, by not increasing the super to 12 per cent by 2020 as per the original schedule.

Now there is a debate within the coalition about whether we should increase the SGC to 12 per cent at all. The delayed increase from 9.5 per cent to 12 per cent from 2021 to 2025 is now under threat, despite the denials of the government. Whether that increase to the SGC goes ahead will be an acid test for this government. Further, this government has done nothing about the theft of superannuation by employers. In fact, under separate legislation, they are giving them an amnesty, a pat on the back if they are giving them an amnesty, a pat on the back for Labor, it would simply not be here. And remember, it was opposed by those opposite at every step of the way.

In Australia it is estimated that 2.85 million workers have been underpaid superannuation, costing them $5.94 billion collectively. In my seat of Corangamite alone, around 18,000 workers or 31 per cent of the workforce have been underpaid around $34.2 million. That's almost $1,900 per worker. The government could fix this tomorrow by extending the safety net for unpaid super entitlements, introducing stronger monitoring and enforcement and actually prosecuting employers. Of course, this isn't a priority for this government.

Then there is the shameful proposition coming from one Liberal backbencher and other coalition supporters to exempt people who earn under $50,000 from having super paid and to take their 9.5 per cent SGC as wages. In my electorate, that potentially means 28,000 workers would be exempt. Collectively, they would lose $98.8 million in super and pay an extra $28.4 million in tax. Worst of all, their ultimate retirement incomes would be slashed. Rather than dealing with these big picture issues, rather than giving workers a hand up, rather than protecting workers' super and making sure everyone can access a decent retirement, all this government wants to do is fiddle with and even white-ant the super system. All they want to do is break down the universality of the system to exempt workers from it and undermine the industry funds. Like most things they touch, this government is a wrecker, not a builder. It was Labor that built superannuation. It was Labor that built Medicare and the NDIS. It was Labor that built paid parental leave. Labor builds; the coalition destroys.

This legislation is another example of the ideological fixation that this coalition government has against workers choosing their fund collectively under an enterprise agreement. It is another example of the ideological use of choice to undermine industry funds and promote the interests of the retail funds. On the other side of the coin, they provide no accompanying consumer protections and no guaranteed right to accessible information. Deputy Speaker, you can hear in my speech that while we support this legislation going through the House it is simply to ensure it gets to the other place where it can be examined more robustly.
Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (19:10): I rise to make a few brief comments about this bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019. If there's one thing that the WorkChoices experience in Australia tells us, it's that when the Liberals put the word 'choice' into the title of a bill you better look at it twice, because under WorkChoices we saw people's wages and conditions attacked, job insecurity start to skyrocket and the balance tilt away from everyday working people, making it harder for people to have any real control over their lives, limiting the amount of money that was in their pocket and, in the process, taking away other choices that they might have, like what to do with an increased pay packet or what to do with increased spare time.

One of the things that the government doesn't seem to understand is that in the workplace a lot of workers and employees would find it pretty difficult to stand up to their employer themselves. That's not because the employer is necessarily malevolent or unscrupulous. It's just because the employer has the power. They have the power to decide what shifts you're going to have, how much pay you're going to get and, in some instances, whether you have a job at all. That's why, generally in this country, people come together in the workplace to negotiate with their employer. They bargain collectively. And those collective bargains are done because workers know that there's strength in numbers and that if you come together you might be able to negotiate things that you couldn't necessarily negotiate individually. In other words, by coming together, you can get yourself a better deal.

That applies across the board to what is in enterprise agreements, and it covers things like wages and it covers things like overtime, but it also can cover things like superannuation. That's what has meant over time is that a number of funds that have been cooperatively run between half-half employers and employees have managed to—in part because of enterprise agreements and collective agreements that have been negotiated—build up funds where they deliver pretty good returns for their members. In fact, they deliver better returns than the funds run by the banks.

This idea of people collectively choosing to do something seems to be anathema to the government. Notwithstanding the fact that it might be because people have come together to bargain in a situation that gives them more power, might actually deliver them better outcomes and deliver more money in their retirement, the government comes and wants to attack it. Why does the government want to attack it, dressing it up by talking about choice in the same way that WorkChoices was supposedly about choice but actually took away people's control over their own lives? Why do they want to attack it? There's a very simple answer. The government wants to allow banks to get their hands on people's retirement savings. The government wants to allow banks to have more access to the several billions or trillions of dollars that are sitting in superannuation funds in Australia at the moment. In part, because superannuation is compulsory, it provides an ongoing stream of income into retirement savings, and as there is a growing pool of money, which should be used to make sure that people can have a good retirement and could also be used to invest in Australia's future, the government sees money that instead should be going to the banks. This comes as no surprise. The government takes a lot of donations from the big banks. The big banks give money to this government, and the government delivers for them in return. The government had to be dragged kicking and screaming into having a banking royal commission, in a process that—it's worth remembering—was led by the Greens. The Greens began the process of calling for a banking royal commission. We moved motions in the Senate that found their way down to this place. Senator Whish-Wilson moved a bill to establish a parliamentary commission of inquiry. Then, when the government finally realised the writing was on the wall and that it was about to lose a vote in this House, it decided to call a royal commission. But the government had to be dragged kicking and screaming into taking any action on the banks, when everyone across the country could see that there is a problem with the banks.

The problem with the banks is that in their wealth-creation arms—where they're trying to make money out of products that they sell to people—the banks have got a conflict of interest. These are the kind of products that, when you go and make an inquiry about your bank balance or go in and visit someone in a bank branch, you always try to get onsold—'Have you thought about your mortgage?' or 'Have you thought about life insurance?'. The problem with the banks selling you these kinds of products—including super products—is that the banks' goal is to make money for themselves. That's just business; they're a profit-making company. That's what they're there for. The banks' goal is to make some money for themselves. So they're going to sell you a retirement product or a super product that'll be dressed up with lots of bells and whistles, but at the end of the day, the person selling it to you or the executive sitting above them would probably get the sack if it didn't make some money for the bank. That is the whole point of them. Whereas the industry funds—the subject that people negotiate about—are not there to make a profit. They're there to put all the money back in. They're effectively not-for-profit. They're there to put the money back in to increase members' returns.

The government can see this big pile of money sitting there. The banks can see this big pile of money, and they want to get their hands on it so that they can make some money out of people's retirement savings. And one of the
things that's standing in the way at the moment is that in some places workers have negotiated collectively, through strength in numbers, to say, 'No, actually—here are the funds that we want. If the employer's got to be compulsorily forced to pay some money into super, here's the fund that we want it to go into.' That then goes into that fund for the worker. Of course, if the worker leaves that job and goes to another job, you can roll your super over. You're not stuck with it for life. But for so long as you're in that job, if it's covered by one of these agreements, then that's where your money goes into, because your fellow employees have come together and negotiated something that is going to work out better in the long run—in the same way that negotiating the rate of pay works out better for you if you do it collectively than if you do it one by one.

But the government—because it takes money from the big banks, and the big banks have said, 'We'd like to get our hands on all of this cash that's sitting there in people's retirement savings and the steady stream of super—has said, 'Well, what can we do to help?' And so the government comes up with this bill that says that even if you in your workplace have all negotiated collectively to come up with a deal that works for you, you are not allowed to negotiate about that. You are not allowed to. And here's the ultimate hypocrisy of this government. The government—in this bill that it says is about choice—is basically saying that you can negotiate and bargain about what you like, as long as it's approved by us, the government. As long as the government has ticked off and said that these are the things that you can negotiate about—sure, you can negotiate. But if you negotiate and choose to do something different to what the government wants, you're not allowed to do it—what utter hypocrisy. If people working in a particular workplace decide that they think it's in their best interests to come together and negotiate something, they should be allowed to do it. Who's the government to step in and say, 'No—you can't do that'?

If we're saying that you can't do it with respect to super—what's next? Is the government going to step in and say, 'You all might have negotiated in this workplace that you're going to get time and a half if you have to work after 6 pm, but we think there should be the right to opt out of that. You're not allowed to negotiate that in your collective agreement?' Is it going to say, 'There's a minimum rate of pay—but no, you should be able to opt out of that as well. There should be nothing compulsory about that, because that's forcing someone to do something'? Well—no. What people have learnt from bitter experience over many, many years is that if you want real freedom in your life, if you want the ability to make choices about things like buying a house, being able to spend time to go on holidays with your family, to have good amounts of time off, you've got to negotiate some of those things and put some walls around it. Otherwise, if you don't put walls around it to protect it, someone will come and try and take those off you. That's what businesses do: they want an edge over the next business. Unless you have a pretty strong level playing field and a strong floor underneath it all, one business will try to take something away to get an advantage over the business next to them. That is just the way that business works.

That's why the debate has got to be about what is the right floor to put in place and what are the right walls to put around it to make sure people get protected. This government, and this bill, is about taking away one of those forms of protection. This bill is about saying that in people's retirement we want to make it easier for the banks to get their hands on your retirement savings and turn it into a product that is not about looking after you on a not-for-profit basis in your long-term interest, but one that is about making money for the banks and for the big retail funds.

So there's a big, big problem with this bill. It's not going to do what the title says, just like Work Choices didn't give people more choice; it actually took away their choice. This bill is going to do the same. It has some real problems. We can't accept the government's rhetoric on this bill. We can't accept their claim that it's going to improve people's lives, because there is a very real prospect that it is going to make people's lives worse. The sad thing about it is that you will find out about it when retirement time comes. You will find out about it when you realise that fees and charges have been taken out of your account over the last 20 or 30 years so that someone—a bank—can make a profit. That's when it will hit. That's why it is important to ensure that the proper protections that we have at the moment remain.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (19:21): I rise in strong support of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Your Superannuation, Your Choice) Bill 2019. Centre Alliance has always supported individuals being the masters of their own financial destiny. For most Australians their superannuation balance determines their financial security in retirement. It is only right and proper that the critical decision on which superannuation fund workers choose to direct their money towards is placed in their hands, in the hands of workers and employees, not in the hands of either businesses or unions. It is well past time that workers should not be forced into particular funds against their choice. This is why Centre Alliance supports workers having their choice of superannuation fund for workplace determinations and enterprise agreements from 1 July 2020. Centre Alliance wrote to Minister Hume in July last year to request these changes, as well as the removal of the loophole that allowed employers to claim salary sacrifice super as employer contributions. I am grateful to the minister for following through on both of these important provisions.
A number of constituents have raised this issue with me. The most common complaint is the from university staff who work casually or part-time and are forced into UniSuper instead of being able to contribute to their pre-existing funds. Because these staff work limited hours, their UniSuper accounts are just eaten away by fees, rather than accumulating within their usual super funds. It is not the intention of the superannuation system to siphon employees' entitlements and add to employers' wage bills only to lose it out to unnecessary and unavoidable fees.

Whilst on balance I would have preferred that the power to choose your own superannuation fund was extended to existing workplace determinations and enterprise agreements. I recognise the practical concerns around disruption and the cost of compliance, especially to small businesses. The bill before us is a reasonable and pragmatic compromise.

I want to make clear that I have no problem at all with working Australians being defaulted into specific superannuation funds. There is, after all, a huge range of funds, and deciding which to choose can be daunting for many. However, I cannot stress enough that the worker should have the power to choose. That is what this bill does. I therefore commend this bill to the House.

Mr Gosling (Solomon) (19:24): From my office, I have been watching the contributions. I was hoping the member for Goldstein was still here, because that was a stunning performance and I wanted to let him know that. He has missed his calling. He is a thespian of the highest order, and, as the member for Moreton pointed out, the hypocrisy was simply stunning.

Labor has a very proud track record when it comes to super. Some of the previous speakers have outlined that. We will continue to fight for a fair superannuation system and play the role we always have with the ability to have the super funds to support their retirement. We created this world-class system and we'll fight to protect it.

We also support choice in super. We're committed to making sure that every worker gets the best possible benefit from their scheme. We need to ensure that working people are informed and that the information enables them to make choices that are in their best interests and not in the banks' best interests. Those on the other side want to protect the banks. We know that. Some of the previous speakers have made that point. They avoided the banking royal commission 26 times, and now it is clear that they are doing the work of the banks. But that's their wont. But let's just be clear about why Labor will continue to protect it. If time allows, I'll relay some words from a senior Territorian in my electorate who wrote to me recently on this issue.

As previous speakers have said, we're referring the bill to the Senate Economics Committee, which is sensible. We will reserve our position on the proposed choice of fund changes until the Senate committee has reported.

Millions of Australians are being ripped off by underperforming funds. This theft just boils my blood. Someone very close to me had an employer who for many, many years was not paying super, when they clearly should have been, and you'll never guess it, the person running the business was incredibly wealthy. The person probably couldn't spend, in the rest of their days, the amount of money they had accumulated running their business, but for years they were ripping off the super of this good friend for mine. Those opposite would like to extend the amnesty—it is not right. This theft is becoming a bigger and bigger problem. In fact, superannuation theft increased by 25 per cent over the years 2013-14 to 2016-17. It may have been even more, were it not for the banking royal commission 26 times, and now it is clear that they are doing the work of the banks. But that's their wont. But let's just be clear about why Labor will continue to protect it. If time allows, I'll relay some words from a senior Territorian in my electorate who wrote to me recently on this issue.

As previous speakers have said, we're referring the bill to the Senate Economics Committee, which is sensible. We will reserve our position on the proposed choice of fund changes until the Senate committee has reported.

Medicare

Ms Rishworth (Kingston) (19:30): Medicare is one of the great legacies of Labor governments. It is so important and so critical. A universal healthcare system is really the bedrock of ensuring that it's your Medicare card, not how much money you have on your credit card, that determines your health care in this country. Unfortunately, in the three terms of the Liberal government they have been actively working against the Medicare system. We will never forget that Tony Abbott ultimately tried to dismantle Medicare by having a user-pays system through his co-payment. The next iteration of the Liberal government attacked Medicare by stealth.

...
Freezing the Medicare rebate really has meant that out-of-pocket costs in this country have soared. Doctors have had no choice but to charge rising out-of-pocket costs as a result of six years of Medicare freezes. In my electorate of Kingston we've seen a 35 per cent increase in costs to see a GP. That is above the national average. We've seen people in Kingston shelling out as much as $32.56 to see a doctor. That is a significant amount of money, particularly for families with a number of children who have to see a doctor regularly or for pensioners who have regular visits to a doctor.

People are really alarmed at the increasing costs with Medicare. The government have failed to recognise that, if they deter people from seeing a primary healthcare physician, those people end up in the hospital system, meaning the cost is greater for taxpayers and the impact on that individual's life is greater as well. This government is only interested in minimising costs to the Commonwealth and does not want to look at the health system as a whole. It doesn't seem to care.

The biggest blow for my electorate came on 20 January this year. Not only have we seen cuts to Medicare right around the country, but the government have decided to put a line on the map that abolishes the bulk-billing incentive payment for my electorate. It means that now not only are average workers going to have to pay out-of-pocket costs, but we're going to see pensioners, children and concession card holders no longer being bulk-billed by this government. This has come as a really rude shock to so many vulnerable families and low-income people who thought that they could still get bulk-billed by their doctor.

Practices have said that they can no longer sustain it. I don't blame the practices. They have been squeezed and squeezed by this government. This final blow means that they are no longer able to offer bulk-billing to the most vulnerable groups in our community, particularly pensioners. This government should hang its head in shame.

I've had a number of constituents contact me. Valerie from Morphett Vale said she had a shock when she visited her regular doctor and had to foot an upfront fee. She said:

I would like to know why the Government has cut the bulk billing incentive and why the cut has not been publicised.

Valerie, I couldn't agree more. The government have tried in a sneaky way to keep cutting and cutting Medicare. The reason why is that they don't believe in it. A resident from Reynella told me that he and his wife used to be fully bulk-billed for each GP consult. He said:

From January 2020, my GP will no longer bulk bill my visit, which means if you include the consult, each script will now cost us $18.50. It used to cost us just $6.60, which was just the medication.

The government need to front up and explain why they have cut this money to GPs in my electorate. My electorate does not have wealthy families. My electorate has many pensioners and many families doing it tough, and they should not be forking out money hand over fist to get basic health care in this country. This country used to be a place where, no matter the amount of money in your wallet, you could get health care. This Liberal government is chipping away at that, and it is a disgrace. (Time expired)

Great Barrier Reef

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (19:35): Recently, in my capacity as special envoy for the Great Barrier Reef, I presented my first report to the Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley. I must say that it has been a privilege to be in a position where I can provide input into the direction of government policy regarding the Great Barrier Reef. Firstly, let me touch briefly on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is a vibrant, beautiful ecosystem of immense value to Australians and the world, but there is no doubt that it's under pressure from growing threats. There is an array of very complex challenges facing the reef, and we must confront these head-on. There is no question that climate change looms as the most serious existential threat to the long-term health and viability of the reef. Greater efforts to reduce emissions and greenhouse gases are required globally. The localised threats that are more within our direct control are being managed reasonably well.

While many criticise the work of the government in this space, we must remember that our investments, combined with the work of our agencies and our partners, are making a substantial and real difference on the ground. Make no mistake about it: we are the best reef managers in the world. Globally, we are acknowledged as such. As a nation, it is something that we should be very, very proud of. In saying that, I am the first to admit that the challenges ahead won't be easy, but they're not insurmountable. Through the continued work of our environmental agencies, and ongoing research and investments, I believe Australia is up to the task of meeting these challenges head-on.

As most people would be aware, the Great Barrier Reef outlook report 2019 downgraded the long-term outlook for the reef's ecosystem from 'poor' to 'very poor'. However, it is important to remember that this is an outlook report and that there are many recommendations and actions contained within it that offer us a pathway to rectify...
these issues. In the eight months I've spent in my role, I've had many in-depth discussions with various stakeholders, who are all passionate about ensuring the reef's long-term sustainability. People I've spoken to are highly experienced and knowledgeable and, as such, understand the reef's many complexities. They have all been of tremendous value and support.

It was during a meeting with Professor Catherine Lovelock from the University of Queensland that I first learnt about the unique benefits of blue carbon. In a nutshell, blue carbon is the carbon stored in coastal and marine ecosystems. These ecosystems sequester and store large quantities of blue carbon in both the plants and sediment below. In fact, mangroves are three to four times more efficient in sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere than terrestrial forests. Blue carbon as a process is not just about mangroves; it includes saltmarshes and seagrasses.

The Great Barrier Reef outlook report 2019 stated that mangrove forests are a critically important habitat and breeding ground for many different species and are of immense value to ecosystems that help support the health of the reef. It went on to state that the mangrove forests also provide important ecosystem services, including coastal protection, pollution absorption, nutrient cycling, primary production and carbon storage.

Globally, most mangrove loss is caused through coastal development. Weather-related events can also have a significant impact, particularly cyclones, extreme sea level variations and heatwaves. The clearing of mangroves occurred widely as a result of coastal development—and the legacy still exists—however, clearing is now strictly regulated.

Research has shown that when denigrated or destroyed these ecosystems emit the carbon they have stored for centuries into the atmosphere, and the oceans become sources of greenhouse gases. Last year, in world-first research, Edith Cowan University researchers and an international team of collaborators accurately quantified the amount of greenhouse gases or blue carbon being emitted into the Australian ecosystem.

It is important that we continue to focus on these areas. I think there is a great opportunity for us, particularly in investing more and more into blue carbon. We've got to stop using the reef to score political points, and we've got to stop talking down the reef. We need to work together—very much so—as proud Australians to ensure that we are doing all that we can to ensure that our reef remains the greatest natural wonder on this planet.

Melbourne Electorate: Community Events

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (19:40): Chuc mung nam moi! Xin nian kuai le! Kung hei fat choy! Happy New Year to the Vietnamese and Chinese community in Melbourne and all over Australia. It has been a delight to spend time celebrating the Lunar New Year and the coming Year of the Rat with the Melbourne community over the last month. I've read that the Year of the Rat, which begins the zodiac cycle, represents the beginning of a new day. It has been an exceptional privilege to celebrate this moment with our diverse, welcoming community in Melbourne.

On Sunday 19 January, I was joined by other local representatives and Greens councillors Amanda Stone and James Searle at the Victoria Street Lunar Festival for the new year. This event, now in its 20th year, is a wonderful chance for our community to gather together to celebrate Vietnamese culture.

My daughters, as always, loved the chance to share in one of their favourite foods, noodle soup, pho, and admire the majestic dragons and displays of culture. Victoria Street was its bustling brilliant self, showing off the vibrancy of our electorate to the visitors from across the city and the country. Congratulations to the event organisers, the Victoria Street Business Association, for their hard work in organising such an important community event and this very exciting anniversary year.

It was also a real pleasure to join the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association celebration for Tet a few weeks ago. Over a number of hours I was treated to a magnificent display of traditional Vietnamese dancing, including a lion dance to the tune of 'Rivers of Babylon', which was especially enjoyable and memorable.

I also had the opportunity for another quick tour of their office. Where there were once empty desks when I visited a number of years ago, there's now a friendly staff member in every corner of the office, contributing to the excellent work that the association does. Celebrations like the one I attended are just one way that the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association helps the Australian Vietnamese community in my electorate stay connected to their culture and also help Vietnamese refugees and migrants find their way in Australia with resources, training and support. As our government continues to strip a lot of support and services for recent migrants and refugees, this work is more important than ever.

I'm glad that I've been able to support the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association through the provision of the Stronger Communities Program grants to help update and revitalise their incredible office space in Richmond, in the heart of the Vietnamese community within Melbourne. I'm very proud that organisations like the Australian...
Vietnamese Women's Association exist in my electorate, living the values every day that I know Melbourne values deeply, especially caring for others, inclusivity and diversity.

Melbourne is one of the most diverse electorates in the country. Multiculturalism is at the beating heart of every corner of the electorate. From the strong presence of First Nations communities in Fitzroy to Victoria Street or Lygon Street, Melbourne is a brilliantly diverse city. It's what makes us one of the most liveable cities in the world. But, at this time of celebrating the incredible contribution that immigrant and migrant communities have made to Melbourne and Australia, we cannot forget the important work that we still need to do to tackle racism and xenophobia in this country. Just this month I've been deeply concerned to hear of reports of increasing xenophobia targeting members of the Australian-Asian community in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. I echo the words of the Chief Medical Officer, Brendan Murphy, who's urging against xenophobia during this time. I thank Brendan Murphy for speaking out and for his crucial work in keeping Australians safe and healthy.

I also want to thank many thousands of Australian health workers across the country who are playing a key role in protecting the wellbeing of Australians. However, it's deeply saddening to hear of young people nervous about going to school or of businesses struggling as customers desert them. I heard a disturbing report the other day of a young boy in the schoolyard who was of Chinese-Australian decent and who was being chased around the schoolyard by others children who want to detain him because they said he had the virus. I'm calling on the government to take the lead. I'm calling on the government to step up and make sure that, at this time when we are trying to protect the health and wellbeing of everyone in this country, it does not allow for discrimination and xenophobia to come through the door. We cannot allow the medical measures that we have taken to be used as cover for racist and xenophobic attacks against people from Chinese-Australian backgrounds or from Asian-Australian backgrounds more broadly. We must do more to stamp out racism in our community and ensure the Australian-Asian community feels safe, welcome and included.

Address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (19:45): Let me associate myself with the comments from the member for Melbourne about the importance of us protecting and respecting the rights of all our citizens whilst we deal with public health crises.

I want to comment on the address yesterday to this House by the President of Indonesia, Mr Joko Widodo, which was a remarkable occasion of deep significance. It was the second time an Indonesian President has addressed a joint sitting of the House and the Senate. The first, you'll recall, being when President Yudhoyono spoke to this chamber in 2010. And, as members would be aware, this is an honour that the Australian parliament only rarely accords to foreign leaders. I believe, in fact, this makes Indonesia one of only three countries—the others being the United States and the United Kingdom—whose leaders have addressed this parliament on more than one occasion. I think this speaks volumes about the importance we, here in Australia, attach to our relationship with Indonesia. Indeed, there are few countries in the world which matter more to Australia. Indonesia is one of Australia's most vital and important partners. It's a relationship that, despite a long history—we were alongside Indonesia at the time of independence—is only now just beginning to realise its full potential.

This is one of those relationships where there is always more to be done, always new areas of cooperation to identify and always greater linkages to be made. But I'm pleased that Indonesia now commands the attention it deserves within our government. Indonesia is our largest northern neighbour, occupying a position of immense strategic importance to Australia. It's the fourth-most populous country in the world and home to one of the world's largest Muslim populations as well as a number of other faiths and religions. It has an economy of about US$1 trillion and is forecast to become one of the world's larger economies in the years ahead. For these reasons, and for many others, Indonesia matters to Australia.

I'm pleased to see the amount of engagement underway between our two nations, in ways that will strengthen our ties and serve both of our interests. In 2018 we established the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Indonesia. We have the Lombok Treaty of 2006, which remains the bedrock of our defence and security relationship. We now have annual leaders' meetings with Indonesia—a very good thing. And, just over the last few weeks, we are now on the cusp of a new chapter in our economic relationship with the imminent entry into force of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. This agreement has the potential to significantly step up our economic relationship and help realise its unmet potential, for whilst we enjoy about $18 billion in two-way trade with Indonesia, we are both low down in the rankings of trading partners with one another. Indonesia is Australia's 14th largest trading partner and accounts for only some two per cent of our exports. As the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties states in its report on this agreement, Indonesia's large population, rapid urbanisation, emerging middle class, economic growth and geographic proximity to Australia all suggest the trade and economic relationship should be more mature than it is. I hope this new agreement, IA-
CEPA, helps us realise this potential, and I believe the announcement by Monash University that it will open the very first foreign campus in Indonesia is a great portent of things to come.

Beyond this, we are cooperating closely on counterterrorism, with Australia providing strong support to the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation and with 17 AFP officers posted to Indonesia. We share Indonesia's concerns about developments in the South China Sea, including continued militarisation of disputed features, and we reaffirm with Indonesia our joint support for freedom of navigation and overflight and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law—most particularly, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS.

The true test of any relationship though, just like the true test of any friendship, is whether you can count on each other when the chips are down. Many here would be aware of the assistance we provided to Indonesia following the awful tragedy of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and in the wake of many other natural disasters that have befallen Indonesia. We did it because we care deeply about the Indonesian people. It is with the same sense of friendship that Indonesia has sent us military engineers to help in our bushfire fighting effort this summer. It’s the gesture of a true friend and it is much appreciated.

**Bushfires**

**Community Sport Infrastructure Program**

**Mr CLARE** (Blaxland) (19:49): In politics we talk a lot about the pub test. What would the average bloke or woman in the pub think about what we do here? If you're fair dinkum you normally pass; if you're full of it, you'll probably fail. Here is a pub test. There's a pub in Nelligen, about 130-odd kilometres away from here in Canberra. It's called the Steampacket Hotel. It's Paul Parker's local watering hole. Paul Parker is the bloke who became famous a couple of weeks ago when he drove his RFS truck up to the media and gave the Prime Minister both barrels. I can't repeat what he said to the TV camera, but I think you'll probably remember the footage.

I tell this story because last week a mate of mine went to the Steampacket Hotel and heard something interesting. The bloke behind the bar told him people have been coming in over the last few weeks and putting money on the bar for Paul. People have been ringing in as well from as far away as Queensland, putting money on the tab for Paul Parker. He's not going to have to pay for a beer again at the Steampacket Hotel for a long, long time. If that's not the ultimate pub test, then I don't know what is.

This government has a serious problem of its own making. People are angry. They're angry that the Prime Minister went missing in the teeth of the bushfire crisis. They're angry that when he came back he gave excuses and said that he didn't hold a hose. A bloke said to me the other day, ‘Winston Churchill didn't fly Spitfires in the Battle of Britain, but didn't go skiing in Switzerland either.’ They're angry that it's taken the government so long to help.

You didn't have to be Nostrodamus to know that this was potentially getting to be a black summer. Until the rains of a few days ago, most of the country has been bone dry. Parts of Australia haven't had rain in years. Add extreme heat and extreme wind and you can get what we've had over the last few weeks and over the last few months. What's worse, experts warned us that this was possible and gave us advice about what we should do. Four years ago the National Aerial Firefighting Centre wrote a submission to this parliament calling on the government to create a national water bombing fleet. It was rejected by the government. In April last year 23 former firefighters asked to meet with the PM. They asked the parliament to set up an inquiry to see if we had all the resources we needed across the country for the bushfires. Both of those were rejected. In November we wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to convene COAG, a meeting with premiers, to do essentially the same thing: to see that we had enough resources to fight the fires that were already under way. That was rejected too. We got a letter back saying it wasn't necessary. Just imagine how different things might have been if the Prime Minister had agreed to any of those requests. No wonder people are angry. They feel abandoned, and abandonment takes a long time to forgive.

On top of that, while the fires are still burning, we find out about sports rorts. Just imagine for a second if you needed a heart transplant and you were at the top of the list and a heart becomes available, and you find out you don't get the heart—somebody else further down on the list got it because of political interference. If that happened it would be a scandal. The same sort of thing has happened here. Mums and dads have put in applications. They're the ones that run sporting clubs as volunteers. They were independently assessed and ranked. Then the government ripped them up and allocated money not to the best projects, but to projects in marginal seats. Seventy-three per cent of the projects they funded weren't recommended by the independent assessor. Bronwyn Bishop lost her job for a $5,000 helicopter ride to a Liberal Party fundraiser. This is $100 million of
taxpayers' money used like this. You can only imagine what the people at the Steampacket Hotel, or any other pub in Australia, think about that.

The worst part of this is that not one person in the government has had the honesty or decency to even admit that anything wrong has been done here. That's treating people with contempt. Worse than that, it's treating people like idiots, and that's dangerous. The Prime Minister is right when he says there are lots of quiet Australians. They don't tweet and they don't go to protests. But they run soccer clubs, they run netball clubs and footy clubs, and after everything that they've seen over the last few weeks, I reckon they're saying very, very quietly under their breath the same thing that Paul Parker yelled to that TV camera a couple of weeks ago.

Boothby Electorate: Aged Care

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (19:54): The electorate of Boothby is home to a large and active group of retirees and seniors. In fact, our local community has one of the highest numbers of over 65s Australia-wide. These residents make a very important contribution to our area and underpin so many volunteer groups, like our CFS, surf lifesaving clubs, veterans organisations, service clubs like Rotary and Lions, Probus clubs, residents associations, historical societies and so many other sporting groups and community groups. I'm grateful to all the wonderful volunteers I work closely with each and every year. I'm also grateful to individuals like Bernie, Maxwell, Anne, Lorraine, Valerie, Carolyn, Bruce, Christine and Danny, Mike and Ella, Wendy, Klaus, and Val, who have taken the time out of their busy schedules to talk to me about how we can work together to best care for our senior Australians. Some of these people came to see me after my very popular seniors forums and I look forward to hearing from many more of my community when we hold the next one, later this year.

Australians are now living on average 10 years longer than they were 50 years ago. While the increased life expectancy signifies the progress we have made in health and improving our living standards, it also presents significant challenges. In my home state of South Australia, we note too well the devastating and shameful impacts of elder abuse, like we saw at the Oakden aged care facility under the former state Labor government. We know the tragic impact on patients and their families and we know this because of the fearless work of people like Stewart Johnston, Alma Krecu and my local residents Barbara and Clive Spriggs, who fought for justice for their loved ones. Each and every single person in this place has a responsibility to ensure we never see an Oakden ever again.

There is nothing more important than caring for our most vulnerable citizens, which is why the Morrison government established the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in January 2019—to make sure we get our care for our senior Australians right. The hearings have considered the key features of the aged care system and provide a platform for concerned aged-care residents, their families and advocates to be heard. The commission will be holding a hearing in Adelaide on 21 February.

To date, the Morrison government has responded to the royal commission's interim report with a $537 million funding package, which includes $496.3 million for an additional 10,000 home care packages, $25.5 million to improve medication management programs to reduce the use of medication as a chemical restraint, and $4.7 million to help meet new targets to remove younger people with disabilities from residential aged care. This is just part of what our government is delivering, with record investment across the aged care system, from $13.3 billion in 2012-13 growing to $21.4 billion in 2019-20 and up to an estimated $25.4 billion in 2022-23.

In my local community, the Morrison and Marshall Liberal governments are also reactivating the repat hospital site that the previous state Labor government, stupidly and cruelly, shut down. A key focus of the revitalised repat is to deliver health services to support older Australians and cater for the complex needs of people with dementia. Late last year we announced a landmark partnership with nationally respected aged care provider HammondCare to deliver an innovative cottage-like home environment at the revitalised repat for people with dementia. We are very much looking forward to working with HammondCare chief executive Dr Stephen Judd and his team on this Australia-first project, which will deliver a 78-bed dementia care home, including two nine-bed specialist dementia care units and four cottages with a total of 60 beds, a new 18-bed neuro behavioural unit to support people with the most extreme behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, a 12-bed specialist advanced dementia care unit and a 26-bed care transition facility for people with dementia. The repat was historically a place where veterans and members of our community felt safe and loved and received the very best care, and that is what we will work to deliver once again.

I am so proud to be part of a government that is implementing significant investments in aged care, so that we can best look after our senior Australians when they most need our support. As policymakers, our duty is to listen and to act to ensure that our senior Australians have access to high-quality services and care that suits their individual needs.

House adjourned at 19:59
NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Zappia to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) South Australia has had the highest unemployment rate in Australia;
   (b) the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for South Australia in December was 6.4 per cent;
   (c) the South Australian economy has stagnated since the closure of General Motors Holden and the associated auto industries; and
   (d) the recent bushfires and the coronavirus will further impact the South Australian economy; and

(2) calls on the Government to:
   (a) remain committed to the Murray Darling Basin Plan;
   (b) ensure federal fire assistance funding to South Australia is provided without delay or difficult processes; and
   (c) bring forward federal funding for South Australian infrastructure projects.

Ms T. M. Butler to move:

That this House:

(1) notes:
   (a) the importance of grassroots youth arts organisations, including Backbone, based in the electoral division of Griffith;
   (b) that for thirty years Backbone has helped young people find purpose, develop skills and contribute to our nation’s culture; and
   (c) that despite Backbone’s success, the Government has cut its funding, and the organisation now faces closure; and

(2) calls on the Government to urgently commit to restore funding to Backbone.

Mrs Phillips to move:

That this House:

(1) notes:
   (a) the devastating impact of the bushfires on the Australian community;
   (b) the heartbreaking loss of 33 lives and more than one billion animals;
   (c) the loss of 2,439 homes, 265 facilities and 5,388 outbuildings in NSW; and
   (d) a further 1,024 homes, 197 facilities and 2,017 outbuildings damaged in NSW;

(2) further notes the ongoing impact of the fires on:
   (a) the small businesses and tourism operators and their employees on the NSW South Coast and other bushfire areas; and
   (b) farmers and primary producers on the NSW South Coast and other bushfire areas that have also been impacted by the ongoing drought;

(3) acknowledges that immediate action is needed to prevent the closure of hundreds of businesses on the NSW South Coast and other bushfire areas, and the loss of thousands of associated jobs;

(4) calls on the Prime Minister to urgently visit the NSW South Coast to meet with local small business owners, primary producers and workers; and

(5) calls on the Government to:
   (a) improve the speed and quality of the Government response to the bushfire crisis;
   (b) address gaps in the available financial assistance for casual workers employed during the tourist season; and
   (c) develop a plan to address the economic impact on businesses that have lost upwards of 80 per cent of their yearly income as a result of the bushfires.

Mr Katter to move:

That this House:

(1) notes with concern that, in 2015, the Northern Territory Government awarded a 99-year lease of the Port of Darwin to Shandong Landbridge Group, a privately-held company with ties to the Chinese Government and Communist Party of China;

(2) affirms that foreign ownership of the Port of Darwin represents a significant threat to Australia’s strategic interests; and

(3) calls on the Government to:
(a) prioritise Australia's sovereignty and strategic interests;
(b) take steps to purchase the Port of Darwin; and
(c) ensure that the Port of Darwin stays in the hands of the Australian Government indefinitely.

Mr Katter to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975, and for related purposes. (Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Amendment (Strategic Assets) Bill 2020)

Mr Pearce to move:
That this House:
(1) notes that new Defence projects such as the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles built under the $5 billion LAND 400 Phase 2 Mounted Combat Reconnaissance Capability program support the development of defence industry and small business in electorates across Australia;
(2) supports job creation in construction and sustainment;
(3) recognises this project presents an exciting opportunity for Australian industry to play a vital role in delivering leading-edge capability and technology to Australia's army; and
(4) acknowledges the Government's significant $200 billion investment in Australia's defence capability.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Australian Capital Territory: Air Quality

Climate Change: Health

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (16:00): I want to talk today about the health impacts of climate change—in particular, the air quality crisis that we experienced in Canberra over this summer. While of course we didn't experience the devastating bushfires in the way that other parts of our country have, I think that we can call our air quality over that period a genuine crisis. We had 35 days that were classified as hazardous, and, in that time, we had over 200 hospital admissions that were linked to smoke and over 570 presentations to our nurse-led walk-in centres. I've had over 250 Canberrans write to me about their concern about these issues, and I want to bring some of their voices into this chamber today because what we experienced over this summer was awful; it was a wake-up call about the need for climate action, and I will make sure that the voices of my electorate are heard in this place.

Firstly I want to talk about Lucinda, who contacted me and said:
I do not breath deeply in my own home at this time. The smoke is too thick, my eyes sting except for when I am asleep, my throat burns, my nose bleeds.
I like many others in this community fear greatly what this future will look like if the approval of additional stations to mine and burn coal, gas and oil continue, in conjunction with the negligent and despicable lack of climate action by the Coalition.

On 21 December, Heidi from my electorate contacted me, and she raised a really important aspect of this issue. I will read her email:
The last two weeks have been miserable and I'm feeling so lost and discouraged. I'm a disabled pensioner that works part time and studies part time. My house doesn't have air conditioning. The smoke that has smothered Canberra is literally suffocating the poor with no air conditioning. With nearly 40 degree weather we are experiencing, we have to literally choose which health deterioration we'd prefer to deal with. Should we swelter in the heat? Which for me, hurts my health … and my physical stress goes through the roof. Should we open the windows … to cool our homes? Sweet relief but at what cost? My home filled with smoke and breathing it in. Everywhere I look, the instructions are to 'run your air conditioner' to clean the air and keep cool. Renters, pensioners, like me, aren't so lucky to be able to have houses that are temperature efficient, keep the smoke out, or have air conditioning.

Many parents also wrote to me with their deep fears for the health of their children, which I can relate to.

I'm really proud that Labor has called on the government to make climate change a health priority. We will continue to keep the pressure on them.

Drought

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (16:03): I rise to congratulate the Liberal-National government for its continuing commitment to providing rural support for the communities across regional Australia. I'm proud to be a member of a government that understands the needs of rural towns, farmers, small businesses and local governments, and I'm proud that we listen to their needs, visit them in their homes and offices and then deliver the support that they need.

On Tuesday 28 January, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management announced more support for communities affected by drought. Funding for farmers, small businesses, families and schools in drought affected areas across Australia is being rolled out as part of the $57 million support package. An additional 52 councils will now receive up to $1 million under the extended Drought Communities Program. In the electorate of Nicholls, this has resulted in two local governments becoming eligible for the Drought Communities Program: the Moira Shire and the Greater Shepparton City Council.

The Drought Communities Program makes funding available to eligible councils to target local infrastructure and other activities that provide employment, create a stimulus for other opportunities for areas that have been impacted by drought, and get money to start to flow through the shops and the suppliers. Drought doesn't just hurt the farmers; it hurts the small businesses and the wider communities as well. The Drought Communities Program extension keeps money flowing through these communities, such as for festivals coming to town, tourism events and creating jobs. It's a great way to help community wellbeing throughout these dry times. Building projects
creates local construction jobs and also creates opportunities for people in small towns to buy something from the local shops.

In November last year, an independent review into the methodology and delivery of the objectives of the Drought Communities Program was announced by the Prime Minister. This resulted in a simplified model of assessment, but it did create further delays in the allocations while the review was underway. I wish to acknowledge the CEO of Moira Shire, Mark Henderson, and the Mayor of the Moira Shire, Libro Mustica, for their patience and understanding while waiting for that review to be completed. It was great news that Moira Shire and also the Greater Shepparton City Council were recipients in the latest round of that $47 million drought assistance package. To Peter Harriott, the CEO of the local Shepparton council; Seema Abdullah, the mayor; and Kim O'Keefe, the previous mayor: I look forward to seeing the projects these councils put forward so that they can alleviate some of the impacts that have been cast on these regions by the ongoing drought.

As I said earlier, the drought doesn't leave us with just a couple of rainfall events. We need to look to this program for further assistance in all of our drought affected communities. I applaud the government for taking this action.

Climate Change

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:06): Last week, I hosted a forum on climate change with Labor's shadow minister assisting for climate change. I was surprised by the number of people who turned out on a Friday morning to hear what we had to say about meaningful action on climate change. It was a diverse group and very representative of the Moreton electorate: mums with toddlers who played in the foyer of my office, grandparents, university professors, former migrants, anti-Adani people, business owners, young people, middle aged people, and even a climate-change sceptic. You get the picture. What united just about every person in the room was the absolute despair that people have over the coalition's inaction on climate change. What united people is this government's utter neglect to address climate change at all now that they're into their seventh year of government. What united people was their frustration over the coalition's inability to implement any real policy that will bring our emissions down.

Over the last year, people in my electorate were glued to their screens. They were horrified by what they saw. They saw fires starting in winter; rainforests burning; people losing their properties; people losing friends and family; cities shrouded in thick, choking smoke; and holiday towns evacuated by our Navy. The horror of those fires and how they have burnt our country will be etched in our collective memories for decades. Like many in this country, the people who came to our forum had seen the fake news about hazard reduction, the fake news about greenies and the fake news about arsonists, and they've had enough. They wrote to me, email after email and letter after letter. There was phone call after phone call. They wrote of their despair and their frustration of living in a country led by one of the few conservative governments in the world still divided on the science of climate change.

I'm proud to belong to a party of government that is the only party that has brought meaningful policy on climate to this parliament. I was here when the CPRS scheme, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, was passed in the House of Representatives, and I watched the coalition and the Greens combine to vote down the CPRS. I also witnessed the coalition hug and cheer when they demolished this nation's emissions trading scheme. People in my electorate are tired of coalition politicians who say the science is settled but do nothing meaningful to actually combat climate change. They're demanding stronger action when it comes to climate change. As the shadow minister for climate change and energy said in parliament last week, what we've experienced over the last summer is not necessarily the new normal. He said that, if average temperatures continue to climb, the new normal will be significantly worse than what we have seen in the course of this summer.

This government must act now. We owe it to the children who played in the foyer of my office. We owe it to every single child of an Australian and to all adult Australians. We know that we have to act further. We know that we need to actually get the balance right. We know that we can get a just transition when we look after jobs and ensure we look after all Australians but lower our emissions. Jobs will come from those renewable technologies and the like. I look forward to them.

Petition: Horse Abattoirs

Phelps, Mr Gordon

New England Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr JOYCE (New England) (16:09): I present a petition from Ms Lynn Newberry. It has 1,051 signatures, and it's about upgrades and reforms to horse abattoirs. I know that she will get a great sense of satisfaction that it's being presented to the Parliament of Australia.
The petition read as follows—

The cruelty shown to horses at Merimist Abattoir on the ABC 7.30 report: The Final Race was unacceptable. We are petitioning the House because export abattoirs fall under Federal Government jurisdiction. While there is no excuse for cruelty, a major difficulty was that the abattoir is designed for cattle, not horses. *The footing is not right for horses causing them to fall down and be trampled by those behind. *The overhead walkways are too low causing them to refuse to go forward into the slaughter area. *There are no doors to prevent horses seeing what is happening to the one ahead. *The actions of untrained personnel cause panic in already frightened animals. *The use of the cattle electric prod only exacerbates the problem.

We therefore ask the House to call for the following upgrades and reforms to horse abattoirs: *Horse appropriate status with doors to prevent horses seeing what is happening to the one ahead. Cattle abattoirs are not suitable for horses. *Standards for animal welfare maintained at the highest level and rigorously policed. *Transparency – cameras and monitoring by independent inspectors. *Banning of the jigger (electric prod). It is already banned in the horse industry. *Training of personnel in equine behaviour to ensure humane treatment.

From 1051 citizens (Petition No. EN1191)

Petition received.

Mr JOYCE: It's proper to acknowledge those who do work for our community and who take the next step. In our great nation, I always believe there are three types of people. There are those who throw papers out the window of a car as they drive along, and they will always be with us. The next group are those who complain about people who throw papers out of the window of a car. You can always hear them—if you go to any dinner party, any barbecue or any pub, you'll hear people talking about other people who throw papers out the window of a car as they drive along. There are signs out talking about finding people who throw papers out the window of a car—who litter. But there's a third group, and they're very important—they're the ones who stop to pick up the papers. They're the people who quietly do their job and take the next step.

I remember a gentleman by the name of Gordon Phelps. He used to get up before dawn every day in St George. He'd fought on the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea, he was a returned serviceman and he'd been a farmer. He had his dog and a wooden pole with a spike on the end of it, and he'd walk along the river picking up papers—spiking them and dropping them in a bin; spiking them and dropping them in a bin. I'd go for a run and run past him, and he was always happy. He never complained about the people who dropped the papers; he just picked up the papers. That was his job, every day. As well as being in Rotary, as well as doing charity work, as well as doing everything else around town, this was another part of what he did. After having served our nation in the Second World War, he was still doing it—at that stage, it would have been around 2010. People like that are the difference.

I want to note some other people in our area of New England: David Briggs, who got an AM in the Australia Day Awards; Andrew Farriss—you probably remember him; he's from INXS and in my area—also got an AM; Vern Turner from Armidale got an OAM; Bill Warburton, who's from North Tamworth, got an OAM for services to the community of Tamworth; Dot Vickery, who I had morning tea with, got an OAM at Guyra; Col Mann got an OAM at Tenterfield for services to aged welfare; and Dr Hutton Oddy got a PSM for outstanding services to the primary industry sector. All these people, and so many others in our nation, are paper picker-uppers. They're the people who make our nation great. They don't just do what's expected of them; they don't even complain about those who do the wrong thing. They just take it upon themselves to make our nation a better place.

Parramatta Electorate: Maronite Community

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:12): Yesterday I attended a funeral in my electorate for a family and a community suffering extraordinary distress from a terrible accident that took place in my electorate a little while ago. There were a number of families involved who lost precious children. But I don't want to talk particularly about those families today—I want to give them privacy—but I do want to talk about the extraordinary community of faith that came together to support them.

The Maronite community in Parramatta centres around the Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral, which rises as an extraordinary building that you can see for miles out of the suburb. It's centred there, but equally as impressive as the building itself is the community of faith that rises together out of the ground in Harris Park. The families themselves were extraordinary examples of faith to the community in the last week, but the community came together in a way that only religious communities do to support these families. They were there in every way that mattered, and I just want to thank them for that.

We all know that in our communities in recent decades we've lost some of the coherence. We stopped living and working in the same suburb and we don't necessarily work with the same people all of our lives, so a lot of the connections that we had have disappeared. But we hear, from time to time, from people about how the churches themselves and the mosques and the temples in our communities are becoming places where people gather.
People come to Australia from overseas and, even though they might not have been religious in their first country, seek out the places where this community exists. They are extraordinary things. When you go to these church communities, they're one of the few places in our communities where you see families—

*A division having been called in the House of Representatives—*

**Sitting suspended from 16:14 to 16:27**

**Ms OWENS:** Churches, places of worship, in our communities are among the few places where you actually see a community in its vertical, where you see grandparents, parents and children together, where the patterns can be identified. These groups of people can support intergenerational development. You'll see the Maronites have built a youth centre. You'll see they have built an aged-care facility. They look after those intergenerational needs because they are a full community. For them, of course, these are wonderful side benefits. This is a community that shares a single thing, which is faith. They share it with their whole being. They share it in the good times and they share it in the dreadful times. Again, I'd just like to thank the amazing Maronite community of Harris Park for the way they have come together behind some of our families that are in the greatest need one can imagine right now. Thank you for your faith and thank you for what you do.

**Energy**

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (16:28): I read with interest an article in *The New York Times* earlier this week that talked about Japan building 22 new coal-fired power stations in 17 locations over the next five years. I also read an article reporting that the CSIRO and the Energy Market Operator had said that renewables were now much cheaper than coal. I thought: how is it possible that Japan could pay the additional premiums to import Australian coal all the way to Japan and still have lower costs? Why would they be building all these coal-fired power stations? So I went to the actual study that the CSIRO did, to look at what parameters they used to come up with that conclusion. Surprise, surprise, they looked at the life span of a coal-fired power plant at just 25 years. Everyone in the industry clearly knows that the design life of a coal-fired power station is 50 years. If you're going to do your costings and you only allow 25 years, you're going to amplify the cost of that coal-fired power station. Sadly, that's exactly what the CSIRO have done to come up with a completely erroneous conclusion in this report.

But it actually gets worse. When you look at the capacity factors, yes, there are heroic capacity factors for solar and wind, but they've made no allowance whatsoever for the degradation of the solar PV cells. All the studies, all the science and all the research tells us these decay at between half a per cent and one per cent every year. So, whatever capacity factor you start off with, you would have to decline that over the 25 years, yet this study has made no allowance for that whatsoever. Then, when it came to the back-up, they said: 'It's lower cost with back-up.' The back-up they've allowed for is only two hours with battery and six hours with pumped hydro. What happens after that? If you're going to make an apples-for-apples comparison, you must compare like with like. You cannot just allow two hours of battery back-up. You have to make an allowance for the worst-case-possible scenario, and that's what they've refused to do.

Finally, of course there's no consideration of the additional cost of extra transmission lines. So what we have are a completely erroneous study and completely wrong parameters, and we have that being repeated over and over in the media in our society today. Is it any wonder that we are where we are and that we've seen electricity prices rise to the extent they have, despite the good work of the minister getting them down over recent years? *(Time expired)*

**Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths**

**Ms O'NEIL** (Hotham) (16:31): I also rise to make a contribution regarding science. It's with great pleasure today that I rise to talk to the parliament about an event that I was able to attend in January in my electorate. The Engage, Engineer conference was a two-day event at Monash University, Clayton, that was run completely by university students. The point of this conference was to help high school students try out science, technology, engineering and maths. The conference was co-hosted by Robogals Monash and Female Engineers at Monash, two incredible organisations that place women at the centre of their mission. During the event, 150 high school students participated in workshops that were run by these amazing student-led organisations that are active at Monash's Clayton campus—organisations like Monash Motorsport, which boasts the No. 1 student combustion team anywhere in the world; and Monash Human Power, which produces aerodynamic bikes that reach speeds of up to 140 kilometres per hour. These kids are doing such extraordinary things. Seeing the work they're doing made me so excited for the future of our economy and our country.

It's very well known to everyone in this parliament that the nature of work is changing, and we need to make sure that we get young people in this country really actively engaged in thinking about what the jobs of the future are going to be so they can get themselves trained up in those roles. One of the statistics that's commented upon is that 75 per cent of the fastest-growing professions around the world require some kind of science, technology,
engineering and maths background. We know this; we've actually known this for quite a long time. But there are some really concerning trends that we see in Australia when we look at how young people are getting themselves trained up. One of the most difficult things we're going to have to confront is that there are just not enough young Australian students who are going into STEM subjects. We're seeing that decline. We're also seeing our performance in STEM subjects decline, and the result of this is already being felt in the broader economy. We talk all the time to tech firms who want to employ young people who have STEM skills, and they can't find them. We know that there are young people flooding into universities and TAFEs and getting trained in areas where they think that jobs might exist but actually don't. There's a big public policy problem here, and unfortunately, after seven years under a coalition government, we're actually going backwards in all of the metrics I've mentioned.

One of the biggest problems, which I know a lot of people in this parliament share my concern about, is the need to lift the engagement of women in STEM. It's important because we want our best and brightest minds on these problems that we face as a society. But it's also important because we know that most of the highest-paid occupations that are being created are being filled by men because they're being STEM educated. One of the most brilliant things about this conference was that the majority of participants by far were young women. They were out there, they were engaging, and I felt very thrilled and excited about the future they're building for our country.

Australian Bushfires

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (16:34): Every season, I enjoy going on a road trip around my electorate of Fairfax. Only a few weeks ago my summer road trip was all about the bushfires, for obvious reasons. On the Sunshine Coast, particularly in the areas of Pereigan Beach and Pereigan Springs, we experienced bushfires towards the end of last year. Also towards the event of last year, this parliament began an inquiry into the intensity and frequency of bushfires. That's an inquiry that I'll be leading as chair of the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy.

It was therefore a worthwhile opportunity during that summer road trip to meet with locals in my area who have hands-on experience and to listen and to learn. To them, I'm very grateful. I met with Tice and his two sons, Lee and Lawrence. Tice is a Gubbi Gubbi man. As a Gubbi Gubbi Kabi Kabi fella, he taught me things about cycle burns that the Indigenous people have been doing for God knows how many years in this country—lessons that have partly been lost. He spoke to me about the frustration of land being locked up and not being able to be accessed. He spoke to me about the need for the next generation to learn and understand.

I met with the local rural fire brigades and their various representatives. They were telling me about their frustration with how hard they work with bureaucracy but with different tiers of government not being aligned and, again, the need to have hazard reduction efforts and better command and control. I met with wonderful people like the Salvos and the people at the Coolum surf lifesaving club. They were people who were there to help either the workers who fight the fires or, indeed, the people who were impacted and to understand their supply chain and logistics.

I met with the people who were directly impacted, the residents of Pereigan Beach. They spoke about the need for evacuation plans, the importance of mental health issues and the importance of technology. Then I met with technology businesses. One in particular was Fireball International, a company that's here in Canberra this week. That's a company that already has real-time, automated, intelligent systems that can detect and, within minutes, report on fires. They use this in California. These are the sorts of technologies we need to be looking at here in Australia. There is no silver bullet. There is no one idea. But we as a country need to work collectively to make sure that we mitigate this type of catastrophe so that it doesn't happen again.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:37 to 16:48

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (16:48): Amid all the ephemeral sludge that inhabits social media, it's good to find some nuggets, some really interesting things, that are there. I invite members to look at the #WomenScienceDay hashtag. It is the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, and therefore I think it's worth exploring the great work that's being carried out by our own superstars of STEM today and indeed every day, whether they're researching exome sequencing for kids with intellectual disabilities or researching environmental impacts in Antarctica, whether they're planning bushfire ecological assessments for New South Wales waterways or talking to girls in schools about careers in STEM. These are remarkable stories of women carrying out vital work in the nation's interest, every day.

The Superstars of STEM program that was established by Science and Technology Australia in 2017 continues to play a huge role in inspiring girls and young women to study and to stay in STEM. To all the women working
in science across Australia on this International Day of Women and Girls in Science, I say to you, as shadow minister for science: federal Labor supports you. Federal Labor believes that science is at the heart of the future of our country and our economy, and it is therefore critical that we have women and girls participate more fully. Science provides employment opportunities, opportunities for industry to grow, expand and innovate, and opportunities for businesses to develop. Science integrates skills, knowledge, people, enterprise and progress. It is about the food we eat, the water we drink, how we engage, how we travel, the environment in which we live, the medicines we take when we are sick, our national security and prosperity, and the jobs of the future.

It is government's role to remove barriers to allow science, research and discovery to flourish; it is not its role to erect them. So to my colleagues opposite: I recommend you take five minutes away from the chaos and remind yourselves of the great productive work that is being carried out by some of our best and brightest women. And to all of the STEM women out there: happy International Day Women and Girls in Science and keep doing what you do. I echo and agree with the comments of the member for Hotham when she said that we need to do more to improve the participation of girls in STEM subjects and to ensure that women have employment opportunities in these vital areas. It's something that can be encouraged by business leaders but by government too, and I call upon government to do more in order to see more women in this important area.

Brisbane Electorate: Australia Day Honours

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (16:51): The Australia Day honours give us an opportunity to reflect on some of the great achievements and contributions made by some extraordinary Australians. That includes some amazing people in our community in Brisbane. The honourable Supreme Court Chief Justice Catherine Holmes was made a Companion of the Order of Australia this Australia Day, one of only 35 such appointments made each year, for her eminent service to the judiciary. Another special honour, for his distinguished service to the parliament of Queensland and to local government, as the former Premier and former Brisbane Lord Mayor respectively, went to Campbell Newman, who was made an Officer of the Order of Australia. Vicki McDonald, the CEO of the State Library of Queensland, was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her significant service to librarianship and professional associations. We have a vibrant and thriving arts community in Brisbane, and Emily Cox and Dr Robert MacPherson were made Members of the Order of Australia for their significant service to the performing arts and visual arts respectively.

Of the recipients of the Order of Australia Medal around Brisbane on Australia Day this year, a special shout-out goes to Mr Neville Bell of the Brisbane Racing Club. He received his medal for services to horseracing and the community. Representing an amazing Brisbane charity, Nic Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, founders of Orange Sky Australia, were both medal recipients for their service to people experiencing homelessness and vulnerability. Mr Allan Tennent was awarded a medal for his service to emergency response organisations. Another to receive an OAM was Pastor Lance Mergard, for his service to the community through social welfare organisations, notably the wonderful organisation ChaplainWatch, and I note that their Purple and White Ball is coming up in Brisbane in a couple of weeks time. For his service to the multicultural community in Queensland, Mr Umesh Chandra, somebody that we see at community events right across Brisbane all of the time, also received an Order of Australia Medal. Dr John Quinn was awarded an OAM thanks to his service to research science in the field of plant systemics. And Mr Robert Wildermuth was awarded his medal for service to the building and construction industry.

These are some amazing people making Brisbane an even better place in which to live, work, play and retire. We wish them all the very best for the future and we congratulate them for all of the efforts that they've made in recent years and over their careers. On behalf of all of the residents of Brisbane, I congratulate them and all of the other very worthy recipients in the Australia Day honours list.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members’ constituency statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Australian Bushfires

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That the House:

(1) acknowledge the devastation across our nation occasioned by the bushfire season including the loss of 33 lives, the destruction of over 3,000 homes, the unimaginable loss of so much wildlife and the devastating impact on regional economies across Australia;

(2) extend its deepest sympathies to families who have lost loved ones and to those who have suffered injuries or loss;
people now that many Tasmanian career firefighters and volunteer prepared for these bushfires. That is the truth of it. We were warned. We were generosity of individuals, families, schools, churches and religious groups, service clubs and businesses from across Australia and elsewhere in the world during the evacuations and following the fires; express its gratitude to Australia’s friends, allies and neighbours who provided or offered support; recognise the unceasing efforts and close cooperation between state and local governments, demonstrating the strength of our Federation; commit itself to learning any lessons from this fire season; and

pledge the full support of the Australian Parliament to assist affected areas to recover and rebuild.

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (16:55): On behalf of my constituents, last week when we were talking in this place about the impact of the recent Australian bushfires, I talked briefly about the impact on my community, which had had bushfires just 12 months ago, and how long it takes to recover. Of course, Tasmania has sadly been hit by far too many catastrophic bushfires—the Dunalley bushfires, the ’67 bushfires. They impact families and locals not just for days, weeks and months but for years and, indeed, for decades. We need to ensure that all Australians, as they have been retraumatised by these bushfires if they’ve experienced them before and as they deal with the current bushfires, get the support they need not just in the weeks and months ahead but in the years ahead. This will take years to recover from. It will take a generation for some people to recover from the trauma of what has happened during this bushfire season.

On behalf of my constituents, I want to pass on my sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of the at least 34 Australians who have died during these bushfires. It is a tragedy that so many Australians have been killed during this bushfire season. It’s a tragedy for those families that have lost their homes. It’s a tragedy for the Australian fauna and flora that have been impacted by these bushfires. Indeed, it is a tragedy for the nation.

We should have been better prepared for these bushfires. That is the truth of it. We were warned. We were warned by former fire chiefs. We were warned by Ross Garnaut more than a decade ago about the impact and future impact of bushfires in this country. We need to be better prepared. The climate is going to be changing more frequently. We are going to have longer bushfire seasons. We are going to have fiercer, more intense fires and we need to be better prepared.

I am concerned about the way that this government has been slow to act. I am concerned that day after day we continue to hear stories about businesses, communities and individuals who can’t get access to the support that is supposed to be there for them—for those people who are trying to access Centrelink payments, for those people who are trying to access small business grants and loans, for those people who are trying their very best to survive and to get medical and health care in some of these communities. The stories are endless. We know that this happens after every bushfire but, as I said, we as a nation should have been much better prepared—much better prepared indeed.

I also want to thank the millions of community service workers in community organisations and thank the volunteer firefighters who are out and about. I know that many Tasmanian career firefighters and volunteer firefighters have repaid some of the kindness and support that were shown to our community last year by travelling to the mainland to fight these ferocious fires. I say to all of the volunteer firefighters and firefighters across Australia and all of the emergency service workers, the first responders, the park staff and the forestry workers: thank you for everything you do on behalf of our community every single day during these bushfire seasons and, of course, beyond that.

In recent days, we have of course seen floods in some of the areas that have also been impacted by drought and by bushfires. We are a nation of flood and fire, but this year we’ve seen much worse and, sadly, I think it’s going to get worse again in years to come. We need to be better prepared as a nation. We need our states and territories to work with the Commonwealth and we need the Commonwealth to show some leadership. We need to get much better at this. The government should’ve been prepared, and it was not. It needs to do better.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:59): Back in 1992, with the help of a very friendly bank manager, I bought my first house, in a suburb called Alfords Point. I was about one house away from a road. There was a house in front of me with an easement up the side, there was a road and there was a bit of a strip and then in front of us there was a national park which went down to the Georges River.
I remember taking my old grandmother there to proudly show her the house that I'd selected and bought, and going to do up, to see what her opinion was. At the time she was going a bit senile and she would sometimes make some very silly comments. She saw the place and said: 'Oh, you've got to be so careful with bushfires. That bush is so close to you. Your house could be at risk of burning down from a bushfire.' I looked at it, and it was a good sixty or seventy yards away. I thought to myself, as often young blokes do, 'Silly old woman! What would she know?'

In early 1994, about two years later, we had some catastrophic bushfire weather in Sydney. I'd left to go to a wedding, and I can remember the north-westerly wind howling at the church. A message came over the radio that there were fires at Alfrords Point and Menai, so I left the wedding and rushed back to my place. I got as far as the shops at Alfrords Point. I remember that the police had it blocked off. It looked as though the entire suburb had been burnt down. I can remember it to this day: at that time, the school fence was like half a telegraph pole cut off with a bit of wire wrapped around it—not the large green gates we have today—and those stumps had caught on fire. There was a palm tree on fire in the front of a house just opposite the shops.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:01 to 17:14

Mr CRAIG KELLY: I was reflecting on my first real experiences with bushfires. As I was saying, I'd returned from the church service for a wedding of a mate and got back to the suburb of Alfrords Point. As far back as I could get was the shops, which are at the top of a hill. Looking across Alfrords Point, it looked as though every single house in the suburb had actually been burned to the ground. I can remember the posts in front of the school, which at the time were half telegraph posts, were actually on fire. There were palm trees on fire in front of houses backing onto the main road. I saw things happen that, in my life, I did not think would be physically possible. I remember that at that moment I thought back to what my grandmother told me. I thought about how little I knew about bushfire and bushfire activity. In that tragic period over those couple of days, over 100 houses were burnt out in the Como, Jannali, Alfrords Point, Bangor and Menai region, and one life was tragically lost. I can remember there were houses that were burnt out that, in a million years, you wouldn't think would not be safe from a bushfire.

Since that time, when I realised how little I knew, I've done everything I can to learn about bushfires. Since I was elected to this position, with that area in my electorate—an area so fire prone and with such a history of bushfires—I've done everything I can both to support our local Rural Fire Service and to try to educate the public about how bad and catastrophic bushfires in Australian forests can be. Until I'd seen it with my own eyes, there was nothing I could have read and no photograph or TV image that could have made me appreciate how drastic, catastrophic and dangerous those fires are in the Australian landscape.

When we had those fires starting back in October and November, in one of my last speeches in this place before we broke up before Christmas, when we'd already seen close to 1.65 million hectares burnt out, I said, 'Our history tells us that there could be a lot more to come as this is well short of our record.' And we saw that over those weeks over Christmas and New Year.

We've seen, even amongst the tragedy, the best of Australians. We've seen the magnificent work of our Rural Fire Service. In the electorate of Hughes, we luckily had a very low number of fires in our area compared to previous years. We had one in the royal national park that was actually suspiciously lit right on the turn of the winds on the most catastrophic day. That is still being investigated. The only reason an investigation was made was that, by sheer chance, a Black Hawk helicopter was flying over the national park doing some standard observations and training and it was able to see someone acting suspiciously. The other major fire—when I say 'major fire', it was very insignificant compared to what we've seen—of any significance in the area was at Voyager Point—again, a fire that is under suspicion of arson. The magnificent work that we've seen of the Rural Fire Service, our volunteers and our communities coming together says something very special about our Australian community.

I would have liked to leave my comments on the condolence motion there, but during this condolence motion some members have taken it upon themselves to criticise the government, say the government is somehow to blame and try to use the tragedy of the bushfires to push their climate change agenda. We must deal in facts and we must deal in the science. We know that at the end of last year, 2019, the levels of CO2 in the atmosphere were 0.0411. That's around 411.85 parts per million. What is Australia's contribution? If Australia had adopted some carbon policy in the past, would this have made a difference, as people make out?

We can do the maths. We can go back to December 1999, before the turn of the century, and the fear of the Y2K bug. Every single Australian could have marched up onto high cliffs and jumped lemming-like into the ocean, and we could have had zero emissions of CO2 since 1 January 2000. Instead of the CO2 in the atmosphere being

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411.85 parts per million, it would have been 411.2 parts per million. The idea that could have any effect whatsoever on global temperatures and therefore have a knock-on effect on bushfires is just preposterous nonsense. And yet this is what we hear implied indirectly and directly by members of the opposition and some people in the minor parties, as though there's some change that this government could have made to do it.

What we could also have looked at is the argument that maybe that increase of CO2 of 411 parts per million in the atmosphere did have some effect on the fires. There is some truth in that, because we know, if we read the science, that there has been a global greening—an increase in forest cover worldwide—over the last 20 years. The scientists put about 70 per cent of that down to an increase in CO2 in the atmosphere. So yes, it's highly likely that, because of that added CO2, our native bush is growing faster than it otherwise would. That is what the science tells us. Our response to that should be to ensure that we are getting those hazard reduction burns done. A seven-year cycle is recommended to make sure that you have some low-level burning on the inner faces close to communities. No-one says hazard reduction is a panacea or a cure, because we know that, in every single year that passes, the bush grows back and it becomes more hazardous. The leaf litter on the floor increases every single year after the back-burn is done.

Again, if we look through the history of our nation, if we look back to the 1939 bushfires of this nation and read through the royal commission report after it, we can see that the amount of hazard reduction burning being done was ridiculously inadequate in 1939. Then we come to the royal commission after the 2009 bushfires in Victoria. They recommended a minimum of five per cent hazard reduction burns of public land being undertaken every year, and yet in New South Wales and Victoria we've seen less than two per cent. In the Victorian forests, over the last five years something like a million hectares less of forest area is treated by hazard reduction than the royal commission recommended. That is not just my opinion; that is the opinion of some of the most experienced fire professionals and scientists that have researched this over decades.

Professor Robert Scagel, a forest microclimate specialist from British Columbia, said:

Fuel load rules. Spending resources and intellectual capital on climate change considerations are as effective at mitigating bushfires as changing the colour of the paper used in reporting them.

David Packham, one of our senior former CSIRO bushfire researchers, said the fires have nothing to do with climate change and everything to do with fuel loads. It is also arguable that the increased temperature we have seen—a one-degree increase in temperature over the last 100 years—has some effect on the bushfires. That is an arguable case. But, if you look at how we calculate the forest fire index and the mathematical equation for that, a one-degree increase in temperature has a very minor effect on our forest fire index. In fact, a one-degree increase in temperature is offset by a 1½-kilometre-an-hour decrease in wind speed. It is the variability in wind speed and the dryness of the environment that has the major effect on how intensely our forest fires burn.

Some may argue that the dryness of the environment is caused by climate change, and I've often heard that there's a drying environment and that this is climate change. They say, 'This is what the science says.' Well, that is not what the science says. The IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, talk about drought and the linkages to CO2, and I will quote directly from their AR5 report. It says:

There is *low confidence* in attributing changes in drought over global land areas since the mid-20th century to human influence owing to observational uncertainties and difficulties in distinguishing decadal-scale variability in drought from long-term trends.

They also say that there's:

*High confidence* for droughts during the last millennium of greater magnitude and longer duration than those observed since the beginning of the 20th century in many regions.

So there is no link between drought and climate change. Even a peer-reviewed scientific paper released in August last year said:

… seasonal and annual precipitation over the last century is found to be stationary in most (but not all) regions. These findings suggest that the Australian precipitation has largely remained within the bounds of observed variability …

That's the science, yet we have people out there basically quoting what is nothing other than superstition to try to make a political point, take advantage and exploit these bushfires. That is a disgrace.

These bushfires are one of Australia's truly great tragedies. We owe it to those who lost their lives to make sure that an investigation is carried out so that we can do everything we can to try to minimise the impact of fire in the future. That requires following the science and telling the truth.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (17:27): I'm glad to join with colleagues across the parliament in reflecting on a terrible and unprecedented summer of bushfires. The summer will be remembered as Australia's first national climate change disaster. It has occurred on a scale never seen before. It has exacted a brutal toll. It reinforces the fact that Australia will be among the countries most acutely affected by the warming of our planet as a result of
unchecked greenhouse gas emissions. Our heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones and to those who have seen their homes and farms, their pets and livestock, and their local communities ravaged by fire. We know that this summer isn't over yet. We know that the harm of these catastrophic fire events will be a dark cloud cast forward for years to come, and some of the worst harm and the most painful losses will be with us forever.

In Western Australia, we've been fortunate so far in avoiding large-scale threats to populated areas, although we've not been free from the impact of bushfire. WA's unique south-west biodiversity hotspot has been scorched by repeat fires in areas like the Stirling Range National Park and the Fitzgerald Biosphere. Three fires since 2015 in the Cape Arid National Park have put the western ground parrot at severe risk. In my own electorate of Fremantle, there have been several fires in urban bush reserves. On 3 January, a fire that started in Atwell jumped the Kwinana Freeway, causing a halt to both traffic and train services and threatening homes. On the same day, a fire in Spearwood was brought under control before it could harm local neighbourhoods or spread into the precious Manning Park reserve. In December, there was a fire that started overnight in Sir Frederick Samson Park, an important Bush Forever reserve in the middle of a suburban community. But, for most of the summer, we've watched the events on the eastern seaboard with concern and heartache for our fellow Australians, for friends and family and for the livestock and native fauna, especially endangered species and threatened ecosystems.

I want to acknowledge the more than 300 men and women from WA, including members of the Jandakot and South Coogee fire brigades in my electorate, who flew east to be part of the incredible effort by professional and volunteer firefighters to battle the fires and save lives. I want to acknowledge the contribution that many Western Australians have made through donations to the relief and recovery effort. I say to them: if you haven't done so already, can you please make a donation in the time to come. Thanks should go to the City of Cockburn, which has donated $15,000 to fire affected communities in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and to the City of Fremantle, which donated $10,000 to the Freo Fire Fund, established through the wonderful Fremantle Foundation after a suggestion by long-time and irrepressible community activist Robby Lang.

On the Friday before last, I attended the first of two Fire Aid concerts at the Fremantle Arts Centre, organised by Phil Stevens, featuring The Waifs, John Butler, San Cisco, Stella Donnelly and Carla Geneve. Every input to the event was provided free so that all ticket proceeds could go where they're needed. That totalled more than $650,000—as the concert poster said, 'From WA, with love.'

Around the world, people have watched the fires in Australia with heartfelt sympathy and with sober recognition of what climate change means for us all. For a few days in the middle of January, I had the privilege of visiting Bangladesh with a number of parliamentary colleagues thanks to Save the Children's Regional Leadership Initiative. The focus of the trip was Australia's development assistance projects aimed at saving lives, reducing poverty and increasing education and gender equality, especially in ultrapoor communities where people survive on less than US$1 a day and generally on fewer than two meals a day.

As we grapple with the brewing impacts of climate change in Australia, it's sobering to consider what faces a nation like Bangladesh. It's especially sobering to consider the one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who exist in makeshift camps in one of the most cyclone-prone areas on the planet. But, notwithstanding the gravity of the challenges they face, the very first thing the members of the Bangladesh parliament wanted to do was to express condolence for the bushfires in Australia. They also expressed hope that the international community would get serious about reducing carbon emissions, and they made the point that there are no climate change deniers in Bangladesh.

In terms of the environmental impact of these fires, let's not underestimate the extraordinary harm that's been done to the continent whose stewardship is our responsibility. Before we take stock of what's just occurred, we should note that we are already in the grip of an acute biodiversity crisis. It's no exaggeration to describe it as an extinction crisis.

Much has been made of the letter to the Prime Minister from the former fire chiefs. But there was another letter to the Prime Minister, from 248 scientists, in October last year, which in respect of the extinction crisis said:

Our current laws are failing because they are too weak, have inadequate review and approval processes, and are not overseen by an effective compliance regime.

To date, what we have heard from the government, including from the Minister for the Environment, is that the focus should be on slashing so-called green tape. That's code—and it's not a very complicated code—for weakening environmental protections. How perverse would it be if our response to the devastation of this season's bushfires would be to further deplete our already fragile biodiversity? We need an environment policy with a clear priority of steeply improving environmental outcomes, not further bending our landscape and its creatures into profit-yielding stress positions.
When this fire season is over, we must consider the inadequacy of our environmental protection framework in addition to the inadequate preparations for community safety. As we turn our attention to the process of recovery and see homes and communities rebuilt and find solace in landscapes that shift slowly from black to green, let's not be blind to the permanent harm that has occurred. In some cases, areas that have been forests will no longer be forests. The ecology will be fundamentally changed. What was there before will not grow back. It's likely that some endangered species have already been pushed to extinction.

I said at the outset that this summer will be remembered as Australia's first national climate change disaster. But we shouldn't regard it as a wake-up call, because that call has been made in various forms for years. The only question is: when are we going to answer that repeated and urgent call to get serious about climate change? When, as a developed, adaptable, outward-looking and ingenious nation that also happens to be one of the highest carbon emitters on the planet on a per capita basis, are we going to get our act together? And when, for the sake of our citizens' safety and the sake of our health, our environment and our economy, are we going to heed and follow the science, address the harm that is already upon us and stop that harm getting much worse by taking action in Australia and by being a concerted, leading, wholehearted participant in global action?

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (17:34): Over this summer, the 'black summer', we've faced bushfires on a scale never seen before. On the South Coast, it's been known as the 'forever fire'. It's estimated that more than 17 million hectares have burnt across the nation. More than 33 people, tragically, have died. In New South Wales, over 2,400 houses have been destroyed. It's estimated that one billion animals have perished, with many more species expected to be now endangered after habitat loss. The fact is: it's not yet over. We welcome the rains; the rains have put out a lot of the fires in my area. But it's not yet over—the fires are still burning down the far South Coast.

Locally, Deputy Captain Geoff Keaton, 32, and firefighter Andrew O'Dwyer, 36, died when their truck rolled after a tree fell onto the cabin of the truck that they were driving, near Buxton. They'd fought the Green Wattle Creek blaze. It took two months to contain. These two men were not alone, sadly. They were joined by seven other firefighters on other firegrounds who made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting people's lives and people's homes. I pay my respects and offer my condolences to their families and colleagues, some of whom I've met, and to all of those men and women who lost their lives over this fire season.

To our firefighters of both Fire and Rescue New South Wales and our volunteer brigade, the Rural Fire Service, together with all of those emergency responders from the ambulance, the police, the SES, the Australian Defence Force, local hospital staff and more—all the volunteer organisations, the Red Cross and St Vincent de Paul: you're a real credit to our nation and our community. To you I say: you can be very proud of what you've done. You can be very proud of what you continue to do. And you have the deepest thanks from our entire community.

I do want to champion and give special thanks to our local RFS volunteers—firstly, to the Southern Highlands district crew. They've been on fire operations since August 2019. They've been deployed across New South Wales, to towns such as Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Drake, Grafton, Coffs Harbour and Casino. They've been here in Canberra, and over in Wauchope, Hawkesbury and Braidwood. They've also been deployed to the Gold Coast hinterland. Since the end of October, crews have worked in the Green Wattle Creek fire, protecting the local towns of Woragamba, Silverdale, Oakdale, The Oaks, Orangeville, Werombi, Lakesland, Thirlmere, Corindah, Buxton, Balmoreal, Hill Top, Tahmoor, Bargo, Yanderra, Yerrinbool, Mount Jellore, High Range, Wombeyan and Taralga. We rattle the names off, but each and every one of those was an incident where the fires crews' lives were at stake and they were fighting to save local communities and to try to halt the rapid spread of these terrible fires.

Since the first week of January, when the Currowan fires breached the Shoalhaven River just south of us, they have been working on the Morton fire, protecting Meryla, Bundanoon, Penrose, Wingello and Tallong. In some places they couldn't prevent the loss of property and wildlife. In other places, they have been successful. This particular district has over 1,000 volunteer members. I've met with many of them. I can say: at this end of the fire season, they're well and truly buggered.

Down on the coast where I live, in the Illawarra district, the RFS has been in the field since September. Crews from the Illawarra have deployed over 145 strike teams, which are fire trucks with four to five firefighters each. The district has around 3,000 volunteers in total. They started the fire season off in Queensland and in Northern New South Wales, before moving to the Gospers Mountain blaze and the Hawkesbury, then the Green Wattle Creek and the Morton blazes in the highlands, then the Currowan fire down the coast, before moving on to where they were last week, in Queanbeyan and in Canberra and on the far South Coast.

The sacrifice made and the risks that these men and women and their families have faced are profound, and the toll on our communities if they had not been fighting for us is unimaginable. Towns would have been lost. Literally thousands of homes and many tens of thousands of lives have been saved because of their efforts to
contain, control and extinguish these fires. Our community thanks you because you are the rarest of things—unassuming heroes.

During the recent blazes, the Dunmore RFS made headlines when a fire truck was overrun by wildfire in just three minutes in Tomerong in early January—a flashover. I spoke to two of the crew who were involved in that after the incident. They were still visibly shaken by what they’d experienced. They activated their cabin sprays and took defensive measures. Luckily, they all survived and within 10 minutes—remarkably—they were out there defending the property that they’d gone down that track to defend. This is the sort of heroism that we’re all in awe of.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:41 to 17:52

Mr DICK (Oxley) (17:52): I rise to enter the debate today and to add my support for the condolence motion moved by the Prime Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. As we know, this summer has been one of the toughest that many Australians can remember for a very, very long time. Right across our country, from my home state of Queensland down through the southern states and all the way across to the west, people’s lives and towns and our native animals have been destroyed by the bushfires and drought which continue to ravage our nation. This has been the most challenging time that many Australians will face in their lifetime. I, along with many of my colleagues on both sides of the House, today rise to pay my respects, to acknowledge those who have had their lives taken, those who have had their livelihoods destroyed and the extremely brave men and women who have worked tirelessly to protect as much as they could.

Almost every day over the long, hot summer, we have seen footage and heard stories about things that we couldn’t have fathomed would be happening to our beautiful country. The skies glowed red and the air filled with smoke as we all could hear the deafening roar of the flames on our televisions, across our news channels, and the high-pitched sounds of the sirens of the emergency services, who were putting their own lives in danger to protect others. Sadly more than 30 people have lost their lives this summer due to the catastrophic bushfires. We send our condolences to the families and friends of those taken too soon. Included among them are a number of emergency service personnel who made the greatest sacrifice to save others. There can be no question that they did exactly that. Their lives were not taken in vain, as we know for certain that they helped to protect thousands of hectares of land as well as buildings, animals and, indeed, fellow Australians who remained safe because of their brave acts.

I especially want to acknowledge and mention the three American firefighters who were killed when their C-130 water-bombing aircraft crashed in the Snowy Monaro region. These were three family men who were simply doing what mates do when they hear the call for help: they roll up their sleeves and get to work. This is exactly what Australians did during the toughest of times. They came together, got around each other and supported their communities in their darkest hour.

It is a staggering figure: more than 2,000 homes have been lost and more than 11 million hectares of bush, forest and parks across Australia has been burned. In South Australia alone, it is estimated that around 25,000 koalas were killed when flames devastated Kangaroo Island on 9 January. Here in the capital of Australia, Canberra, we’ve seen some of the worst smoke pollution, with air quality rated the third-worst of all major global cities on 3 January and plumes of smoke travelling more than 7,000 miles across the Pacific. My home state of Queensland has also been significantly impacted by the bushfires over the summer. Since August Queensland has experienced more than 3,000 bushfires, over 250,000 hectares have been burnt and more than 50 homes have been lost. This number would have been far greater if not for the amazing efforts of emergency services personnel, the leadership of local governments and of course the Queensland government.

Whilst it would be impossible to be there 100 per cent for every situation, the Queensland government and local governments have been working hard to ensure that our state is as well-prepared as possible for bushfire seasons. This includes holding more than 60 open days at fire stations last year to better prepare communities for bushfires, on top of the million hectares that were control-burned last year to manage the fire risk. On behalf of the community—indeed all Queenslanders—I want to pass on my thanks to the Premier of Queensland, the mayors affected in local government, the state ministers and, of course, the Queensland Disaster Management group and local disaster management groups across all of our regions.

I particularly want to acknowledge the work of Minister David Littleproud, who stepped up, didn’t let politics get in the road and delivered for many regional communities. Can I also put on record my thanks and appreciation to previous acting fire commissioner, Mike Wassing, and to the new Queensland Fire Commissioner, Gregory Leach, for their outstanding leadership through these tough times. It is only by the guidance and teamwork of our disaster emergency teams that so much land and indeed people’s lives have been able to be saved.
In my electorate of Oxley, it's been great to see the community come together to support those affected by fires. In my remaining remarks today I want to acknowledge just a few of the very special groups, organisations and individuals who came together to support their fellow Australians in need. I would like to acknowledge the Darra Jindalee Catholic Parish, which held a special garage sale just two weeks ago. I want to acknowledge all the volunteers and Khaleel Petrus and his family for all of their hard work. Thank you to the Duraack Inala Bowls Club, which ran a megaramble with all proceeds going to the Lions Foundation bushfire appeal. Thank you to the secretary and tireless worker Jenny Horne. Thank you to the Wolston Park Golf Club, a club I am proud to be a patron of, for raising funds week in, week out.

Thank you, of course, to the community of Forest Lake, where my electorate office is located, who held an amazing Australia Day free barbecue, picnic and bushfire appeal. It was a huge success, with a huge crowd attending to show their support. It was wonderful to see so many people across the Forest Lake community—local community groups, churches, small businesses—all coming together with a shared goal to raise funds for the bushfire appeal. The team exceeded their goal by raising almost $3,000 for the bushfire appeal. Thanks to so many community groups, residents, community leaders. And of course thanks to our local councillor, Charles Strunk, and his Forest Lake ward office for all of their efforts in organising such a special event.

A local restaurant in my community, in Jindalee, La Bonne Saigon, held a charity event. It was organised by the amazing owners Hein Nguyen and her family and by Lisa Scott, the manager, along with a group of talented Vietnamese singers. They joined forces to organise a charity fundraising dinner, with profits going to the bushfire relief appeal.

I also want to acknowledge one of the local councillors in my area, Councillor Angela Owen, the councillor for Calamvale Ward, for coordinating the collection of dignity packs for East Gippsland Rotary Fire Aid. There were 2,306 dignity packs containing approximately $40,000 worth of stock donated and delivered to Bairnsdale, East Gippsland. Thank you to Councillor Angela Owen. Thanks also to the Rotary Club of Forest Lake for coordinating and donating 100 packs and assisting with the delivery of the packs to Toll for transport. This donation is a significant contribution to those families in need.

The Vietnamese Community in Australia, Queensland Chapter, have long had a history of looking after others and giving back to our community. Whether it be people here in Australia or around the world who are affected by natural disaster, such as floods and fire, the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Queensland Chapter, is renowned for being one of the most generous communities in Queensland. They will be holding a special fundraising dinner on 16 February, and I want to make special mention of the vice-president, Teresa Do, for all her efforts organising the event, alongside the president of the chapter, Dr Cuong Trong Bui OAM.

In closing, and on behalf of the people of Oxley, which is a generous community, I send my deepest condolences to all those who have lost loved ones due to the fires, and I send my sincerest thanks on behalf of the Oxley community to all of our emergency personnel, ADF and volunteers who put their lives on the line to keep us safe. Our community, and Australia, owes you a great debt.

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (18:01): I rise to speak in support of this motion which mourns the Australians who have lost their lives in this horrific bushfire season and pays tribute to the nation's emergency personnel and volunteers who have worked and continue to work with colleagues from New Zealand, the USA and Canada, amongst other nations, to battle blazes across the country. It's been a fire season of devastation, with 33 lives lost, including nine firefighters, more than 3,000 homes destroyed and 17 million hectares burned, taking with it countless wildlife and livestock. So many of our fellow Australians have lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods.

In my home state of New South Wales, 25 people have tragically lost their lives, including three volunteer firefighters and the three US crew members of a C-130 Large Air Tanker that crashed on 23 January. The number of homes lost in New South Wales stands at 2,418 and is expected to rise as damage assessments continue. More than 5.4 million hectares have been burnt and 18,000 head of livestock are dead. But right across Australia bushfires have taken their toll. In Victoria, three people have lost their lives, and 1½ million hectares have been burnt. The houses destroyed so far number 405, and more than 7,000 head of livestock have been lost. In South Australia, three people have died, 185 homes have been lost and 300,000 hectares have been burnt. In Queensland, 49 homes have been destroyed and more than 2½ million hectares have burnt. In Western Australia, two homes have been lost and 786,000 hectares burnt. In Tasmania, three houses have been lost and more than 36,000 hectares burnt. Fires have raged near the nation's capital as well, burning more than 85,000 hectares of land. Indeed, it was sobering for members of parliament to return to Canberra last week and see the blackened bush and smell the smoky air.

Near my home, in Lake Macquarie, fires have threatened homes and closed roads in Charlestown and Wangi, and the fire at Killingworth affected the M1 motorway. On the Central Coast, Charmhaven was impacted, and the...
Gospers Mountain fire threatened communities for several weeks. In the Hunter Valley, communities have been threatened by blazes the likes of which firefighters have never seen before. Some of these fires have been large in area. Others have hit hard and with great intensity. In the words of one firefighter: 'Our rule book says we should never take on a flame height in excess of three metres front-on. We didn't have that opportunity at North Rothbury. The flames were three or four times that height, but they were coming straight over Wine Country Drive, directly on top of houses. So we just had to throw the rule book out the window.' This is the challenge that confronted many, many people as they fought these fires.

I want to express my and my electorate's gratitude to the brave firefighters who risked their lives to save their fellow humans. Some of these firefighters have been serving for months on deployments throughout Australia. I thank you for your sacrifice and your service. I also recognise and thank the hundreds of maritime workers who were involved in rescuing and supplying their fellow stranded Australians. I give my thanks for the individual and collective acts of generosity we've seen throughout the community; people have donated goods and money.

In my position as shadow minister for international development and the Pacific, I also want to thank the governments of so many Pacific island nations who have sent personnel, typically from their armed forces, to help in this crisis. I thank those Pacific island nations for their generosity. These nations have much less resources than Australia, but individual citizens and governments have dug deep into their pockets to donate to the bushfire appeal. Thank you again for your contribution. I want to thank the ADF for their assistance at this time. I want to thank all the other emergency services personnel who have served and helped in this crisis.

I should also note that it was the local ABC radio that kept people informed of where evacuation centres were, when it was safe to return and what the impact was—and it was the local ABC radio that provided a space for the outpouring of community spirit. We really saw our nation come together, with people throughout the community helping in this crisis.

Next to every loss, as hard as it seems to believe at the time, is a win—a win in protecting homes and property, and a win in saving lives. We have seen incredible scenes this summer of orange skies and roaring flames, and always in the foreground are men and women with hoses in hand fighting to save communities and themselves. It takes incredible determination and courage, in the face of what we have seen this season, to push on and to keep fighting. Yet, that is what we've seen in every state of Australia.

There is no doubt that this bushfire season is a national emergency, one that requires a national response and national leadership. For even those who've not been directly affected by fires have been indirectly affected by smoke, by road closures, by interruptions to their holiday plans and by the water restrictions that have been made necessary by appalling drought. It is vital that we learn from this bushfire season; that we develop a comprehensive national response to meet the physical and mental needs of the communities affected; that we begin a national audit to identify and address the mass destruction of wildlife and habitats, as identified by the shadow minister for the environment, my colleague the member for Griffith; and that we start working on a national plan to provide financial support for volunteer firefighters.

Importantly, we must also sit down with the fire chiefs who warned about this disastrous fire season but were not listened to. We must heed the warnings of scientists who wrote to the Prime Minister earlier this month with a message that there is no strong, resilient Australia without deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.

In no way does it diminish our mourning for lost lives or our respect for brave firefighters to talk about climate change as a contributor to this horrific bushfire season. In no way does it diminish our determination to rebuild the communities affected to talk about the mitigation and adaptation that climate change requires us to make. As several hundred scientists wrote to the Prime Minister:

The current emission reduction targets of Australia and the world are insufficient and will commit us to 3°C or more of warming by the end of this century.

They continued:

We call on our leaders to unite to develop non-partisan, long-term policies that will enable the managed transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 that the scientific evidence shows is required to avoid dangerous human-caused climate change.

There is no doubt that human-caused climate change is making fire seasons, and fire itself, worse. We are experiencing more frequent and more extreme fire weather conditions during summer, an earlier start to the fire season and a lengthening of the season into winter.

Fire management is becoming increasingly challenging. We must engage in the desperate task of mitigating our climate emissions. Adaptation will not be enough. If we just settle for adaptation now, what we've experienced through this awful spring and summer, and the winter to come, will not just be the new normal; it will be less than what we experience in the future if we allow global warming to exceed 3 degrees. What we saw this season,
unfortunately, is, some would say, the new normal, but it can get worse if we just focus on adaptation. It is in the national interest and it is in the global interest to actually focus on mitigation to restrict global warming to well below two degrees Centigrade. Otherwise, what we've faced this season is a mere precursor to what will occur in the future. And I'm not being alarmist—I'm responding to the best scientific advice on what is occurring and what can occur in the future.

This is not something that our country can ignore. We owe it to the Australians who've lost their lives, to the families who've lost loved ones, to the communities who've lost businesses and livelihoods, and to the men and women who continue to stand firm in the face of the raging infernos we have seen bear down on Australia's summer. We owe it to all Australians to take real action on climate change.

On behalf of the people of Shortland, I pass on my condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one, to everyone who has lost a home or a business and to those mourning the loss of wildlife—one billion lost. And I pass on my great thanks for the sacrifice of the firefighters and other personnel who have helped us in this crisis.

Ms Butler (Griffith) (18:11): It's a pleasure to follow my friend the member for Shortland, given the very thoughtful condolence speech that he's just made. I want to assure him, and everyone in this parliament, that I and my constituents in the federal electorate of Griffith on Brisbane's south side offer our deepest condolences to those affected by the national bushfire crisis. Of course, we've seen a horror summer, with 33 fatalities as a consequence of the bushfires and more than 3,000 homes lost. Businesses have been affected—some by physical damage, but many, many more by the economic loss that comes with the interruption that we've seen to the tourist season.

I think all Australians, when they saw the images of the children of some of the people who had been lost, would have been overwhelmed by grief, and it's very clear that our entire community has been united in that grief and in that mourning. That's why this condolence motion, an expression of the condolences of the entire Parliament of Australia to the people of Australia for their loss, is so apt.

I really want to thank the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for deciding to devote the first day of the new year of the parliament to this condolence motion and to addressing the condolences that we all want to express to those who've lost people. With condolence must come gratitude for the sacrifices of the people that we lost over the summer and for the sacrifices of many more, whether they were volunteer firefighters, first responders, paramedics or other health professionals, or people who just stopped what they were doing, got together and made sure that the response was there.

Last week I drove from Canberra to Batemans Bay, where we had our shadow cabinet on Friday. I stopped at Nelligen, which is just outside Batemans Bay, for a burger with the lot. Can I recommend to every Australian: the burger with the lot at the River Cafe at Nelligen is delicious. I say that advisedly because these businesses are suffering. The owner told me a story of how the pub was suffering, how the caravan park had been closed for a very long time and how so many businesses were really suffering as a consequence of the bushfires. He told me his story, and many other people I've spoken to have told stories about how they were personally affected by the fires.

We couldn't help but be moved, could we, Deputy Speaker Gillespie, by the stories of people who, while their own houses were burning, were out there volunteering as firefighters to save their communities and to stand up for their communities. I was really moved by the words of the member for Eden-Monaro, who said that he and his local RSL—he's a veteran, as you know—had invited the fire service volunteers to march together with them on Anzac Day this year. And it's fitting, isn't it? Because I've heard so many people talk about how Gallipoli forged the spirit of a nation a hundred years ago, but I think this summer the sacrifices that have been made, the losses that we've suffered and the incredible spirit that we've seen are also going to be really formative of our identity and our spirit as a nation. So I think it was really apt for the member for Eden-Monaro to talk about firefighters marching on Anzac Day with the local RSL. It was very fitting. I know that so many Australians will be looking for ways to express solidarity, condolence, grief and also hope in coming months, because we've already seen it.

In my electorate on the south side of Brisbane, in Griffith, people were so moved to try to help. The thick smoke haze lay across our city because of the fires—the direct interaction that we had with them, which of course pales in comparison to those who were directly affected by the flames. But it isn't that long since the 2011 floods. We as a city remember what it's like to go through a disaster, to suffer great loss and to suffer the terrible feeling of not knowing what's going to happen—what's going to happen with your house or what's going to happen with your rebuild. I think there's still a feeling of: ‘The rest of Australia really pulled through for us back then and we now want to do the same.’ We saw the bowls clubs, the pubs, the local craft breweries and the bookshops putting on their own bushfire fundraisers—the pubs with meat trays, for example. I was really overwhelmed by the outpouring of support.
The other thing that's really notable is the amount of grief and distress that this national bushfire crisis has caused people in relation to the loss of some other Australians—the tiny Australians: some of our threatened species. Obviously we've all seen the images of koalas and we've heard the stories of the potoroos and the Kangaroo Island dunnart. There are some less charismatic species as well. I noticed a story that was circulating last week about a fluorescent pink slug. Insects, lizards, fish, vertebrates and invertebrates—all of these different species have been affected. I've had people in tears about these losses as well. Of course our first thoughts are to those who lost their lives in the fires, but so many Australians have been moved to support the wildlife. They've also been moved by the loss of stock. So many people have had to engage in some quite gruesome work because of the loss of stock. I can't even imagine what that would have been like for the people who were suffering through that.

But we've seen some stories of real heroism. We visited the Adelaide Koala Rescue when they were camped out in the gym of one of the local primary schools, using 100 or so little tents they'd bought from Bunnings Warehouse to house the koalas. We saw the work that people like them were doing, and there's a lot more to be done. One of the academics I spoke to, Chris Dickman from the University of Sydney, gave an attention-grabbing but actually quite conservative estimate of more than one billion animals dying in the fires. That is an estimate. We need to know, firstly, what the scale of the loss is, and, secondly, what needs to be done right now, in a short window of opportunity, to deal with secondary threats: things like feral cats and feral foxes; things that come in once the fires recede and then pose another threat to the species.

I'm really pleased to see that the minister put out a press release today about the Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel identifying 113 species for priority recovery as a consequence of the bushfire crisis. What we need in addition to a mapping exercise—which is excellent; I'm pleased there's a mapping exercise—as soon as it's safe to do so, and in some cases it is safe to do so now, is boots on the ground for a national ecological audit, with scientists undertaking the work that needs to be done. For some species, we have a window of opportunity now to make sure that they're protected. So I encourage the minister to consider Labor's suggestion in that regard. I also want to thank the people who are already doing what they can: the citizen scientists, for example, who are turning their grief and their distress into action, including those using UNSW's iNaturalist app, where it's safe to do so.

But in this condolence motion we are here to mourn. In mourning and in expressing our condolences, we have to acknowledge that the national bushfire crisis has been continuing. We're now facing additional challenges. We had drought in a lot of the fire affected areas—Tenterfield, for example. I visited there last year; they were mid drought and also dealing with the immediate aftermath of serious fire. And now, on top of drought and fire, we have had some significant rain events. So I want to acknowledge the work that is still being done. As I said, I drove to Batemans Bay last week. There are lots of RFS people still working so hard on the recovery, still trying to come to terms with the loss that they've suffered. So, as well as expressing the depth of our grief as a nation and the sincerity of our condolences, we also should thank those people who are continuing, in many cases, to put themselves in harm's way in order to respond to the national bushfire crisis.

Briefly, I want to associate myself with the comments that the member for Shortland made in his capacity as the shadow minister with responsibilities for climate. I endorse those comments, of course. I anticipate that we will all be looking at what can be done to ensure that, in the future, a tragedy on this scale doesn't happen again—to take whatever action we can to honour, through mourning and condolences, the lives lost, and to ensure Australians' safety into the future.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (18:21): I seek leave to continue my contribution to this debate.

Leave granted.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: I spoke earlier about the Dunmore RFS crew, who made headlines when their firetruck was overrun by wildfire within just three minutes, in Tomerang in early January—a flash-over, as it's described. I described how they activated their cabin sprays and took defensive measures, and they survived. Within 10 minutes of that incident, they were out defending the house that they'd gone down that track to look after. It's this kind of heroism that we are all in awe of.

It's why the kids of Fig Tree holiday care gave a hero's welcome to the RFS volunteers. It's why the Wollongong City Council held a parade on Australia Day in honour of the emergency responders. It's why the Mittagong RFS received anonymous letters of thanks from children at a school in Sydney. Another local crew, from Dapto, were even photographed at the Green Wattle Creek blaze, and that photograph was displayed on the Opera House. Our communities' deep-felt thanks cannot be overstated.

Inevitably, the debate on climate change has been enlivened. But the debate on whether climate change has been a contributor to and a cause of these fires kind of misses the point in some respects. It's undeniable that...
climate change has been a contributor to these fires. It's undeniable that climate change has been a contributor to the drought, although some do try to deny it. It's undeniable that climate change has been a contributor to the prolonged fire season, restricting the capacity to manage forests, to do hazard reduction and to do controlled burns. It's undeniable that the summer of 2019-20 was the point at which we stopped talking about climate change in the future tense and started talking about it as something that is happening now. The point is that, if we're going to preserve our way of life, we have to change the way we do things. If we don't act, 'forever fires' will be the new normal, and they should not be forever. The urgency of this work does not come at the cost of us thanking, as we are today, those people and groups who have given so much to keep us safe during these blazes.

I want to take this opportunity to thank another group as well. We don't often think of them as lifesavers, but they have been: our local broadcasters. In the Illawarra, the South Coast and the Southern Highlands, we had WIN News Illawarra, the South Coast Register, the Illawarra Mercury, Southern Highland News, 9News Wollongong, 2ST, 98 FM, Wave FM and Power FM all playing a role in informing, reassuring and alerting locals, and telling our stories. I have no doubt that people are alive today because of the information that was being broadcast through these networks. They truly played a critical role, so I take this opportunity to thank them as well.

I want to particularly thank ABC Illawarra and ABC South East. The men and women there have literally kept people alive and safe with up-to-the-minute emergency broadcasts. Your work has been immense and has been of great value to the entire community. It's given us a critical understanding of how we respond to this emergency. Together our local media outlets have all managed to humanise the most brutal disaster we've ever experienced. You made us cry, you made us laugh sometimes, you've kept us safe, and we thank you.

I know the RFS have successfully partnered with local high schools in my area, running a cadets program to ensure that young people are coming up through the ranks of the RFS. This has happened at Dapto High School and Bowral High School, and it's a credit to those teachers who are engaging, to the volunteer RFS and, of course, to those young cadets who are giving all of their efforts.

Ruby and Charlotte Crueden-Taylor in Dapto, local children, held a bake sale and were inundated with support, raising more than $1,000 in three hours. The Illawarra Mercury reported that one customer paid 200 bucks for a doughnut because the funds were going directly to bushfire relief. Local businesses—and I'm thinking of my mate at the Robertson butcher and of the Robertson Hotel, the Robertson Bowling Club and Moonacres Kitchen—are feeding the ADF and emergency responders out of their own pockets, giving up their family income in support of our community and our emergency services. There are countless other examples across the district. Alexander's Cafe mustered donations, and the list goes on. I don't have time to list them all.

A special shout-out to the men and women at the Moss Vale Services Club and the Mittagong RSL who helped operate their facilities as evacuation centres in the Morton and Green Wattle fires. Similarly, the Albion Park and Moss Vale showgrounds became evacuation centres for large animals. The Albion Park Show Society properly operated their facilities as evacuation centres in the Morton and Green Wattle fires. Similarly, the Albion Park and Moss Vale showgrounds became evacuation centres for large animals. The Albion Park Show Society properly prioritised their work as an evacuation centre over hosting the 2020 show, which has been cancelled.

The New South Wales Business Chamber and their Illawarra Business Chamber chapter have been doing a great job in running their campaign Backing the Bush, encouraging local businesses to pledge to hold meetings in bushfire affected areas. So far companies that have signed the pledge include BlueScope, WIN Corporation, IMB Bank, Peoplecare and the University of Wollongong. Local manufacturer and major employer BlueScope has donated a million dollars to the Red Cross. And how could I leave out the Red Cross and St Vincent de Paul for the great job they have done for the district?

Dapto local Leanne Shackell delivered back-to-school backpacks to 165 Batemans Bay children. She received collections organised through Hayes Park Public School parents, UoW staff, local businesses and Dapto locals who heard about it on Facebook.

Wombat Care Bundanoon have been caring for wombats across the highlands. Wombats are well-known for willingly sharing their burrows with their natural enemies, like snakes, during bushfires. There's some speculation on whether they do that or they just head downstairs, but it's a great thing and let the myth survive! I think of this as a metaphor for how so many other Australians have acted, sharing their safe places with others in danger.

I want to give a shout-out to Raptor Care and Conservation at Fitzroy Falls. They've also been playing a role with Australia's magnificent birds of prey. The Dingo Sanctuary at Bargo was repaired by dozens of inmates from the Illawarra Reintegration Centre. Many hundreds of Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands residents sought shelter with family and friends in the Illawarra over the bushfires. Spare rooms and couches were more than just a place to stay; they became the frontline on the home front—a place of refuge for those fleeing the fire, a gesture of solidarity and citizenship for those who could.

I also want to give a shout-out—and I am nearing the end here—in the Southern Highlands to John Waters and friends, who organised the fire aid concert. It was a terrific evening. It was done at the drop of a hat, very shortly.
We had thousands of people there. We had about 6,000 people by my count. For my generation, it was great to see Daryl Braithwaite, Leo Sayer and John Paul Young. My kids were not so impressed, but I thought it was a great afternoon out there at Bong Bong Picnic Racecourse!

Over at Berrima, my good mate Richard Lane organised the Wingecarribee Vocal Muster to perform on Australia Day, again recognising and fundraising for the RFS. On the coast, Football For Firies was held—a match between the Wollongong Wolves and Albion Park City—to raise money for the Albion Park RFS. We've had the Illawarra Codes Combined—the Hawks, the Dragons and the Wolves—golf day, raising money for the Salvos and WIRES.

I want to give a special shout-out to my mate the member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips. She spent her wedding anniversary on the front line, while her husband was in New Zealand on the family holiday that she never got to. She's done a great job. I wind up by saying that there are so many more that I could thank, but, in the time that I have available, from my heart and on behalf of the people of Whitlam, the Illawarra and the South Coast, thanks for all the support we've got. We got through it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): It being 6.30 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192(b). The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That grievances be noted.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Dr HAINES (Indi) (18:30): Like most Australians, I've been tremendously disappointed by the recent revelations regarding the Community Sport Infrastructure grants scheme—or, sadly, as most now know it, 'sports rorts'. As if that isn't bad enough, it's becoming apparent that there are other grant programs that are now under a similar cloud—pools that weren't asked for and grants with no guidelines at all flung unabashedly towards marginal seats. Each day seems to bring a new scandal.

If my voice sounds tired, it is because I am tired of hearing about these things. At the centre of sports rorts is an ugly reality—that is, that our government perpetrated a considered and planned abuse of power. These are grants that were applied for in good faith by good people all over the nation—good people who had high hopes for good things in their local clubs. Those same people have now found out that they were wasting their time.

They've also found out that this was no mistake. Scoring high according to the guidelines but being overlooked was no accident; it was design. They've found out that this wasn't a computing error or a bureaucratic bungle. It was, in fact, a deliberate use of ministerial discretion not for public good but for political gain—an abuse that the minister, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other government members are completely happy to defend. 'Let it go,' you might say. 'The train has moved on.' But we mustn't just let this go through to the keeper. We need to ask ourselves what will stop this practice from happening again.

I want to dwell for a minute on what this whole tawdry episode says about this place and how it's seen from the outside—that is, by the people it serves. I was listening recently to a former minister in the current government who stepped down at the last election. He reflected on his time here and said: 'It's been quite interesting since I left. When I hear my former colleagues answering questions, I often think, "Oh, for God's sake, answer the question."' He went on to say, 'When you're inside that bubble, groupthink becomes the norm and you don't really step outside it. Now that I'm not there, when I listen to them talking, I think: it's obvious you're not answering the question.' This came from a former minister. When I think about the scandal over the sport grants and some of the things that members of the government have said in its defence, I think about these comments, because this is the thing: good people across the nation know when they're being ripped off and they know when they're being fed a line.

No-one believes the spin. Everyone knows that the real question is not answered here. Claiming that rules were not broken, when the ANAO's unequivocal report is that rules were manifestly broken; claiming that there's 'nothing to see here', when people all over the nation know that the emperor has no clothes; and claiming that this program is unimpeachable because it funded girls' changing rooms, when it's plain to see that this was about political self-interest, not about girls and changing rooms, is not answering the question. Novelty cheques were handed out by unelected candidates while the elected and respected local MP was left on the sidelines. People aren't fooled by this nonsense. They're embarrassed to watch it. It's embarrassing because good people of sound character know that it's wrong.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
When the truth emerged about sports rorts, most fair-minded people rightfully expected a bit of embarrassment in return. Perhaps they hoped for that now rare and old-fashioned hallmark of a true leader: an admission of fault and a genuine show of remorse. But, no, there has been no acknowledgment from anyone in the government that any part of this was wrong—notwithstanding, weeks on from the Auditor-General's scathing report, a concession of the failure to register membership of a shooting club and thus a conflict of interest for which the minister took responsibility and subsequently stood down. But, even then, the minister not only defended the practice of determining grants' success by marginal seat status; she said she would do it all again.

Australians have never felt less trust in politicians, and incidents such as this confirm those feelings. That's what truly disturbs me. Confirming to the nation that they cannot trust their leaders—by unapologetically spinning an alternative narrative on the Auditor-General's report—serves to further distance Australians from their government. That's a dangerous thing for our democracy. I feel pretty sure that, if someone—anyone—in the government just said, 'You know, this is wrong. The ANAO has found us wanting. This is not good enough. We are sorry. We assure you we are committed to remedying this', I reckon the public would say, 'Yep. Fair enough. Don't do it again.' But 'sorry' simply is the hardest word in this place. That is really disturbing. We put the word 'honourable' at the fronts of ministers' names because we expect honour from them and we expect decency and humility. When things go wrong, we just expect a bit of contrition. But no-one moves on when they lose trust. They remain unsettled and cynical. When our citizens are cynical, how can we as their elected representatives possibly lead them on issues of real national importance? This is the real tragedy of all of this.

When the Prime Minister referred the saga to the head of his department to investigate a possible breach of ministerial standards, I was powerfully disappointed by that too. In fact, if we weren't in the midst of the worst bushfire crisis this nation has ever experienced, we might have felt a rush of air across this nation as we collectively shook our heads, not in disbelief but, sadly, in complete belief—complete belief that of course there was never going to be immediate action; there was going to be a new review. Why, after the Audit Office has just submitted a meticulous research report, did we need another investigation to establish if the senator breached the ministerial code of conduct? The code says ministers 'must ensure disinterested exercise of statutory and other powers', and must 'observe fairness in making official decisions'. It's disturbing to me that the Prime Minister was unable to tell himself that the ANAO report demonstrated a clear breach of those standards. It is even more disturbing that this extra process cannot be seen outside of cabinet.

Thus, the Prime Minister creates an alternative reality where the former minister for sport did nothing wrong. The Deputy Prime Minister said he was choosing to believe this alternative reality. But the rest of the nation, I can tell you, in fact chose to believe the ANAO report, the one that we can all see and read. In episodes like this, people rightly lose faith in politicians. They think we're all rotten, that we're all in it for ourselves. The tragic thing is I don't believe either the senator or the Prime Minister or any one of us in this place is truly rotten or that we got into politics to dabble in corruption or to look out for ourselves. That's another tragedy of this.

So the need to introduce a federal integrity commission has never been clearer. Such a commission would not be a silver bullet, but it is an urgent and necessary intervention into this nation's spiralling crisis of trust in political institutions. I want something constructive to come out of all of this. My predecessor set the bar by introducing a private member's bill to establish a federal integrity commission. The government has since declared that they will introduce their own. They said they would do that by last December. Where is it? We haven't seen it yet. Indeed, today the government gagged debate on a motion that was brought forward from the Senate to discuss a federal integrity commission. We can't even talk about it.

I very much hope that the government is truly serious about the powers that a federal integrity commission needs, because the last draft of the model it has proposed would be completely useless in the face of the current scandal. That model would require 'reasonable suspicion' that the conduct in question constitutes a criminal offence for an investigation into a politician to be initiated. The government must understand that, when people demand an integrity commission, they don't mean one that looks purely into cases of criminal conduct but rather one that looks into corruption in the true sense of the word—the abuse of public power for private or political gain. Even if the case could be investigated, the government's proposed commission would not be able to hold public hearings or make findings of corrupt conduct in the case of politicians.

This scandal makes clear the inadequacies of the government's model, but the standard for this is incredibly clear: a federal integrity commission must have broad jurisdiction, covering all those involved in federal public administration. It must set common rules of integrity such that no-one is held to a lower standard than anybody else. It must give the commission appropriate powers to fulfil its purpose. It must hold fair hearings, meaning it must have the ability to hold hearings in public. Finally, it must be accountable to the people. This is a character test for the government. If it chokes, the anger out there in the community will be white-hot. Faith in our democracy will decline even more, with all the consequences that will have for our country.
Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:41): Today is world Safer Internet Day. Sadly, it's a desperately needed initiative. Social media can be used for a lot of good things, but unfortunately, over 15 years, we've seen a rising tide of people acting absolutely appallingly on social media, using it as a vehicle to bully, harass and intimidate their fellow Australians. Research commissioned by the eSafety Commissioner tells us that, in just the 12 months to June 2016, one in five teenagers say that they were cyberbullied, while last year 14 per cent of the adult population in Australia were the target of online hate speech. One in 10 adult Australians today have already had a nude or sexual photograph of themselves posted online without their consent. These actions have consequences. More than 40 per cent of those involved say that their mental health has been negatively affected, while a third have also suffered physical health effects.

Our constituents want to see action, so what can we do about this rising national crisis? There are certainly specific policy actions which I believe the private sector and government need to pursue. In particular—though I acknowledge that some, including especially Facebook and Instagram, have increased their work in this space—social media companies still have much more to do in relation to their responsibility for the content that is posted on their platforms. If they can constantly trawl what we say and do online to sell us ever-more-targeted products then they can design algorithms to better identify and filter out bullying, hateful speech and harmful content. I believe they also need to end total anonymity, where it exists, and ensure that all users who abuse others online can be individually identified and held accountable for their actions. It seems that some people feel that they are able to say whatever they like and do whatever they like on social media because there is some veil of secrecy, some veil of anonymity, that they can hide behind. That veil of anonymity has to be torn to shreds.

We know that people suffering from poor mental health often turn to the internet for information and outside contact. We can receive push notifications and pop-up chats from sales callers when we express an interest in a product or pass by a shop, and it seems now, with the likes of Google Home, Google Assistant and things like that, that you only need to be talking about something. For instance, Mr Deputy Speaker, you might be in your lounge room with Google Assistant or some similar product and you might be saying to your dearly beloved, 'I think it's time we invested in a new bed,' and—hey, presto!—you will be bombarded with ads on the internet for new beds and new mattresses. It's really quite scary. Why can't we use that same technology to provide proactive access to a counsellor for those who express an interest in suicide or for those who have expressed searching online for suicides and who then perhaps visit a suicide hotspot?

Most urgently, I believe we need to do more to prevent access to websites and social media posts which promote eating disorders and self-harm or facilitate sufferers' conditions. It is absolutely, undeniably unacceptable in today's day and age that we allow people to peddle websites and social media pages which promote self-harm and how one might go about committing suicide, for example. There is absolutely no justification for those websites, and they ought to be shut down. Companies like Google et cetera—the search engines, the social media companies—have to step in, otherwise government should. If they're not willing to make those changes, we should. Ultimately, it's not through better regulation or technology that we're going to solve this problem. It is, after all, the day-to-day attitudes of millions of Australians as they engage in social media which creates our online world.

As a society, in the street we don't accept bullying, harassment or abusive language. In general, we don't do it, and if we see others doing it Australians most often intervene. Face to face we generally try not to be rude or offensive. We try to act with courtesy and decency and, for most of us, even a little kindness. On the whole, we try to disagree respectfully and, above all, we generally let others quietly get on with their lives in peace. We certainly don't allow people to walk the streets in masks and use their anonymity to spread messages of hate or derision. We don't allow random attacks on strangers for their opinions or try to make others angry or depressed for sport. We don't take every disagreement as an excuse to fire a barrage of vitriol and scorn and we don't stand idly by while others behave in this way, yet a significant minority of us do just that online. Some of these people—the very same people who would thank a bus driver, help a passer-by with their shopping bags or disagree rationally and respectfully with, perhaps, an elected official—will vilify and abuse; behind the safety of a computer screen, they will do just that. This is what needs to change.

As a society, we must start applying the same standards of respect, courtesy, decency and humanity online that we apply in the offline world. We must start putting social pressure on people who refuse to live up to those standards. That is what Safer Internet Day is all about. By signing the pledge and making a very public commitment to making a safer internet, I hope all of us can start to set a conscious example and show the bullies and the trolls that we, as a community of Australians, will no longer tolerate this.

I've recently taken my own stand against this rising tide of bullying and harassment. When I became the federal member for Fisher in 2016, in the interests of spirited debate and freedom of speech, I took a very liberal approach.
to my social media. I only censored material that used profanity. But facing the ever-growing number of people who seem to have nothing better to do with their time than spread vitriolic messages of hate and derision, at the beginning of 2020 I decided to act. From now on I will not allow anyone, including me, to be abused, harassed, bullied or disrespected on my social media pages.

I encourage free speech, I encourage a healthy debate and I encourage my fellow Australians to disagree with me, or the government, but I will not allow those platforms to be used by those who choose to not treat each other with basic decency and respect online. I've begun to hide the posts of those people, whatever their political views, and permanently ban them from my page. I would encourage all members to do the same thing. We, as elected members, have got to stand up and lead by example on this point. I've copped only a very small amount of criticism for this stand, but I've got to tell you: the overwhelming majority of people who have responded have been extremely positive and thanked me for doing it. We hold a privileged position in this place and we must lead from the front. I believe it's time that the Australian community treated each other with respect online, as they do offline. We've got a part to play in this role, and I really encourage those opposite and my own side to do just that.

Today's a very good day: Safer Internet Day. Take the pledge, talk to your kids, do everything you can to keep them safe, and visit www.esafety.gov.au to get some terrific ideas on how to keep you and your family safe.

**Holt Electorate: Hampton Park Secondary College**

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (18:51): On Thursday 30 January, I visited a local secondary school within my electorate: Hampton Park Secondary College. The school is home to kids who come from over 70 different nationalities. While speaking at the school assembly, I asked the students to raise their hand if they were concerned about the future. Over 75 per cent of the students raised their hand, which leads me to ask the question: what can we do or what should we be doing about this? I reflected on this in a framework. I asked a number of students afterwards: 'Do you have hope for the future? What are your hopes for the future?' The response back was concerning, and it's the topic of my conversation here tonight. The impact of the answer to that question, which was that the students didn't have hope for a better future—they wanted a better future; they didn't believe it would happen—led me to explore the concept of politics and hope. What role does that diminution of hope, that potential extinguishment of hope, play in our democracy and in our parliamentary life? From any perspective—from a rational perspective, from a societal perspective, from a communal perspective or from a religious perspective—the death of hope, the extinguishment of hope, is a problem. It's a problem because of the consequences.

I broaden the definition of 'hope' as in trust, because to hope you've got to trust that something will happen. This ties into some questions that I asked post that important discussion with the kids from Hampton Park Secondary College. Around this place I asked two very good staff members, people who work in this place, what they thought about politics and politicians. This is what a young intelligent person, a good person who works in this place, basically said about politicians—generally their perception of the community's view of politicians. They said: 'From a young person's perspective, we're telling politicians, loud and clear, what we want and the lives we want—but it's not going to happen. They listen, they laud us for our engagement and our opinions, they talk about how inspiring we are and how we are the future, but we don't see any action and we don't see any change.' That's from someone who works in this building. What are we supposed to say to the people we say are disconnected? It's not that the person is wrong, but that is what people believe. They're right to believe that, because a number of young people that I've spoken to around the country also reflect that.

I asked a respected journalist—I'm not going to name him—'So what do you think? Is there any hope in politics? Is there any hope that anything is going to happen?' I asked him to send me a message. I said: 'Tell me what you think. Is there hope in government? Do you think the world's going to change?' People read this gentlemen's work. This is what I got back. He said: 'People have traditionally looked to governments. We might have disliked politicians, but we relied on governments in a way that some others didn't. Government is central to our conception of what Australia is, but trust in government has vanished. If other countries never trusted or even disliked government, a loss of faith in institutions isn't such a problem. Here it's much worse because people believe that governments are important. We're such a small population on a large continent in a vast region, so government has to work well. Now it doesn't. It's not just the perception that politics is controlled by vested interests; it's the learned helplessness of governments over the past 20 years. A nation that built the Snowy can't roll out the NBN or run a census and they're certainly not up to the challenge of climate change. This is a result of the power shift between government and the private sector over the recent decade, which no longer even delivers the economic prosperity that it did in the early 2000s.' That's from a journalist that I really respect, a journalist that is read by a lot of people. That's his personal opinion. Do you know what? I don't have to go very far in my constituency to hear that back, whether it's from the tradies that I doorknock or the young people I speak to.

The previous speaker, the member for Fisher, spoke about youth suicide. We had some terrible difficulties with that problem down our way. When you want to see the lack of hope and the lack of trust and despair, its ultimate
manifestation you can see in some of the terrible things that happened in that region in 2011 and 2012. Yet the hope of a few of those kids who got together then led to a forum that was on the *Four Corners* program. It covered a forum that I hosted with Professor Patrick McGorry. That led to the creation of two headspace services. So there was, in the midst of that darkness and despair, some concrete action taken to address that issue. But the preconditions, I think, are there in such a way for the problems that we have in our society.

This issue that comes back to me from person after person is about their lack of trust, their lack of faith and their lack of hope that things can be better in politics. The previous speaker touched on that in a different way and about how he's taking action to deal with that online, which I commend him for. But I guess what I wanted to talk about is the perniciousness of this lack of hope, the death of hope, the death of trust in political bodies. If you're an authoritarian regime that wants to do a democracy harm, what's the best way you can do that? You extinguish hope. You extinguish hope that your voice can be heard. You extinguish hope that the future is going to be better for your kids than it was for you. You extinguish hope that action can be taken about climate change. You extinguish hope that there might be a problem in the community that can be fixed by institutions, because trust in the institutions has been taken away. Once you take away trust in an institution you take away hope, and hope is important.

There was an article written by a gentleman called Titus Stahl which I referred to just prior to coming in here. It was written very recently. It's entitled 'Why politics needs hope (but no longer inspires it)'. I wanted to just touch on why we do need hope from a rational perspective. This is from the end of this particular gentleman's article about hope:

So it is rational, perhaps even necessary, to recuit the notion of hope for the purposes of justice. And this is why the rhetoric of hope has all but disappeared. We can seriously employ the rhetoric of hope only when we believe that citizens can be brought to develop a shared commitment to exploring ambitious projects of social justice, even when they disagree about their content. This belief has become increasingly implausible in light of recent developments that reveal how divided Western democracies really are. A sizable minority in Europe and the US has made it clear, in response to the rhetoric of hope, that it disagrees not only about the meaning of justice but also with the very idea that our current vocabulary of social justice ought to be extended. One can, of course, still individually hope that those who hold this view will be convinced to change it. As things stand, however, this is not a hope that they are able to share.

If I want to subvert democracies in the West—if I'm in an authoritarian regime—I'm going to be looking at the instruments that I can use to extinguish hope. This is where I agree with the previous speaker, in terms of the mechanisms that can be used by those who want to weaken hope, trust and faith in institutions. And social media can do that, and they do.

In the past—I was thinking, and I was talking to my staff about this—when I was growing up, we would all converse over five television programs or four TV stations. Those, and the printed media, were how we got the news. Now we have so many ways of getting information. We have more information available to us as individuals than at any other time in human history, and yet I think that, when we have a political discourse or a discussion, opinions have narrowed and the tolerance of a diversity of views has narrowed. What's happened in that blizzard of information is that we've reinforced biases, not created a community of interest where there can be conversations.

So to those young people at Hampton Park Secondary College who started that conversation: we here have hope, but it is something that we need to talk about, and I thank them, and I certainly hope that this speech has inspired some belief that there could be hope in parliament and in this place.

**Townsville: Floods**

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (19:01): This month marks 12 months since the devastating floods which hit Townsville, in my electorate—a whole year of pain, heartache and loss for many residents, and of resilience and recovery for many others. It is difficult to fathom that it has only been one year. So much has happened.

I remember the night the text message warnings came rolling through. The rain had been pelting down nonstop for days, and there were a lot of people becoming pretty uneasy about the weather and the flash flooding that was happening around town. But soon attention turned to the dam, which had reached levels of more than double its capacity in a very short amount of time. As the decision was made to start opening the gates, the Ross River swelled and the inundation of hundreds of homes and businesses began. No-one knew exactly what was coming or what to expect.

What followed was the evacuation of thousands of people. Some got out before the floodwater took hold. But, for others, it was too late. It was then that we saw the incredible community of North Queensland come together amidst adversity. As roads became rivers, anyone with a tinnie was out on the water. They were bravely risking their own lives in reaching residents whose homes had turned to islands.
Then there was the immediate aftermath. The devastation was real as people cleaned up, throwing out their muddied belongings and hosing out the homes they'd worked so hard for. As stories emerged of residents who had lost everything, even more stories came out of the generous and selfless acts of members of the community who just wanted to help their fellow Townsilians. It all made me very proud to call Townsville home.

The months have gone by, and we have reached the year-long milestone. There has been a lot of progress, but there's also a long way to go. Plenty of people have still not returned to their homes, unable to afford repairs or still waiting on the insurers to pay out. Many small business owners are only just reopening or, in the case of some—the motels on Bowen Road, for example—they are still at work on the process.

Today, the federal government has provided help in the form of cash grants to individuals and small business owners, to the tune of $42.3 million in the Townsville area. But I'm under no illusion that this will put an end to all the problems that people are facing. So I want to say to the people of Herbert: if you're still hurting, if you're still struggling, please get in touch with me. If you need help, please reach out to my office. If there's red tape that needs cutting through, I want to know about it. If your insurance premium has gone through the roof, I want to know about it. And there's another thing that has become very clear through this event, which we'll talk more about after this—high insurance premiums.

I want to pay special tribute to the hundreds of defence and emergency services personnel who gave their all serving their community through those tough days, and many had their houses inundated by water. They put in extra hours and they took risks, all for the sake of looking after the community that they love. But, for them, it's not all about Townsville. I was so delighted to hear that during the recent bushfire crisis that has plagued down south of Townsville—in New South Wales and Victoria, where people's lives have been lost; and houses, properties and businesses engulfed by flames—they deployed to help their fellow Australians. These are people who themselves went through a terrible disaster only a year ago, and they wanted to help other communities. Members of the 5th Aviation Regiment from Townsville flew down, as did 52 firefighters from North Queensland rural fire brigades. I'd like to thank them for their selfless service not just to Townsville but beyond. Many are still battling flames or helping with recovery now.

So, 12 months on, we take stock. We reflect, we learn and we celebrate our progress. And we push on with the rest of the job. We may have been knocked down, but we are definitely getting up again.

The other important issue which I'd like to speak about this evening is the issue that is adversely impacting many North Queenslanders—insurance. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you're no doubt aware, Townsville was hit by the natural disaster I've just spoken about. Thousands of locals have been displaced from their homes, have suffered significant damage to their homes and their income and, during this time, have sustained much stress. It is extremely disheartening to see insurance companies take advantage of the situation through what can only be described as price gouging.

I refuse to sit by as premiums keep rising, property owners are forced out of the market and people in my electorate of Herbert are suffering, with nowhere to turn. Make no mistake: we're in the grip of an insurance crisis and market failure. That is why the ACCC has been instructed to conduct its investigation into the cost of insurance in northern Australia—so it can shine a light on this despicable issue and respond accordingly. While the final report of the inquiry isn't due until the end of the year, recent hearings have all but confirmed what we already know. North Queenslanders, who have already been hit by a once-in-500-years devastating flood, are now being hit again. Time and time again we've heard stories of people in the electorate of Herbert being forced to pay significantly higher insurance premiums on their homes, contents, vehicles and businesses. Things have gotten so bad that I've heard many stories from people who say they can no longer afford to cover themselves because premiums are simply too high. The sheer stress for those who can no longer afford insurance is harrowing.

This is a national disgrace and something which must be fixed as a matter of priority. Combined home and contents insurance premiums rose by 130 per cent in northern Australia between 2007-08 and 2017-18. This is compared to a rise of 50 per cent across the rest of Australia. The average cost for combined insurance across North Queensland is $2,400—more than a thousand dollars above the average cost across the rest of Australia, whose premiums average $1,300. This situation is simply not good enough. I understand that tackling the problem is complex, and I'm grateful that the responsible minister, the Assistant Treasurer, was able to come to Townsville and speak with residents of our city firsthand. Minister Sukkar heard just how significant ongoing insurance issues were to the people of North Queensland. The stories we heard at the forum and continue to hear are shocking and a cause for great concern.

The people of Townsville and North Queensland have reached crisis point. We currently have organisations such as the Anglican Church of North Queensland forced to self-insure their properties, and their insurance premiums are going up by 500 per cent. We have family owned and run businesses left devastated as they
continue to pick up the pieces and rebuild their lives and their businesses. Some people, particularly in strata title properties, simply cannot access insurance. We've seen the Townsville RSL's flood insurance increase tenfold and nursing homes on the brink of closure. This simply isn't good enough. We are right now in the midst of a disaster season. Time is of the essence. We need less talk and more action.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr THOMPSON: I'm happy to take interjections as we go through, but we could get rid of stamp duty. The Labor state government could get rid of stamp duty in North Queensland—and that could happen in other disaster places around Australia. We need to encourage the Premier to find where her spine should be located and get rid of stamp duty, which would lower the premiums by 10 per cent. The first 10 things in the ACCC report are about the state government.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr THOMPSON: I'll take that. I agree with you. The state government are all talk and no action. They have done nothing. It's a shame, because they don't care about North Queensland. They only care about propping up their coffers for the next state election. It's a shame that the people of North Queensland are once again being treated poorly and like mugs by the Labor state government, which really should look after us.

Indigenous Australians

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (19:11): 'Talk with us, not to us.' That's been the request of the First Australians in dealing with government concerning social policy, reconciliation and constitutional recognition for many years. 'Talk with us, not to us.' Yet, on the first big opportunity that the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government had to respect this request from First Nations Australians, this government failed disgracefully. The First Nations National Constitutional Convention in 2017 saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come together from all over Australia over four days to produce the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Statement from the Heart represented First Nations Australians speaking with one voice in unity about being listened to and respected by non-Indigenous Australians and government about their future and recognising and paying respect to their unique culture and heritage. This was a historic moment in Australia's history.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a statement for all Australians and something that we should be proud of. It speaks of pride and spirituality in First Nations people's connection with this land, this continent, for more than 60,000 years. It talks of the crisis of modern First Nations people—the shockingly high rates of incarceration, particularly of young men; the alienation of children from their families; the detention of youth, powerfully described as 'the torment of our powerlessness'.

Then there is the request for respect, the request for Australians to listen, to seek constitutional reform to empower First Australians to take their rightful place in their own country through the establishment of a First Nations voice in the Constitution, through a makarrata commission to oversee truth-telling about Australia's history and colonisation and to supervise agreement-making with Australian governments. Unfortunately this historic document, this cry for respect from a united Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, was dismissed by the Turnbull government and dismissed out of hand—in my view, a show of disrespect to our First Australians.

Australians, as a nation of people, can lay claim to a feat that no other nation of citizens can lay claim to throughout the world, and that is that we have the longest continuing culture in the world through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—scientifically and anthropologically proven to connect First Australians with this land for over 60,000 years. That is a history and heritage that we should be immensely proud of. That is an achievement that should be celebrated, respected and recognised in our nation's founding document, our most important document—our Constitution. But, sadly, it is not. In fact, if you read a copy of the Australian Constitution, you could be forgiven for believing that Australian history began with British colonisation. Our founding document—our Constitution—does not tell the truth about Australia. It doesn't tell the truth about our history. It makes our history incomplete. Our founding document should reflect our true history, our culture and our values. It should exhibit our respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their heritage and their culture. It does not, and that must change.

Just as the Apology to the Stolen Generations was the most important step in healing what government had done in removing children unjustifiably from their mothers and fathers, so too is constitutional recognition the most important gesture in the empowerment of our First Australians and ensuring that they can live rewarding and fulfilling lives with living standards equivalent to other Australians. It represents Australian people coming together through education, through consultation and through democracy by us voting to amend our Constitution to finally recognise our history and our true culture—that of the First Australians and their connection with the land—to amend our founding document to celebrate the history and the achievement of our First Australians; to
finally tell the truth; and to say to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 'We hear you, we understand you, we recognise your culture and we respect you.'

It is such a shame and such a disappointment that the Turnbull and Morrison governments have rejected the Uluru Statement from the Heart and shown such disrespect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their ambitions. In October last year, Labor acknowledged the government's announcement of a co-design process for a legislated First Nations voice to parliament. We will engage in this process collaboratively, but bipartisanship or agreement across the parliament cannot become a race to the bottom. It has to be ambitious and it has to listen to First Australians and the wider Australian community. Labor fully embraces the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The statement outlined the reasonable and modest desires of First Nations people for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations voice to parliament, a makarrata commission to supervise the process of agreement-making, and a national process for truth-telling.

It is crucial that First Australians people have a say in their future and in policies, laws and decisions that affect them, and Labor remains committed to realising the desires of First Nations people, as outlined by First Nations people in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Labor's priority for constitutional reform remains, recognising the First Australians in our Constitution and a voice to parliament, and it's vital that First Nations people's views and wishes are properly and comprehensively understood in this process. We acknowledge the appointment of Tom Calma and Marcia Langton to lead the senior advisory group, and we encourage all Australians—all First Nations communities and leaders—to participate and ensure that an important diversity of views is heard and understood. This is a process that Australia has a unique opportunity, in time, to get right: to finally recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, and the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made to our nation. It's too important for us to dismiss this process out of hand. That's why Labor takes this process very seriously and calls on the government to do the same.

First Nations peoples and the broader community understand the need for the voice to have security and, therefore, protection in the Constitution. For too long, our founding document has not reflected Australia's true history. It's time for us to rectify that wrong and to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—the First Australians—are recognised in our founding document, in our Constitution, and that we pay them the respect that they deserve.

Mallee Electorate: Seasonal Workers

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Mallee

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (19:20): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Congratulations on your election to this role.

I rise today to discuss a critical issue facing the horticultural sector in my electorate of Mallee. Since being elected, growers have informed me of the difficulties that they face in securing a reliable and sufficient seasonal workforce. Mallee is home to approximately 74 per cent of Australia's almond production, 70 per cent of table grapes, 57 per cent of nectarines and 19 per cent of oranges, with most grown in the north of my electorate. This area along the Murray River encompassing Mildura, Robinvale and Swan Hill amounts to 10 per cent of all horticultural farms in Australia and accounted for $1.36 billion—or 15 per cent—of Australia's horticultural production in 2016. Growers from these areas have been dealing with workforce shortages for years, creating anxiety and uncertainty for each harvest. If workers cannot be found, this season's harvest is at risk of falling to the ground, resulting in a $1.4 billion loss for this industry.

The problems associated with labour shortages have been amplified recently due to a number of factors, including the Victorian government's labour hire licensing scheme and the federal government's Modern Slavery Act. These legislative instruments provide important regulatory frameworks to protect growers and workers in the industry. However, when compounded with intense seasonal demand, growers face significant workforce challenges.

I have been listening to local voices and working hard with my colleagues in government to develop adaptive solutions to the workforce shortage issues in this industry. In September 2019, I organised several meetings between six federal government departments, state and local government officials and many industry stakeholders, including the Australian Table Grape Association and Citrus Australia. In response to the work we have done in this space, the Regional Agriculture Migration Package—otherwise known as RAMP—has been developed at the request of the government to improve seasonal labour supply to horticultural farmers, to advocate to state and local governments for appropriate accommodation for workers and to eliminate illegal employment practices in the great food-producing areas along the Murray.

The RAMP is a coordinated response by our government to a complex issue of national importance, bringing together the resources of the departments of employment, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Home
Affairs as well as the Australian Border Force and the Fair Work Ombudsman. The RAMP makes a number of improvements to the Seasonal Worker Program and the Pacific Labour Scheme, which are longstanding cooperative agreements between Australia, nine Pacific island nations and Timor-Leste.

The Seasonal Worker Program and the Pacific Labour Scheme offer employers in the agriculture sector access to a reliable workforce where there is not enough local Australian labour to meet seasonal demand. It is also an opportunity for workers from partnering countries to earn good wages and learn new skills. The money they earn is often spent on their children's education or family medical bills, or is even used to build a house or start a small business. These seasonal workforce programs offer reciprocal benefits and form a key aspect of our commitment to build stronger connections with our near neighbours in the Pacific.

Under the RAMP, the Seasonal Worker Program Regional Pilot has been expanded to the whole of the Wimmera Mallee region. This pilot enables greater flexibility under the program as workers can move between regions to take advantage of seasonal harvests. It is now possible for approved employers to enter shared arrangements that will increase the portability of workers throughout the program. This means that farmers and growers that require workers for short periods of time can plan their harvest needs and share the same workers consecutively.

I've heard that many smaller growers are deterred from becoming approved employers because their harvest period is not long enough, meaning they cannot provide enough work to fill the requirements of the program. Although these people can still source seasonal workers through approved labour hire contractors, the services of these companies come with associated costs. This change therefore gives growers more choice and flexibility when making arrangements for their workforce. The ability for growers to enter into these shared arrangements will encourage more producers to participate and allow proactive growers and employers to work collaboratively to meet the needs of their businesses.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is working with our partner countries to develop pools of work-ready applicants to take up opportunities through our Seasonal Worker Program and the Pacific Labour Scheme. At the start of this year, I had the pleasure of hosting the first secretary of the Timor-Leste embassy, Mr Samuel Soares. I invited Mr Soares to Mildura to participate in discussions on the Seasonal Worker Program and the recent changes made to it. He informed me that his embassy has prepared a pool of over 6,000 applicants willing to come to Australia under these programs. Mr Soares assured me that his government is working to streamline its internal processes relating to these programs to welcome more Timorese workers to Australia. Their hard work is demonstrated by the fact that the number of Timorese workers in the Seasonal Worker Program has increased from 754 in 2017 to 1,712 in 2019.

The Timor-Leste government knows that Australia's seasonal workforce programs are beneficial for their workers. However, Mr Soares noted that Timorese workers do incur significant costs as part of their employment. Before accepting their offer of employment, seasonal workers must complete expensive medical tests in Timor-Leste. They are then presented with a schedule of payments that will be deducted from their pay to cover certain costs, including flights and accommodation. Mr Soares estimates that Timorese workers spend close to AS$1 million in associated costs and deductions during their involvement with our seasonal workforce programs. Mr Soares informed me that these costs reduce the value proposition of our programs and are too onerous for some to bear. Investigation needs to occur so these costs can be subsidised in order to increase the value of these programs to potential workers.

During Mr Soares's trip to Mildura, we visited a local table-grape farm—GrapeCo in Merbein South, which is owned and operated by Frank and Adrian Caia. GrapeCo has been through the process to become an approved employer and has been approved to employ 25 Timorese workers. Their status as an approved employer has given them scope and flexibility to expand their workforce as their business grows. I met Romiro Soares, Gilberto Gomes and Martina Freitas on the farm. They had recently arrived at GrapeCo from Timor-Leste and have been enjoying the experience so far. It was extremely valuable to me to hear their stories and to learn that our seasonal workforce programs are delivering for both local growers and workers from our partnering nations.

Based on the feedback I received from numerous sources it is clear that the federal government's seasonal workforce programs are operating effectively and are working to address shortages in the region. That being said, a number of barriers remain, preventing a complete solution to the workforce shortages in our region. As such, this issue will be a key priority for me this year.

The second puzzle piece in resolving workforce shortages is the Horticulture Industry Labour Agreement. The government has introduced this new initiative, which increases access to skilled and semi-skilled workers in the horticultural industry. Through this agreement employers are able to sponsor workers for the temporary skilled shortage visa for 31 approved occupations, and workers will have access to permanent residency pathways under
the skilled employer sponsored regional visa program and the employer nomination scheme visa program. This is a promising initiative which recognises the maturity evolving in the industry, which requires both the skilled and unskilled workforce to continue to grow.

I look forward to working with local producers and relevant stakeholders to ensure success with this Horticulture Industry Labour Agreement, as well as our complementary seasonal workforce programs. My expectation is that our horticulture industry will go from strength to strength in 2020 and beyond, contributing to the goal of a $100 billion agriculture industry by 2030.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien): The time for the grievance debate has expired. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192(b). The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:30