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SITTING DAYS—2012

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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Office holders

Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP
Deputy Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Members of the Speaker's Panel—Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP,
Mr Anthony Crook MP, Mrs Yvette Maree D'ATH MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP,
Ms Sharon Joy Grierson MP, Dr Andrew Keith Leigh MP, Ms Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP,
Mr Geoffrey Raymond Lyons MP, Mr Robert George Mitchell MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP,
Mr Robert James Murray Oakeshott MP, Ms Deborah Mary O'Neill MP,
Ms Amanda Louise Rishworth MP, Mr Michael Stuart Symon MP,
Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakou MP,
Mr Anthony Harold Curties Windsor MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Ed Husic MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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<tr>
<td>Vasta, Ross Xavier</td>
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<td>Moore, WA</td>
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<td>Wilkie, Andrew Damien</td>
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<td>Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Kenneth George</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Tony</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; NWA—The Nationals WA; Ind—Independent; AG—Australian Greens

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright  
Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Grove
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform</em></td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service and Integrity</td>
<td>The Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Deputy Prime Minister)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon David Bradbury MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research</strong></td>
<td>Sensor the Hon Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry and Innovation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation</em></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Stephen Smith MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Defence Materiel</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<td>Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment Participation</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>The Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>The Hon Sid Sidebottom MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Resources and Energy</td>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
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<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Mental Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Health</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Catherine King MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Senator Cory Bernardi</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong> (Leader of The Nationals)</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport</td>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</strong> (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Participation</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis SC</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection</td>
<td>Mr Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
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<td>Senator Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water</strong> (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government</td>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for COAG (Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee)</td>
<td>Senator Mari se Payne</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Shadow Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
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<td>Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Andrew Laming MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services</td>
<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Mitch Fifield</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population</td>
<td>Mr Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Ganbaro MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security</strong></td>
<td>The Hon John Cobb MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
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Tuesday, 20 March 2012

The SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper) took the chair at 14:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Stynes, Mr Jim

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:01): I want to say a few words about the sad loss of Jim Stynes. Jim Stynes is known to Australians as a great footballer, no matter what football code you follow. He was an athlete who drew attention from the crowd and was well known around the country.

Since his days in football he has become even more well known, firstly for his dedication to and work with disadvantaged young people. He had a real passion for working with Australia's youth through his very own Reach Foundation. As a government we have been very pleased to partner with the Reach Foundation to help disadvantaged young Australians. Jim was absolutely passionate about supporting teenagers who had been bullied, were suffering from depression or were at risk of substance abuse. He then took his vision further and focused on the needs of Indigenous teachers and students in Indigenous communities around the country using his own sporting career and his love of football to help inspire them to stay in school and to achieve at school.

Jim Stynes is well known as a Melbourne footballer and a Brownlow medallist. He is someone we are used to seeing on the sporting field and, to use that term of the Irish, we saw him then in a hero's light. But in these last few years what we have seen is courage in a very different context as he remained defiant despite a crippling cancer that was slowly taking his life away. We as a nation have not witnessed all of the private moments of courage of Jim Stynes as he faced this illness. We have had an insight into some of them, but in these final days and weeks I am sure that in his most private moments he continued to show the courage that he had become famous for.

I was in Sydney last Friday to celebrate St Patrick's Day at what is billed as the biggest St Patrick's Day event in the world outside Ireland. Jim Stynes was a great Irish person—a great Irish man. When I spoke about the Irish influence on our larrikin spirit I said that the larrikins that we celebrate are larger than life—sceptical, iconoclastic, egalitarian and defiant. Those words summarise Jim Stynes, particularly the word 'defiant'—defiant in the face of this illness, showing remarkable courage. He will be missed by Australians from many walks of life. He will be missed by the footballing community. He will be particularly missed by the Melbourne Football Club where he not only was a star player but also came back as club president to inspire the club onwards in what have been some difficult days for the Melbourne Football Club and for those who barrack for the Dees. More than anything else, of course, he is going to be missed by his family. Their pain today must be so great. Our very sincere condolences go to his wife, Sam, and to his two children, Matisse and Tiernan. Jim Stynes, we are going to miss you.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): As the Prime Minister has said, Jim Stynes was an Irishman who became an Australian Rules legend. He played 244 consecutive games—a record—he won the Brownlow medal and he was a Victorian of the Year. He was a great footballer, but he was not just a great footballer. Through his Reach Foundation he worked with tens of thousands of troubled youths, and as President of the Melbourne
Football Club he steered that institution through some very troubled times. His long battle with cancer was entirely in character, replete with both strength and stoicism. He was an Irishman who became one of the very great Australians. On behalf of the coalition our deepest sympathies go to Samantha and his two young children, Matisse and Tiernan.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:06): by leave—I move:

That further statements by indulgence in relation to the death of Jim Stynes be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

For the information of members, that debate will be listed for this afternoon in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Carbon Pricing

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. I remind the Prime Minister that every council, sports club, charity and community group across Australia will soon be paying higher bills under her carbon tax. Is the Prime Minister aware that if every one of Australia's 600,000 not-for-profit groups applied for compensation they would receive just $550? How will this help the Ayr Anzac Memorial Club, which faces a carbon tax hit on its power bill of over $16,000 a year and rising?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:08): We are committed to seeing a cleaner energy future and to achieving that in the lowest cost way possible. That is the commitment of our government. The commitment of those on the other side is to impose the biggest possible cost they can think of right across Australian society, including on the very people that the Leader of the Opposition professes concern about. As we have structured our carbon-pricing plan we have structured it to get the reduction in carbon pollution that even the Leader of the Opposition says he supports—at the lowest possible cost. In doing so we have worked to support families, to support working people, to support people with children and to support pensioners with more money in their pockets and more disposable income. So of course that is relevant to how they can support their local sporting clubs.

Mr Christensen: Sixteen thousand dollars!

Ms GILLARD: This plan is in very sharp contrast to the Leader of the Opposition's plan to impose a bill—

Mr Christensen: Sixteen grand!

The SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dawson will remain silent for the balance of the Prime Minister's answer to the question.

Ms GILLARD: a $1,300 bill, on every family. That is the Leader of the Opposition's plan—an effective carbon price of $62 a tonne. That is the Leader of the Opposition's plan. Here on this side of the parliament—

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume her seat. I am listening to the Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Prime Minister was asked how her compensation package would help the Ayr Anzac Memorial Club, which faces a power bill—

Mr Dreyfus: What's your point of order!

The SPEAKER: The honourable member who interjected, the member for Isaacs, will remove himself from the chamber, under the provisions of standing order 94(a).
The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: I called on the honourable member for Sturt. He has the opportunity to make his point of order. I will listen to it. I will rule on it. The Manager of Opposition Business will recommence his point of order and he will be heard in total silence.

Mr Pyne: The question the Prime Minister was asked was how her compensation package would help the Ayr Anzac Memorial Club, which faces a power bill rise of $16,000 a year. She is not attempting to answer that question.

The SPEAKER: It is very early in question time for the Manager of Opposition Business to be sent out.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I do not need the assistance of honourable members on the government front bench. The Prime Minister had barely commenced her answer. I am sure that she is extremely anxious to get to the specifics of the question asked.

Ms GILLARD: I thank the member for Sturt for his point of order and I thank him for his frank statement. Let us not forget it was the opposition that first proposed an emissions trading scheme.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will address the question.

Ms GILLARD: So I thank the member for Sturt for reminding us of the deep hypocrisy at the soul of the Liberal Party about putting a price on carbon.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will pause. I have required other honourable members to withdraw the term 'hypocrisy', and the Prime Minister will withdraw.

Ms GILLARD: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. On this side of the parliament, we will work with sporting clubs, the businesses, Australian workers and every part of Australian society to seize a clean energy future at the lowest possible cost. On that side of the parliament, when they do not stand for a contradiction, they stand for a bill for working families of $1,300 each.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We are going to have an empty chamber.

Mining

Ms O’NEILL (Robertson) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. By getting the mining tax done, how is the government managing the economy in the interests of working people and spreading the benefits of the boom to the many and not just the few?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:12): I thank the member for Robertson for her question. I know that in her part of the world she is concerned about how people will seize economic opportunities in the future. She has an electorate which is home to many small businesses—many businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction. Ms GILLARD: I thank the member for Robertson for her question. I know that in her part of the world she is concerned about how people will seize economic opportunities in the future. She has an electorate which is home to many small businesses—many businesses that want to see a company tax reduction and many small businesses that want to see a company tax reduction.

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result. It is good news for our national economy that our pool of national savings will grow. And it is good news for mining regions—which are experiencing both the benefits and sometimes the burdens that can come with rapid growth—that there will be new funds available to invest in the infrastructure that mining communities need: the roads, the rail and the ports that help to feed the mining boom. On this side of the parliament we are proud that we have worked long and hard to ensure that we have these economic settings for the future of our country and that during this time of resources wealth we are sharing that wealth with the many around the nation—not the few. Ultimately, these big pieces of public policy speak of your values and who you stand for. We on this side of the parliament are clear: we stand for sharing the benefits of the resources boom with the Australian people. On that side of the parliament they stand for the privileged few like Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart. On this side of the parliament we stand with Australian businesses, providing them with a company tax cut. On that side of the parliament they stand for increased company taxation, making it harder for Australian businesses to make their way and to employ their fellow Australians. On this side of the parliament we stand for shaping and embracing the future. On that side of the parliament they stand for pretending that you can stand still and wish the future away. We stand for jobs and prosperity; they stand in the way. (Time expired)

Carbon Pricing

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware that Bradken Foundry employs 500 people in the electorate of Moreton and will face a carbon tax bill of $340,000 each year based on the government’s own figures? How does the Prime Minister expect this company, which has been operating in Australia since 1920, to remain competitive and to continue to invest in Australia while they are paying the world's biggest carbon tax?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:16): I thank the member for his question and I ask him why he is opposed to that business getting a tax cut and why he will exercise his vote in this parliament to deny that business a tax cut. If he is so concerned about these foundry workers, if he is so concerned about a business that has been in operation since 1920, why will he come into this parliament and vote against it getting a tax cut? That is what he is intending to do. Why is he going to exercise his vote in favour of Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart rather than that business?

On the question of carbon pricing, as the member may be aware, although perhaps he has been too caught up in the fear campaign to worry about the fact, there is a program to work with businesses—particularly with foundry businesses—to support them in the transition to a clean energy future. I am sure that the member for Moreton will be working with that business and other businesses in his electorate so that they understand the way in which that assistance is available to them. As the member for Moreton goes about his discussions, he will be able to walk into that business, he will be able to walk into small businesses and he will be able to walk down the business streets in his electorate saying that he stands for a company tax cut for those businesses and that the Leader of the Opposition wants to stop that tax cut ever getting through.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): Mr Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister apologise to the 500 workers at Bradken and to
everyone else whose job is less safe because of the carbon tax for saying before the election, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead,' and breaking that promise within a few weeks to save her political skin?

The SPEAKER: I rule the supplementary question out of order.

Mining

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (14:18): My question is to the Treasurer. By getting the minerals resource rent tax done, how will the government now deliver its benefits throughout the Australian economy?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:19): I thank the member for Capricornia for that very important question. The passage of the MRRT is an historic reform for this parliament which will benefit working Australians and small businesses right around our country. Members of parliament from our side of the House voted for very important measures to spread the benefits of the mining boom right across our country and right into every postcode of our country because we believe in a fair go for all Australians. Those on the other side just support the vested interests of a few.

On this side of the House we have the interests of working people very much at heart. That is why, for example, we voted for the instant asset write-off of $6,500, which will go to 2.7 million small businesses right around the country. Those on the other side voted no. We voted for a huge boost to the superannuation savings of 8.7 million Australian workers, but they voted no on that side of the House. We also voted for a $500 boost to the superannuation savings of those on the lowest incomes in our country, but those on that side of the House voted no. Everybody on this side of the House supported revenue which will go to investment and infrastructure right across our great mining regions, but they on that side of the House voted no.

A few words about the role of the Prime Minister and the role of the Minister for Resources and Energy in this historic reform. The Prime Minister went into bat—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: No. I will determine whether the Treasurer is out of order. The Treasurer is out of order and he will return to the substance of the question.

Mr SWAN: The Prime Minister went into bat for millions of Australian workers, including in the electorate of Capricornia, to have their superannuation boosted.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will be heard in silence for the balance of his 56 seconds.

Mr SWAN: The Prime Minister went into bat for the workers and the small businesses in Capricornia. The Leader of the Opposition went into bat for the mining billionaires. That is what occurred in the parliament. This is a very important and historic reform for our country. It will strengthen our economy, it will strengthen investment and it will strengthen employment, and that is why we on this side of the House so enthusiastically support this major long-term reform for Australia.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (14:22): I ask a supplementary question of the Treasurer. The Treasurer has spoken about the benefits of the mining tax for the economy. What does this mean for local communities in my electorate of Capricornia in Central Queensland and for others represented in this chamber?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:22): This historic reform will benefit 14,200 small
businesses in Capricornia. It will boost the superannuation accounts of 48,800 workers in Capricornia and there will be a significant upgrade to the intersection of the Bruce Highway and Capricorn Highway through this revenue stream. There will be a significant injection of funds into the Peak Downs Highway and it will support the Mackay Ring Road Study. What we see here in Capricornia is what we ought to be doing with the superprofits of very profitable mining companies: investing in the future, supporting employment, supporting small business, supporting the savings for the retirement of our workforce. We can do all of these things through this great historic Labor reform and we are doing them in Capricornia.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:23): I would like to inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Hon. Alan Shatter, the Irish Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, who is here for the St Patrick's Day celebrations. As 30 per cent of Australians have Irish heritage, and more generally because of the welcome we are happy to extend to overseas visitors, I welcome both the minister and also His Excellency the Ambassador of Ireland and their party to the gallery.

Honourable members: Hear, Hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Carbon Pricing

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware that Townsville ratepayers will have to pay an extra $5 million each year because of her carbon tax? I refer the Prime Minister to the comments of the Mayor of Townsville, Les Tyrell: 'Any compensation will fall well short, and councils across Australia may be faced with the dilemma of either pulling back on services or raising rates.' What does the Prime Minister advise the mayor to do: cut services or raise rates?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:24): In the first instance, what I would advise the mayor to do is ask the member for Herbert why he voted against the Townsville Ring Road project, which will be funded through the proceeds of the minerals resource rent tax and why he has voted to deny the people of his electorate up to $160 million in extra infrastructure. That is what I would suggest that the local mayor ask the member—

Mr Ewen Jones: Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The honourable the Prime Minister will resume her seat. Any honourable member is entitled to take a point of order. The member for Herbert is seeking my attention for this purpose, and he is now given the call.

Mr Ewen Jones: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. I do not know what any of this has to do with whether the mayor can raise rates or cut services—one or the other. It is a very simple yes-or-no question. If the Prime Minister cannot answer it she should probably sit down.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member is a new member. I will determine whether the Prime Minister is sat down or not and not the honourable member for Herbert. The Prime Minister will obviously be directly relevant.

Ms GILLARD: Once again, I say to the member for Herbert that he has got a lot of explaining to do. The Townsville Ring Road was voted against by the member for Herbert. On the question of carbon pricing, I would advise the local mayor to get the facts about carbon pricing that are available to local councils. Because as well as voting
against infrastructure in his electorate the member for Herbert is engaged in the Leader of the Opposition's fear campaign, he would of course have avoided any of the facts. The facts are these: the impact on the cost of living has been modelled by Treasury at 0.7 per cent, people will receive in their hands additional money—pension payments, family payments, tax cuts—and any impact on local councils has been factored into those figures. The member for Herbert should get those facts to his local council.

When the member for Herbert is thinking about the impact on his community of the needs of our future economy, which includes a clean energy future in which we are sharing the proceeds of the resources boom, he might also like to talk to the local mayor about how to get to a clean energy future in the cheapest possible way—that is, with the government's plan, not the Leader of the Opposition's plan—and he might want to talk to the local mayor about how good it would be for local economic activity if businesses large and small got a tax cut. That is our plan, and the member for Herbert is opposed to it, alongside the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): Mr Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister apologise to the ratepayers of Townsville and ratepayers all around Australia for saying before the election, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead' and betraying that promise to save her political skin?

The SPEAKER: The supplementary question is ruled out of order.

Regional Australia Institute

Mr CROOK (O'Connor) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. I refer to the Regional Australia Institute and I ask the following question without any disrespect to the institute's current board members. Given Australia's dependence on regional Western Australia and WA's leadership in regional development through the successful Royalties for Regions fund and the unique regional development opportunities it brings, why is there no Western Australian representation on the board? Is there an opportunity for a regional specialist from WA to be appointed to the board?

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (14:29): I thank the honourable member for his question. The Regional Australia Institute is a very important commitment made to the regional Independents by the Prime Minister in the formation of this government and we have delivered on that commitment. The Regional Australia Institute is a public company limited by guarantee and the membership of its board is determined by its board. I am happy to pass on your concern about the need for WA representation.
I should say that the Ministerial Advisory Council on Regional Australia, MACRA, which I have established, has a very broad cross-section of representation, including WA representation. Collene Longmore, CEO at the Shire of Roebourne, is a member of MACRA and we are very keen to ensure all the country is represented. I might say the member for O'Connor is the only member on that side of the House to ask a question in this place on regional development. In all the time I have held this portfolio, I have not had one question from Her Majesty's loyal opposition in relation to regional development. I think the member should pay some regard to who he trusts to better look after the regions when it comes to consideration of issues we bring before the parliament and before the Australian—

The SPEAKER: The honourable member will return to the substance of the question.

Mr CREAN: This is the substance of the question, Mr Speaker. I have been asked about the significance of the Regional Australia Institute.

The SPEAKER: Minister, as Speaker, I will determine whether you are being directly relevant.

Mr CREAN: As is your right, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The minister will become directly relevant or he will resume his seat and I will call the next questioner.

Mr CREAN: So far as the Regional Australia Institute is concerned, this is a fundamental plank in enabling regions to better themselves. I have said many times in this parliament that when we look at the patchwork nature of the economy we see that the regions are the patches. We need to encourage them to diversify their economic base. They cannot do that unless there is proper research and proper foundational fact upon which decisions are taken. The reason we have established this important body is to connect with the very good work already being undertaken in regional universities around the country, to identify the gaps, to advise us and to undertake, through the money we have made available to them, how they can fill those gaps. This is a major initiative for regional Australia which has come about only because this government has implemented it.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:33): I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon members of a parliamentary delegation from New Caledonia led by the President of the Congress of New Caledonia, the Hon. Mr Rock Wamytan. On behalf of the House I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

Honourable members: Hear, Hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mining

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism. Minister, how strong is the current and future investment pipeline in Australia's resources sector and how does the government respond to claims that the introduction of the minerals resource rent tax and the petroleum resource rent tax will affect this investment?

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman—Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism) (14:34): I thank the member for Throsby for the question. In doing so, I acknowledge that Australia is grabbing with both hands the window of opportunity which is the resources boom. It is not just about us accessing record commodity prices; it is also about guaranteeing future investment by regaining the loss of market opportunity which
occurred under the last resources boom during the Howard government. We are also ensuring that the benefits of this resources boom are spread across the Australian economy, especially in sections such as manufacturing, tourism and education, which are challenged by the nature of the Australian dollar at the moment and the pressures the resources sector is placing on the broad Australian economy.

Investment is really about the future. We have $455 billion in either planned or committed capital investments at the moment and $170 billion of that is capital investment in the LNG sector. This is exceptionally important. I notice a certain Queensland flavour to the questions from the opposition this afternoon. Let us talk about the benefits to Queensland of the minerals resource rent tax and the petroleum resource rent tax. Let us talk about the $45 billion new capital investment in the LNG sector in the Gladstone corridor achieved since the introduction of the PRRT. Let us talk about the significant investments from India—the first major investments to the Queensland resources sector in the Galilee Basin by GVK and Adani—a country looking for further opportunities to develop a guaranteed source of supply of commodities, despite what the opposition has said about the introduction of the PRRT and the MRRT. More importantly, this reflects increases in not only investment in Australia in the coking coal, thermal coal and iron ore sectors but in jobs growth. That is what this government is all about—investing in our future and guaranteeing jobs growth.

Since the legislation was introduced we have seen a 37 per cent jump in mining industry employment in Australia. This is not just about direct employment; it is also about the services sector, logistics, maritime services, and cleaning, legal and financial services, all benefitting Australia, especially in Queensland, from this resources boom. It is about time the Leader of the Opposition apologised to the Australian business sector for denying them an across-the-board cut in company taxation, ensuring the opportunity to spread the benefits of the resources boom.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will return to the question. Is the Chief Government Whip seeking to ask a supplementary question?

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** No.

**The SPEAKER:** On that basis, he is not going to be given the call!

**A government member:** Thank God for that ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** And I do not need the minister on my right saying, 'Thank God for that ruling'!

**Carbon Pricing**

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. I refer to the Queensland chamber of commerce survey that found that three out of four respondents believe that the carbon tax will have a negative impact on their business and that more than four out of five Queensland businesses surveyed urged the government to scrap the carbon tax. Will he listen to the small business community of Queensland and urge the Prime Minister to scrap a tax that will push up electricity prices and force some small business owners out of business?

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (Gorton—Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness and Minister for Small Business) (14:38): I thank the honourable member for her question because it is a very valid question when we raise small business in this place and so rare that I get an opportunity or the government gets the opportunity—
Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR: to respond to questions in relation to small business. There is no doubt that, as a result of the scare campaign by the Leader of the Opposition and indeed the coalition generally, there are some concerns in relation to the assertions made by the opposition, but I can assure the small business community that we are responding to the needs of that sector.

We have done that, of course, by announcing a tax cut from 30c in the dollar to 29c in the dollar, effective from 1 July this year. We have also done that by announcing an instant asset tax write-off of up to $6,500 for each asset, which is a fantastic opportunity for small business across the country. Whether you are incorporated or not, you are able to get much better cash flow and a greater capacity to invest early on in the business because of the instant asset tax write-off in this country. Indeed, for those businesses that are not incorporated, because of the increase in the tax threshold from $6,000 to $18,200 there are also other benefits that flow there.

What we will continue to do in this country as a government is represent the interests of small business. We did it recently with the announcement of the small business commissioner. We have done so by providing tax relief and lifting the burden of tax upon businesses in this country by introducing the minerals resource rent tax. We will continue to do that. By way of comparison, we see the Leader of the Opposition be the only Liberal leader in living memory who opposes tax cuts for business in this country.

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. I ask him: now that the government has secured passage of its mining tax, what will the revenue mean for economic infrastructure in mining and regional communities, including of course the Hunter region, and how has the government addressed the challenges involved in delivering this infrastructure funding?

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:40): I thank the member for Hunter for his question and acknowledge that he moved a motion in the House just yesterday recognising the importance of the MRRT, because he understands the need to provide critical infrastructure in capacity constrained mining regions, including in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. That is exactly what the Regional Infrastructure Fund under the MRRT is about: giving back to the communities that are impacted by the consequences that have occurred as a result of the mining boom.

When you travel to many of the mining communities you are struck by the fact that, whilst there is enormous wealth being generated, there are also massive shortages of critical infrastructure, a lack of planning, a lack of foresight and pressure on those communities. It is not just me who says that, because another member of this place said this:

I share the disappointment about how few mining companies contribute to the areas they invade and how little state governments return of the massive royalty incomes they receive to the communities. That was the Leader of the National Party, speaking about the invasion of these companies into these communities—but, of
course, opposing infrastructure development in these communities.

That is what they did when they said no to the MRRT in this place and in the other place last night. They said no to the Scone level crossing study in the member for Hunter's electorate; no to the Gladstone Port Access Road; $50 million, in the electorate of Flynn; no to the Gladstone Port Access Road; $50 million, in the electorate of Flynn; no to the Blacksoil Interchange project, $54 million, in the electorate of Blair; no to the Townsville Ring Road project, $160 million, in Herbert; no to the Peak Downs Highway project, $120 million, in Capricornia; no to the upgrade of the intersection of the Bruce and Capricornia highways, another $40 million; and no to the Mackay Ring Road Study.

Mr Christensen interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: Those opposite just say no, no, no, including to regional infrastructure in their communities.

The SPEAKER: The honourable minister will pause, and during that pause the honourable member for Dawson will remove himself from the chamber under the provisions of standing order 94(a).

The member for Dawson then left the chamber.

Mr ALBANESE: He should be embarrassed by opposing this infrastructure in his own electorate. But it is not just here, because Campbell Newman has been on the Queensland campaign trail promising funds from the minerals resource rent tax for projects such as the Toowoomba Bypass because it does not fit in with his funding model. It is absurd. You cannot have the benefits without having the revenue stream, and that is what this government understands. That is why we have put in place a fair system to spread the benefits of the mining boom to the many—not just their few mates. (Time expired)

Mining

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (14:44): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his statement on ABC Radio National this morning that the $60 billion difference between the original mining tax and the new mining tax is 'grossly inaccurate'. He added, 'We do not do those 10-year estimates.' How does the Treasurer reconcile that spin with this Treasury document which shows a 10-year estimate for the mining tax with a $60 billion hole?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:45): Very simply, the former Secretary to the Treasury has made it very clear that Treasury regards those 10-year estimates as being completely unreliable.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SWAN: They can protest all they like but they know this because it was a statement made in Senate estimates. The member for North Sydney likes to ignore it, but he has a lot of hide to come in here opposing a resource rent tax—absolutely opposing it, lock, stock and barrel—and then to make all sorts of wild and exaggerated claims about revenue streams. The facts are these—

The SPEAKER: There is no need for the honourable member for North Sydney to come to the dispatch box, as I suspect he is taking a point of order on direct relevance—I am intuitive. The Treasurer will become directly relevant.

Mr SWAN: The shadow Treasurer is asserting that we should have a bigger MRRT after coming into the House and opposing its passage. How hypocritical can you get? The fact is that the former Secretary to the Treasury has made it very clear he does not regard those results as being—
The SPEAKER: Order! I require the term 'hypocritical' to be withdrawn as I am endeavouring to bring about a new tone of civility in the chamber. The Treasurer will withdraw that term.

Mr SWAN: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr Hockey interjecting—

Mr Albanese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask the member for North Sydney to withdraw.

Mr Hockey: I withdraw calling him a liar.

The SPEAKER: Do you withdraw unconditionally?

Mr Hockey: I do.

The SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member. He will resume his seat. I am listening to the member for North Sydney but I am not sure on what basis.

Mr Hockey: I seek leave to table the 10-year table from Treasury which the Treasurer, on this morning's radio, said does not exist.

Leave not granted.

Mining

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (14:48): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation. Will the Assistant Treasurer tell the House how getting the minerals resource rent tax done will spread the benefits of the mining boom to all Australian businesses and to working people? What would be the impact of not delivering these benefits?

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (14:48): I thank the member for Kingston for her question. I know she is a very passionate advocate for all members of her local community and that, in particular, she is a passionate advocate for small business. She has 13,500 thriving small businesses in her electorate. That is why she is very pleased to have supported the government's legislation to introduce a mining tax to spread the benefits of the mining boom.

This government is determined to manage the economy in the interests of working people. That is why we have introduced a mining tax, which will ensure that the benefits of the mining boom can be spread to all corners of this country. As a result of this initiative and the support this government has provided both for working people and for small businesses, many millions of small businesses and many millions of working people will soon receive the benefits of the mining boom. Some 2.7 million small businesses will receive the benefit of the instant asset write-off, which will allow them to invest in the productive capacity of their businesses and make sure they can continue to employ people and generate wealth. This is what people in this place should be doing to support small business.

In addition to supporting small business, we have supported the millions of Australian workers who deserve an increase in their superannuation. By increasing the superannuation guarantee charge we can increase the superannuation savings and benefits that Australians retire on. We have also targeted some of these initiatives at low-income earners to ensure that they get the benefits of the mining boom.

Those on the other side have been determined to oppose these measures. They voted against these measures in the House and the Senate and they have foreshadowed that when the company tax cuts come forward they will vote against them as well. It is more than just a little ironic to see those on the other side prepared to come into this place and vote against the interests of small businesses. The member for Swan is prepared to come into this place and vote
against the interests of the 19,200 small businesses in his electorate. The member for Cowan is prepared to come into this place and vote against the interests of the 16,400 small businesses in his electorate. I am asked about the impacts of not spreading the benefits of the mining boom—

Mr Hockey: On a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker: the member wrote the question and now he is answering it, but he is still not being relevant.

The SPEAKER: I have always believed that dorothea dixers are regrettable. The Assistant Treasurer has the call and he will be directly relevant.

Mr BRADBURY: I am asked about the impact of not spreading the benefits of the boom. We know that we can deliver a mining tax to keep the resources sector strong and spread the benefits to all Australians. It was not that long ago that those on the other side said that this tax—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BRADBURY: would kill the goose that lays the golden egg. There are millions of Australian businesses and workers and the only goose they have to worry about—

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Treasurer's time has expired and he will sit down as he no longer has the call. The Assistant Treasurer will be removed from the chamber if he defies the chair and continues to talk after his time has expired. That goes also for others.

Small Business

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (14:53): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his statement yesterday that 'a company tax cut is important for 2.7 million small businesses'. How does the Treasurer reconcile that spin with his own economic note released on Sunday which shows that only 720,000 Australian small businesses are companies and, according to the latest Taxation Office data, less than 300,000 of the 2.7 million small businesses actually pay any company tax?

An opposition member: He's gone into shock!

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:54): I am always shocked by Curly over there, I can tell you that. Mr Speaker, we have—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will remove himself from the chamber under the provisions of standing order 94(a).

The member for Lilley then left the chamber.

Mr Randall interjecting—

The SPEAKER: As will the honourable member for Canning.

The member for Canning then left the chamber.

Small Business

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. What is the government doing to reduce the tax burden on small businesses to make sure they benefit from the mining boom? How will the government accomplish this, and are there any challenges that need to be addressed?

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton—Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness and Minister for Small Business) (14:55): I thank the member for Werriwa for his question and his interest in small business. There are 7,000 small businesses in his electorate and they will all be beneficiaries of the government's decision to provide tax relief in the form of instant asset tax write-offs and company tax cuts. In answer to his question, and this is consistent with the question asked of the Treasurer by the member for Goldstein, I can assure the House and the entire country that the instant
asset tax write-offs will apply to all of the 2.7 million businesses in this country. The fact is that this tax relief will be provided to incorporated and unincorporated businesses. That means that, whether you are a sole proprietor, an independent contractor, a microbusiness or a small business generally, you will be a beneficiary of the instant asset tax write-off of up to $6,500 for each asset. Further to that, there is a $5,000 tax write-off for company vehicles. That is in addition to the tax cut from 30c in the dollar to 29c in the dollar for incorporated companies, and there is further relief for those businesses that are unincorporated in the form of an increase to the tax threshold for individual taxpayers from $6,000 to $18,200. This government understands the need to provide relief for businesses across the country, which is the opposite position from that taken by the Leader of the Opposition and the coalition generally. Such a point of distinction between the government and the opposition is remarkable.

As a result of the legislation being passed in the Senate last night it is effectively the mechanism to distribute the mineral wealth during a mining boom. This is absolutely critical because, as we know, some sectors of our economy are confronting challenges, not the least of which is the high Australian dollar. For that reason we have to respond in kind to provide support and tax relief to those businesses in those sectors of our economy. Whether it be tourism or manufacturing, there is a need to provide support. This initiative provides support in the form of instant asset tax write-offs for small businesses which really do help with cash flow—particularly if you are a start-up business or a microbusiness. Certainly, the company tax cut will provide relief. The government is proud to do this and we do it for businesses. We just wish that Tony Abbott would get out of the way and support tax cuts for companies.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister has been in the House for a number of years and is well aware that the standing orders require him to refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his title.

**Member for Dobell**

Mr **PYNE** (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:59): My question is to the minister for workplace relations. I remind the minister of his statement yesterday in question time that he was in the process of going through the Fair Work Australia report into HSU branch No. 1. How does he reconcile that spin with the fact that he told Sky News at four o'clock that he had read the entire report, or is he expecting people to believe that he read the 146-page report in the 15 minutes between leaving the House and his media appearance?

Mr **SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (14:59): I thank the member for Sturt for his question and I note that in the combined electorates of the party he represents four million people will benefit from an increase in superannuation from the legislation passed last night. Furthermore, I refer the member for Sturt to yesterday's answer. It is a public report. It is available to all. The Senate committee released it on Friday. We all understand in this place that there has been a process underway to investigate allegations into the HSU or certain branches of it. We also understand in this place that that process is independent. We also understand in this place—

Mr **Pyne**: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: he was not asked a question about the HSU investigation or Fair Work Australia. He was asked a question peculiar in his gift to answer, which is how he read a report that
is 146 pages in 15 minutes, or didn't he tell the truth yesterday?

The SPEAKER: Some people read speedily. The minister has the call. He is aware of the standing orders and will be directly relevant.

Mr SHORTEN: I refer the member for Sturt to my answer yesterday. I also refer the members of this House to the process which has been underway. The report has been concluded into one part of the union. That matter has now been referred, at the discretion of the General Manager of Fair Work Australia, to the Australian Government Solicitor's office. We are a government who, despite the calls from those opposite, will not interfere politically with this investigation. I understand why this question has been asked. I understand perfectly well—

The SPEAKER: The minister will be directly relevant.

Mr SHORTEN: The opposition do not want to talk about the benefits of the mining tax and they will do anything—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The call is withdrawn from the minister.

Age Pension

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform. Will the minister update the House on how the government is supporting Australians after a lifetime of work and what will be the impact of withdrawing this support?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (15:02): I thank the member for Makin very much for his question and all the work that he does, particularly for older Australians, in his electorate. This government is determined to make sure it does everything it possibly can to support Australians after a lifetime of work. With the passage of the mining tax through the Senate last night we are going to see millions of Australians benefit from increased superannuation, and that will include many people in the electorate of Makin. I know that they will be very pleased with that decision.

I can also inform the House and the member for Makin that from today Australia's 3.4 million pensioners are also receiving another increase—an increase because of this government's determination to make sure that pensioners are being looked after. It is this government that delivered a historic increase to the pension back in 2009 and we also delivered improvements to the way in which the pension keeps up with the cost of living. That is why since 2009 we have increased the pension for single pensioners on the maximum rate by $154 a fortnight—$154 a fortnight that all of those opposite just wanted to say no to. Since 2009, a couple on the maximum rate have received $156 a fortnight extra because this government is determined to do everything it possibly can for pensioners who need that help now and for those who need increased support through their superannuation.

In addition to those changes, in May and June this year the government will also be providing additional assistance to pensioners. We will make sure that singles get $338 and couples get $510 combined. All of that will be delivered by this government. I was also asked by the member for Makin about any danger to these increases. What we know is that those opposite want to claw back more than $300 out of the pockets of pensioners. That is exactly what this Leader of the Opposition is going to do to them.
The SPEAKER: Is the honourable member for Fraser seeking to ask a supplementary question?

Dr Leigh: No.

The SPEAKER: In that case the honourable member will resume his seat—

Mr Crean: He has a bow tie on. That should change things.

The SPEAKER: Even though the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government reminds me that the honourable member is also wearing a bow tie.

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister confirm that Customs air cargo inspections have dropped from 60 per cent under the former Howard government to only 8.3 per cent today? Will the minister immediately reinstate the $60 million cut from the Customs budget that has contributed to illegal weapons being smuggled across our borders?

The SPEAKER: The question is ruled out of order because it contains argument.

Mining

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (15:06): My question is to the Treasurer or if not the Treasurer then the Assistant Treasurer. Who is the Treasurer over there? Where is he?

The SPEAKER: The honourable member for North Sydney will remove himself from the chamber under the provisions of standing order 94(a). If I see a repetition of such conduct any honourable member doing so will be named.

Mining

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness. Will the minister advise the House what the impact of the government's plan to cut the company tax rate will be on the competitiveness of Australian business?

Mr Pyne: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I note that you have ruled out the question from the member for Stirling. I ask for the purposes of elucidation for future questions, which part of the member's question contained argument? Which phrase was 'argument'?

The SPEAKER: I do not have to explain a decision I make in that respect but if the honourable member wants to come and see me, as he regularly does, he is welcome to do so.

Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker, I also have a point of order. The member for North Sydney may not have heard your ruling asking him to leave the chamber for one hour.

The SPEAKER: Is he still here?

The member for North Sydney then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: On his way out, the honourable member said, 'Larger than life, Mr Speaker' and I could not disagree. The chair is indebted to you for your assistance. The member for Fraser will resume his seat.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, on a point of order, I am more than happy to come and see you about this matter and discuss it in more detail but I think the entire House needs to know how a question that says, 'Will the minister immediately reinstate the $60 million cut to the Customs budget that has contributed to illegal weapons being smuggled across our borders?' contains any argument.

The SPEAKER: If you look at the words 'has contributed to' that is where the argument is. But feel free to come and see
me. The honourable member for Fraser is given the call.

Dr LEIGH: Would it assist the House if I began the question again, Mr Speaker?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Now that we have been able to admire the honourable member's splendid attire, he will recommence his question.

Mr Jenkins: It's my tie!

Dr LEIGH: I am indebted to your predecessor in this regard, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness. Will the minister advise the House what impact the government's plan to cut the company tax rate would have on the competitiveness of Australian businesses? What would be the consequence of blocking this measure or in fact of increasing the company tax rate?

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I have a point of order. The question was hypothetical and therefore should be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will listen to the honourable member ask the question again.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And the honourable member will be heard in total silence.

Dr LEIGH: Will the minister advise the House what impact the government's plan to cut the company tax rate would have on the competitiveness of Australian businesses? What would be the consequence of blocking this measure or in fact increasing the company tax rate?

The SPEAKER: The question is in order. I call the honourable the minister.

Dr EMERSON (Rankin—Minister for Trade and Competitiveness) (15:11): Thank goodness for that. The whole purpose of implementing the minerals resource rent tax is to finance a small business tax break, a company tax rate reduction, investment in infrastructure and boosting the superannuation of 8.4 million working people. The member for Fraser asks the question: What is the impact on competitiveness of introducing the MRRT in order to cut the company tax rate? The purpose of it is to ensure that those businesses that are not in the mining industry fast lane can be as competitive as possible. In order to make them competitive, to support their desire to be competitive, we need to, where we can, implement a competitive company income tax rate to increase the possibility of retained earnings because, out of those retained earnings, you can then get the productive investment that they are seeking to improve their overall competitiveness. This is true for all incorporated entities in Australia.

The member for Goldstein asked a question today about the impact of this measure on small businesses. And the truth is he is clueless. We have a small business tax break that applies to each and every small business in this country—2.7 million small businesses employing almost five million people—which has the same purpose, to encourage investment in productivity-increasing activities. That is the whole purpose of the MRRT—to increase the competitiveness of these businesses.

On this issue of supporting company tax reform, the former member for Higgins said, 'We would welcome the bipartisan support of the opposition if it could rise to the challenge of supporting national interest reform.' They are true words; they should be supported. The fact is that this Leader of the Opposition wants to increase taxes. He wants to increase the company tax rate, thwart these tax cut reductions for small business and for all business. I say to the Leader of the
Opposition: What is wrong with you? You are not even good at being Liberal.

Ms Gillard: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:13): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Report No. 27 of 2011-12

The SPEAKER (15:14): I present the Auditor-General's Audit report No. 27 of 2011-12 entitled Performance audit: Establishment, implementation and administration of the bike paths component of the local jobs stream of the Jobs Fund.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Queensland Mining Industry: Carbon Pricing

The SPEAKER (15:15): I have received letters from the honourable the Leader of the Nationals and the honourable member for Blair proposing that definite matters of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion today. As required by standing order 46, I have selected the matter which, in my opinion, is the most urgent and important; that is, that proposed by the honourable the Leader of the Nationals, namely:

The massive impact of the carbon tax on mining and mineral processing communities in Queensland.

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

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

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (15:16): Mr Speaker, as a fellow Queenslander, you would realise the importance of this particular matter, especially at this time of the Queensland electoral cycle. During question time today, we heard again and again about the impact of Labor's carbon tax on Australians—on Australians in business, on Australians at play, on Australians at home. Everywhere, this pervasive tax is going to impact upon their lives.

The passage of the carbon tax through the House of Representatives has certainly been one of the most bizarre events in Australian political history. A government bereft of legitimacy, cobbled together out of expediency and self-interest, without a mandate, imposed the will of a very few on the entire nation. After that we saw the government congratulating itself for imposing this tax on the businesses and families of Australia. Today again we see them congratulating themselves on imposing upon Australia's great mining industry another round of new taxes. Labor seemingly only take pleasure out of new taxes, out of inflicting pain. They have done it at least 20 times since elected to office—20 new taxes imposed upon the Australian economy. They have done all this, congratulating themselves with great hubris. As the carbon tax went through the Australian parliament we even saw the Prime Minister hugging the member for Griffith. How bizarre was this tax that brought those two people together in a rare display of harmony?
There was no thought in all this rejoicing about the deception and betrayal of the Australian people through this legislation. There was not a sombre thought for the mums and dads in living rooms across the country who are worried about the impact of this extra cost on everything they are going to buy. There was no concern demonstrated for the Australian jobs that were placed in real jeopardy—thousands of Australian jobs—because this tax makes Australian industry so much less competitive. There was no concern about the risk to jobs in Queensland, such as jobs in the mining industry—which have now been put at even greater risk as a result of the imposition of the mining tax—along with jobs in the minerals processing sector, jobs in the foundries, as we heard in answer to a question in question time today, jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry and jobs in agriculture. These are the economic pillars of Queensland, and they are all under assault by this government's carbon tax and by its lack of concern about the people who work in those industries and the important and vital role they play in building a strong Queensland and a strong Australia.

This was no ordinary carbon tax. This was no carbon tax in keeping with things happening in the rest of the world. This is by far the world's biggest carbon tax. There is nothing in its league anywhere else in the world. The Australian carbon tax will raise more money in its first three months than the Europeans have raised since they started their tax six years ago. Australia is responsible for about 1.3 per cent of global emissions and the Europeans for 14 per cent. Yet our tax, in just three months, will collect as much money as the Europeans have collected in six years. It will keep going up and up and up from then on. The European price keeps going down and down and down. The legislation which this government is boasting about, which it so gleefully celebrated in this place and in the other chamber just a few months ago, guarantees that the Australian carbon price will go up, up, up, even though the global price is going down, down, down. That indicates this government's comprehension of economics and the impact that has on ordinary Australians.

The people resent the unseemly hooting, hollering and high fives in the House of Representatives at that time. It just shows how out of touch Labor really is with the households of Australia. On Saturday the people of Queensland will have an opportunity to pass judgment, and they can do it quietly at the ballot box. I have got no doubt that they will be sending a message of judgment not just to the Queensland government—which have been willing supporters of this tax, in spite of the fact that they know something of its impact on the Australian economy—but also to Labor federally. They do not want the carbon tax any more than the people of New South Wales want this tax. When there is retribution passed on the government in Queensland, that will be a message not just to Labor and its failures in that state but to the federal government that the people of Queensland do not want this tax.

There is more. Today, electricity generators exposed the government's carbon tax attempts to gouge funds to prop up this year's budget, lumping industries and consumers with upfront costs. Matthew Warren at the Energy Supply Association belled the cat when he said:

… industry is deeply concerned that the design features of the carbon pricing mechanism are being influenced by Budget revenue considerations. They should not be.

He went on to say:

… as the carbon price is a mechanism to reduce emissions – not raise revenue – its design should
not be compromised by revenue considerations. It would be especially unfortunate if such considerations imposed extra costs on the energy industry and ultimately energy consumers.

But that is exactly what this government is proposing to do. They want to fill up some of their budget black hole by forcing the electricity industry to buy carbon permits early, in 2012-13. They want this money to be brought forward so that they can deliver a wafer-thin budget surplus, theoretically, in just a couple of months time. So there will be more than just the 10 per cent hike for families in the first year of the tax; it will be 10 per cent plus, because the government are insisting that the electricity industry buy some of these permits early.

Let us also have a bit of a look at what is going to happen in Queensland. It is perhaps a little curious that the Queensland Competition Authority, which sets electricity price increases in the state, will release its next recommendations on 30 March, after the Queensland election. I wonder whether Anna Bligh chose her election date so that she would not have to deal with the news associated with what the Queensland Competition Authority is going to say about electricity prices. Following the experience of New South Wales, we can expect increases of 10 per cent hike for families in the first year of the tax—early, but it will be more than that, as a result of the impact of the carbon tax and the fact that the federal government is bringing forward their obligations.

Once upon a time Queensland boasted about its low-cost and abundant electricity. It was one of the major advantages that Queensland had in attracting industry from around the world—low-cost and abundant electricity. But, under Labor, electricity prices in Queensland have soared by almost 60 per cent in the last five years. That is only a taste of what we are going to get in the future as the carbon tax starts to bite. One of Queensland's natural advantages will be destroyed by a Labor government determined to tax the coal industry, electricity generation industry and then, of course, every element of transport, consumption and manufacturing in the state. You do not need to be a mathematical genius to be able to figure out what this government is up to. It is desperate to deliver a wafer-thin budget surplus in a few months time, and it has not got the money.

Labor's carbon tax is a job killer. It is affecting every community and causing grave concern across the nation. Families will still be reaping the cost that it imposes on Australian households way after the memories of compensation have gone. Incidentally, the compensation will be made this financial year—early, so that it also does not have an impact on next year's budget figures. The artificial, dodgy surplus that Labor is seeking to conspire has simply been dreamed up with absolutely no real benefit whatsoever.

This tax will have a particular impact on Queenslanders. We already know that local government has said that the carbon tax will add around $200 million to the cost of garbage disposal every year. Electricity bills will increase the cost of education by $57 a student and the costs for hospitals will increase by $100 million a year. Queensland Rail reports that the carbon tax will add $5 million to its costs and so add to rail fares. Of course, grocery costs will be up by five per cent. The 7-Eleven stores say that it will wipe five per cent off their gross profits. Westfield are already including a carbon or greenhouse gas emission charge in their leases. These are costs that Queenslanders will have to bear. So it is not just the minerals and the minerals processing sector that will suffer, although we have heard the leaders of the aluminium industry, in particular, say that Queensland will have the
most taxed aluminium industry in the world. We have heard them talk about their inability to compete with industries in other parts of the world because of the ever-present and increasing cost that Labor is determined to impose upon them.

But it is not just these industries alone which will be affected. The Queensland tourism industry will pay a hefty toll. It has been tough enough for people to make a go of tourism in Australia over recent times. But Labor's carbon tax will be felt particularly hard by the Australian tourism industry. If someone wants to have a holiday in Cairns, the Gold Coast, the Whitsundays or the Sunshine Coast, they will have to pay the carbon tax on their air fares, their bus fares and their train fares. Labor will be imposing this tax on the domestic tourism industry. However, if you choose to have your holiday in Bali, Phuket, Fiji or Honolulu, you will not have to pay the carbon tax, even though, obviously, a trip to Bali or Honolulu will have a much higher carbon footprint than a trip to Cairns or the Gold Coast. So this carbon tax is just that—a tax. It has nothing to do with climate reform, let alone being climate friendly; it is just another Labor Party tax.

What about the agriculture sector? It is another area that is a pillar of the Queensland economy. Let us look at abattoirs. They say that they will have an increased cost of $60 million, which will be required for investment in order to meet the carbon tax requirements. Australia's biggest abattoir at Dinmore will be slugged $3.3 million a year when the carbon tax is introduced. There was a report in the paper at the beginning of the year which said that abattoirs around Australia, but particularly in Queensland, were likely to close for several weeks a year so that they can stay under the 25,000-tonne carbon tax trigger. Is it any wonder that the people of Dinmore, around Ipswich, are starting to question why they have been voting Labor all these years? Is it any wonder that they are wondering why the party that was supposed to be for the workers is now so much against the workers and is putting their jobs at risk?

Labor keep telling us that we do not have to worry about any of this because only the 500 biggest companies are going to pay. Labor will never give us a list of these 500 companies. Where are they? Who are they? That is not information that the Labor Party are prepared to share with the Australian people. But the facts are that that statement is simply untrue. At least 100,000 companies are going to pay higher fuel taxes. Every business in Australia will have higher costs as a result of the impacts of this tax being passed on. This is going to have a particular impact on regional communities, where most of the mines exist and the mineral processing is actually occurring. But that does not worry the Labor government. In fact, it is of even less concern to the Greens. The Greens' Senator Sarah Hanson-Young dismissed all the people who are going to lose their jobs in regional communities. She said:

… small towns that are based on fossil fuels probably won't exist.

That is the amount of sympathy they get from the Greens, and we all know that the Greens run this agenda and that Labor is just trotting along. It does not worry her that there will be no coalmining towns, no mineral processing, no jobs and no royalties to pay for the environmental programs and other things that the Greens want so much. She does not care. As we know, the Greens rule in this country and Labor simply follows.

An outcry will ring out across Queensland on Saturday. Take a whiff of the winds of change. Labor is simply on the nose. History will damn this generation of Labor
governments, both federal and state, and there will be a special place in the annals for this Prime Minister, who is condemned by her own words. The people will savour their day of judgment. *(Time expired)*

**Dr Emerson** (Rankin—Minister for Trade and Competitiveness) *(15:31)*: On issues of the impact of carbon pricing or the MRRT on business investment decisions, listen not to what the coalition says but look at what investors are doing. The projections in the MYEFO, the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, suggest that the pipeline of resources investment in Australia is continuing to grow since the budget to more than $450 billion. It says:

Following growth of 34 per cent in resources investment in 2010-11, resources companies expect to increase their capital expenditure by a further 74 per cent in 2011-12 …

Indeed, the Reserve Bank's most recent statement on monetary policy predicts that investment, as a share of GDP, will hit its highest level in half a century. That is why I say: listen not to what the coalition says in its fear campaign but look where investors are putting their dollars.

Modelling has been done on the impact on the economy of Queensland of putting a price on carbon. That modelling suggests the following: the growth of the Queensland economy is expected to be strong, with average annual gross state product growth, in real terms, of 3.5 per cent per annum to 2019-20. That is Queensland Treasury modelling and it indicates very strong growth. In fact, the modelling report goes on to say:

… average annual growth in Queensland’s real GSP to 2019-20 will be 3.5 per cent both with and without carbon pricing …

This is the crucial point: there will be strong growth of 3½ per cent with or without carbon pricing. Yet we have the Leader of the Nationals coming into the parliament seeking to convey a belief, an impression, that the carbon price is going to have an adverse effect—some sort of devastating effect—on our mineral and mineral-processing industries in Queensland. Indeed, the same report from Queensland Treasury says:

… employment is forecast to grow at 2.0 per cent per annum both with and without carbon pricing, with an extra 474,000 jobs expected over the period to 2019-20 …

Those are the dispassionate forecasts done by the Queensland Treasury, but we hear not a word of that from the Leader of the Nationals and would-be Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.

Very soon after the announcement by the Gillard government of the carbon-pricing mechanism, Peabody, the largest coalmining company in the world, made a $4½ billion bid for Macarthur Coal. That is a major investor voting with its wallet. Indeed, I have a list here of major mining projects that have been approved and announced, including: BHP Billiton's Caval Ridge Mine project development; BHP Billiton again with the Goonyella to Abbot Point rail line, employing 2,000 people directly; QR National's Wiggins Island rail project, employing 3,000 people directly and indirectly. Origin Energy, ConocoPhilips and Sinopec—this is coal seam gas, which obviously the coalition is opposed to both up in Queensland and here federally, as they never stop attacking the coal seam gas industry—are employing 6,000 people in construction and 1,000 people in operations. Xstrata has the Lady Loretta zinc construction project. BHP Billiton is the lead company for the Bowen Basin metallurgical coal project—that is a $5 billion investment. And there is the Lake Vermont expansion of the coal-handling and preparation plant near Dysart in Central Queensland. Those are just
a few of the examples of the projects that are going ahead under the carbon price that has been announced by the Gillard government.

The problem is that the coalition is speaking out of both sides of its mouth. When the Leader of the Nationals is up in regional Queensland he is very fond of attacking the mining industry. At the beginning of the matter of public importance he said the mining and processing industries are the 'economic pillars of Queensland'. That is what he says when he comes to Canberra, but when he is up in Queensland he says:

I share the disappointment about how few mining companies contribute to the areas they invade … So we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Queensland accusing mining companies of invading areas, yet when he comes to Canberra he says they are the pillars of the economy of Queensland. That is the sort of approach we get from the coalition: saying one thing to one audience and another thing to another audience.

It is not just mining companies who are voting with their wallets; it is members of the opposition who are voting with their wallets. I will go through the members of the coalition who have invested and continue to invest their money in mining companies: the member for Goldstein, the member for Durack, the member for Maranoa, the member for Canning—

Mr Ian Macfarlane: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very reluctant to rise to my feet to call a point of order on relevance, but I remind the minister that the MPI—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Groom will resume his seat. This is a matter of public importance. All these debates are far ranging. The MPI refers to the 'massive impact of the carbon tax on mining and mineral processing'. The member for Groom needs to be aware that when you offer up an MPI that allows—a bit like a question—wriggle room people are going to take it. The minister has the call.

Dr Emerson: The point I am making is that in one breath coalition MPs are saying that putting a price on carbon will devastate the mining industry in Queensland and in Australia. That is what they say, but what do they do? They actually lodged a vote of confidence in the future of the mining industry of Queensland and Australia through their wallets, just like the major mining companies such as Peabody, Rio Tinto, BHP and Xstrata are doing. That is why the member for Ryan, the member for Bennelong and the member for McPherson have mining shares. I have no problem with that. It is just that they should not be going around saying that the mining industry faces a bleak future. Then there are the members for Moore, Bradfield, Dickson, Grey, Swan, Fadden and Brisbane. In fact, two MPs—the member for Stirling and the member for Flynn—acquired their shares after the implementation of a price on carbon.

So, when it comes to their wallets, when it is in their kick, when it really comes down to the basic motivations of MPs, they are in there investing in the future of mining in Australia. I do not have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is when they come into this chamber and say, 'Mining is going to be wiped out.' The member for Flynn is here and I think he might be one of these investors. Maybe he could tell us later. Yes, I see that he is. He showed his vote of confidence by investing after the implementation of this measure.

So let us not have in this chamber—I know we cannot use the word 'hypocrisy', so I will not—the double standards of people coming in here and pretending they have great concern for the future of the mining
industry when in fact they do not. Indeed, the implementation of the mining tax, the MRRT, which is designed to share the benefits to the very communities to which the Leader of the Nationals has referred, could and would do that. In fact, $5.6 billion of the $6 billion in the Regional Infrastructure Fund is being funded by the minerals resource rent tax, and to what purposes is this infrastructure fund being put in Queensland alone? The Blacksoil Interchange project, with up to $54 million in the electorate of Blair, the Townsville Ring Road project, with up to $160 million in the seat of Herbert, and the Peak Downs Highway project, with $120 million in the seat of Capricornia. The member for Capricornia supports it and supports the raising of the revenue that would fund this investment, but it is opposed by the Leader of the National Party and would-be Deputy Prime Minister.

In addition there is the upgrade of the intersection of the Bruce and Capricornia highways for up to $40 million. Again, it is strongly supported by the member for Capricornia and strongly opposed by the Leader of the Nationals because the Leader of the Nationals opposes the minerals resource rent tax. He wants to give that money back to Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart because he, along with the Leader of the Opposition, believes that Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart pay too much tax and that these communities do not deserve the benefits of this infrastructure investment.

The Mackay Ring Road study of up to $10 million is also being funded out of this infrastructure fund which is overwhelmingly being funded by the minerals resource rent tax. So where is the true allegiance of members of the coalition? It is not with the Queensland economy and not with the mining communities of Queensland but with Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart, because the opposition believes they are paying too much tax.

I never thought I would see the day when coalition MPs came in here and voted against a reduction in company tax and against a small business tax break allowing small businesses to write off instantly any and all assets valued at up to $6,500. I see the member for Higgins and I wonder if she would agree with her predecessor, who said that when it comes to cutting the company tax rate this is a reform that is in the national interest. He called upon Labor to support that reform in the national interest. When the coalition reduced the company tax rate, funded by some base-broadening measures, the former member for Higgins said that it was incumbent upon the Labor opposition to support these measures in the national interest. And what did Labor do? We supported them in the national interest. We supported the implementation of the business tax reform measures that were the outcome of the Ralph review. We had the former member for Higgins saying that we must because there was an obligation on oppositions to vote in the national interest.

They were the good old days as far as opposition parties voting in the national interest are concerned, because this political party, the coalition, will not vote in favour of a reduction in company tax which would support mining communities and would give a tax break to all of the 2.7 million small businesses in Australia—all of the contractors, not just the 30 per cent who are companies.

We had the embarrassment of the member for Goldstein coming in here and saying, 'But the company tax rate only applies to incorporated entities, which is only 30 per cent of them, so the rest of the small business community gets nothing.' He must be the only guy in Australia who does not
understand the $6,500 instant asset write-off. In a debate late last week, when we were discussing the instant asset write-off, the member for Goldstein made exactly the same point. Learn nothing, forget nothing. It was exactly the same point. I said—predictably—in response that, of course, all small businesses get the benefit of the instant asset write-off. And he said to me, unbelievably, 'But you've got to spend $22,000 to get the $6,500 write-off.' I explained to him that you do not; you spend $6,500 or less to get the $6,500 write-off. He thought you had to spend three times that amount. He multiplied something by 30 per cent—one over 0.3—and got this figure in his head. I explained all this. Learn nothing, forget nothing. He comes into the parliament and asks the same question.

The reason he is not voting for it is that he does not understand it. The reason the Leader of the Opposition is not voting for it is that he wants to increase tax to pay for his paid parental leave scheme with a great big new tax on everything you buy. He wants to increase tax by 1½ percentage points. The true high-taxing champions in Australia are the Liberal Party. If you want to look for tax relief, if you want to look for incentive and if you want to look for small business support, then always look to the Australian Labor Party.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (15:45): I think the standout in the performance of the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness just then was that he could barely bring himself to mention the carbon tax. But he raised a question: if you want to look for tax relief, if you want to look for incentive and if you want to look for small business support, then always look to the Australian Labor Party.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: The minister raises the issue of Treasury. If we are to rely on Treasury figures, they originally predicted a budget deficit in the current year of $10 billion. I think the latest estimate is $50 billion. So while investment in Australia remained flat between 2008 and 2011—which are the years of the Labor government—in Africa we saw a rise of 26 per cent, in Canada we saw a rise of 31 per cent, in South America we saw a rise of 54 per cent and in the rest of the world we saw a rise of 78 per cent. I guess that says that the investment community is putting its money where it thinks it is going to get the return. Unfortunately, we are missing out on the increase.

This MPI is about the impact of the carbon tax on mining and resources communities. This carbon tax is an absolute assault on those communities. We are seeing that this government is always about putting in place new taxes that affect jobs and investment in Australia. Just yesterday we saw the implementation of the MRRT—the minerals resource rent tax—which will disadvantage Australian miners in comparison with the rest of the world and drive investment overseas. That, coupled with the carbon tax, is going to raise an enormous number of issues, particularly in regional Queensland. It is not just an issue of jobs in Mount Isa as a result of the carbon tax that is going to be imposed on Xstrata's smelter there. It is not just about jobs in...
Townsville, where a carbon tax is going to be invoked on the nickel refinery. It is about the impact of the carbon tax on one of the most decentralised states in Australia where people live outside the capital cities and rely on electricity that is being transmitted long distances on wires and generated in coal fired power stations, which are going to face a huge hit as a result of this tax.

I heard the Leader of the Nationals highlighting the fact that the government is manipulating the rules for forced purchase of carbon credits. Not only are they doing that and forcing electricity supply companies to buy these credits in advance but also they are imposing a floor in the market that holds the price above the international price. The international price is currently less than $10 per tonne of carbon, and that is in the European market. This government is going to make sure that every regional Queenslander pays more for their electricity by making the minimum carbon price even higher than that by at least $5—and probably by about $8, based on current projections of the carbon price in Europe—putting an unrealistic floor of $15 in the market. Every Queenslander will pay more for their electricity as a result of this and regional Queenslanders will pay even more than those Queenslanders who live in capital cities.

We need to be clear on one thing in relation to this carbon tax. This is the carbon tax that the Prime Minister of Australia promised the electorate there would not be under a government she led. This is the carbon tax. But rest assured of one thing: when Queenslanders this weekend get their opportunity to vote on whether or not a Labor government can impose a carbon tax, wait and see what happens. Just as they did in New South Wales and just as they did in Victoria, the people of Queensland are going to reject this carbon tax at this ballot and at the next one—the federal one.

Queenslanders will understand that this carbon tax is bad for them. It is bad for their job opportunities, it is bad for their cost of living, it is bad for the cost of educating their children, it is bad for the prospects of their children and it is so full of anomalies. If a person in Brisbane decides to catch a bus to work, they pay the carbon tax, but if they decide to drive themselves—one person in a car—they do not pay the carbon tax. People in Queensland are far more practical than that. They do not want to see their jobs disappear. They do not want to see their coal industry constantly put under attack by the Gillard government. They want a future. They do not need another tax. They do not understand why Australians are being asked to pay a tax that is far higher than any tax anywhere else in the world and covering far more of the economy than any tax anywhere else in the world, and they do not understand why they have to pay a tax when much of the rest of the world does not. We are not seeing a carbon tax in the United States of America, we are not seeing a carbon tax in Canada, we are not seeing a carbon tax in South America, we are not seeing a carbon tax in China, we are not seeing a carbon tax in Japan, we are not seeing a carbon tax in Korea, we are not seeing a carbon tax in India, we are not seeing a carbon tax in Africa and we are not seeing a carbon tax in the Middle East. Yet those who sit opposite think that this is going to make a huge difference.

What will make a huge difference to climate in the world is a combined action right around the world. All this carbon tax will do is destroy jobs in Queensland. All it will do is reduce the competitiveness of one of the biggest industries in Queensland, the coal-mining industry. All this tax will do is make it more expensive for Queenslanders to live. I think it is fair to say that people in Queensland have had enough. They want the
Queenslanders do not want to see industries that sustain regional Queensland destroyed by this tax. The Greens seems to think it is fair enough that small towns like Duaringa and Capella just disappear off the face of the earth because we should not have a coal industry—because we have a carbon tax. The Labor Party support that because they use the Greens every day to get legislation through. If that is the position of the Labor Party and the Greens then I think Queenslanders will seek retribution on the basis of that.

I grew up in regional Queensland. I know how hard those people work. They do not want to see their life savings, their future and the future of their children’s jobs taken away by this tax. They want to see industries that get out there and have a go and succeed, because they understand that that is where the jobs come from. They understand that you have to be internationally competitive if you are going to have jobs. They will not be internationally competitive if they have a carbon tax and a mining tax. Who knows, next year the Labor Party will have to think up another tax—because every year they show that they are the spend, waste and tax party of this parliament.

People in Queensland will not accept that. They want to see industries prosper. They want to see jobs for their children. They want to have a cost of living that is compatible with the rest of the world. They do not want to be paying more for their electricity or paying more for their goods that are transported in trucks across the vast state of Queensland, simply because the Labor Party had to do a dirty deal with the green movement to maintain power.

Dr Emerson: You negotiated a carbon price!

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: I did not negotiate a carbon price, I negotiated a carbon trading scheme, locked in with the rest of the world. This starts off as a tax. It then reverts to a scheme with a false floor in its price. This weekend the people of Queensland, for the first time—because the Prime Minister misled them by saying she would not have a carbon tax under a government she led—will have a chance to vote on a carbon tax. I am looking forward to the result.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (15:55): Two things make the MPI introduced by the member for Wide Bay rather extraordinary. The first is that they made it Queensland specific. Why would they do that, Madam Deputy Speaker? Is it because they do not care about the mining industry in New South Wales? Is it because they do not care about the mining industry in WA or South Australia? I hope not. I will let them speak for themselves, but I think we secured the answer through the contributions of both the member for Wide Bay and the member for Groom.

This MPI is not about concern for the mining industry or the minerals processing industries, it is about Saturday's Queensland election. How sad it is that they are putting their own political interests ahead of the interests of the mining sector and all those who rely upon it. I will say a startling thing: I think the Labor Party will lose in Queensland on Saturday. That is more than likely, after so many years in office, as a natural political cycle. But how sad it is that the Leader of the Opposition and all of his senior shadow ministers have this week spent so much time trying to grab some ownership of that
victory. They have nothing to say down here whatsoever. In question time they fail to ask any significant questions on policy. It is all about smear and innuendo and trying to trip someone up about an incident or two. There are never any health questions, never any real transport questions and never any real MRRT questions. It is carbon, carbon, carbon—because they think it is a winner. How sad it is that the only thing they have going for them, the only hope Tony Abbott has to shore up his position in the party room, is to grab hold of what might be an imminent victory in the Queensland election. It is very sad, but it says something about the standards on the other side.

The second thing that makes the MPI extraordinary is that it is about carbon and its impact on the mining industry and comes just a day after the Senate finally passed the MRRT, the mining tax. Would you not think that the day after the passage into law of a new mining tax that they have been so critical of this MPI might have been about the MRRT? No. It is their view that carbon is a winner for them. And they are going to stick to carbon. It leaves unanswered questions about what they really think of the MRRT and whether they are serious about repealing it and giving up all the tax and superannuation benefits that will flow to Australians as a result. We might be seeing a development here: the subtle shift away from their opposition to the MRRT and a focus back on what they think is a sure winner—that is the carbon price.

I heard some of them on the other side criticising the minister for talking as much about the MRRT as about carbon, but you cannot talk about one without talking about the other. This is resources policy and you cannot pick it apart. These things all go together. The reality is—and I represent a mining community—we have an economy with multiple speeds both throughout regions and throughout sectors. This combination of policies will not only get the taxation balance right, it will bring some form of equilibrium back to our economy. It will make sure, for example, that those who have waste as a result of their business, including carbon waste, pay for the cost of production—so the playing field will be levelled. The mining tax will make sure that those who exploit the resources owned by the Australian community pay the true taxation cost involved and are not taking economic rent.

Those things will have an effect on the speed of the mining sector. But guess what? My people want the mining sector to slow down. So do those in non-mining sectors who cannot find the employees they need to fill their available positions. In the Hunter Valley our unemployment rate is around three per cent, yet businesses in the services sector and the manufacturing sector cannot find the people they need to fill jobs. That of course is having an inflationary effect.

The people in my community are also concerned about air and water quality. They are worried about the car parks, the highways they encounter every day, housing prices, rental prices and the fact that they cannot get childcare places. All of these things flow from an overheated regional economy. Many on the other side represent communities in the slow lane. They have small businesses that are struggling, yet they come in here to deny this very important opportunity to put back into equilibrium some of the problems we have between sectors and to ensure that the great wealth that is flowing from the minerals industry and the mining sector is evenly shared by all Australians. That is a basic proposition that, surely, no-one on that side can reject.

Aluminium has been mentioned. I will talk about aluminium, because you could argue that, in many ways, it is part of the
minerals-processing industry. The aluminium industry around the world is in trouble. Why is it in trouble? Because it got itself into a position of oversupply and consequently prices have been falling. It is worse here in Australia because the Australian dollar is so high and because input costs are high as well. People in this country, including those who sit opposite, are blaming the carbon price for some job losses in the aluminium sector, notwithstanding the fact that we do not have a carbon price yet. The most extraordinary thing I have heard is that our carbon price proposals here are causing aluminium smelter closures elsewhere around the globe. Of course they are not; it is common sense that they are not. I do not know how those opposite can put out this rubbish without any form of embarrassment, although I am sure there are some over there—some of them might be looking at me right now—who are embarrassed about some of the arguments that are being run by the people who sit on the opposition front bench and who obviously do not have a clue. By the way, those of them who are from New South Wales might pick up the phone to their state counterparts, the New South Wales government, and say: 'Give Hydro aluminium in the Hunter a power contract.' That is the way they could make a contribution to helping the aluminium industry in this country. Certainty, with a fairly priced power contract, has the potential to save 350 jobs in my electorate. It is about time some on that side thought about picking up the phone to Barry O'Farrell to say: 'Please give Hydro aluminium in Kurri Kurri a power contract.' We cannot do much about the Australian dollar and we cannot do much about the global price of aluminium, but we can certainly do something about a power contract for Hydro aluminium.

There have been lots of stories about job losses in the mining industry. I have a list of all the recent proposed investments just in Queensland—I will not read them out. Since we announced and passed the carbon price and since we first announced the MRRT mining investment in Queensland has been booming, which is counter to everything those on the other side have been saying. I loved seeing, the day after the Prime Minister announced the detail of our carbon price, Tony Abbott getting his fluoro vest and hard hat straight on and running to Peabody's Wambo mine in my electorate. He took Barnaby Joyce with him, because the Leader of the Opposition has to be a bit statesmanlike: he can let Senator Joyce say some things he feels he cannot say—and they certainly said some things that day about the future of the mining industry in the Hunter. But also on that day Peabody was involved in a $4.5 billion power play. Such was its concern about the coming carbon price and its impact on the mining industry, particularly on the mining industry in the Hunter.

Anyone outside this place listening to this debate this afternoon, particularly if they are not from Queensland, should be saying: 'Why aren't they talking about my state? Why aren't they talking about mining in New South Wales? Why aren't they talking about it in Western Australia and South Australia? Why would they be talking only about Queensland?' As I said, those opposite are trying to take some credit for what might happen in the Queensland election on Saturday. More importantly, they should ask themselves why the opposition keeps running arguments that simply do not stack up to the facts. It is simple: it is all about political opportunism. 

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:06): This carbon tax is a strong betrayal of everything the ALP stands for. It is a betrayal of the
workers of Australia. It is a betrayal of honesty in government. This is a government so obsessed with winning, spin and the PM's willingness to 'do whatever it takes' that it has forgotten the people of Australia. It is the people of Australia and Queensland who will bear the pain of lost jobs and increased prices. It is the people of Australia and Queensland who will be watching electricity bills rise relentlessly—caused by this government's obsession with focus groups and opinion polls.

Do not accept the deception that the carbon tax has anything to do with principle. According to a Galaxy poll conducted for the Institute of Public Affairs, more Australians are worried about price rises on electricity than on other major household expenses. Those not yet worried about the impact of skyrocketing electricity price rises certainly will be when the impacts of the carbon tax start flowing through in just three months. Thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment in coal mines and related businesses are at risk from the carbon tax, according to the Australian Coal Association. ACA chairman John Pegler criticised the federal government, saying:

In our view the government has underestimated the impact of the carbon tax …

The $18 billion cost impact of the carbon tax will hit many of Australia's mines making them uncompetitive in international markets.

This occurs at a time when the International Monetary Fund is warning that economic growth in our major coal export markets in Asia could be slashed by a third.

Nowhere will the carbon tax hurt businesses, communities and residents more than in my home state of Queensland, a state where the Labor government continues to set new records for poor and reckless financial management, nowhere as stark as in the health department where it will cost $220 million to fix the failed payroll system, where a fake Tahitian prince stole $15 million and where they cannot even get the basics right to pay their nurses.

The state Labor government know that the carbon tax will spell disaster for many businesses and thousands of jobs, particularly in the mining sector—but their silence has been deafening. Did the Queensland Labor state government question their federal colleagues? Did the Labor state government stand up for Queenslanders on the insidious carbon tax or mining tax? No. The Queensland state Labor members are too busy distancing themselves from the ALP and pretending to be Independents for this weekend's election.

What compounds the failure of the state Labor government to stand up for mining and mineral-processing communities in Queensland is that last year the Bligh Labor government commissioned a report from Deloitte Access Economics regarding the carbon tax impact on my home state of Queensland. Keep in mind that this was a report commissioned by a state Labor government and a Labor premier who is also the Labor Party's past national president. This report found that Queensland's gross state product would be 2.76 per cent lower by 2020 and 4.11 per cent lower in 2050 with a carbon tax compared to without one. That is a five per cent reduction in Queensland's gross state product and will result in a predicted 21,000 jobs lost in Queensland alone. On top of this, the Queensland Treasury has estimated a loss in economic value of the state's generation companies of $640 million, which undoubtedly will be passed on to consumers. Yesterday, during the leaders'
debate, Labor Premier Anna Bligh boasted that her government would be leaving Queensland better off than when her very old and tired government first came to power. Assisted by her federal colleagues, and on the evidence of her own report, this is clearly not the case.

Frighteningly, this $640 million in Queensland pales in comparison to the $40 billion cost the National Generators Forum estimates the generation sector will incur across the country. However, as in Queensland, it is likely that nearly all of this cost will be passed on to consumers. Part of this high cost is due to the starting price of $23 per tonne being far higher than carbon prices elsewhere in the world, and it has put Australia at a considerable disadvantage compared to other countries. Without a carbon tax, the Productivity Commission puts Australia in the middle of the pack with regard to tackling climate change. So by waiting for international action for the sake of our economy, and particularly our manufacturers, we would by no means be dragging our feet. It is a matter of plain common sense.

The Gillard government should be embarrassed and ashamed about introducing a carbon tax and the hurt it will inflict on families and communities across Australia. And yet the scene in this chamber when this tax was passed—similar to the scenes in the Senate last night when the mining tax was carried—was one of celebration and jubilation. What sort of government celebrates inflicting hardship on the people and communities of Australia?

On 20 August 2010, the day before the last federal election, the Prime Minister categorically stated, 'I rule out a carbon tax.' This morning in a press conference she boasted, 'Guess what? We now have a carbon tax.' She should hang her head in shame for that duplicity. This is not only yet another tax but also a bad tax. It is as simple as that. Taxes affect prices, and prices change behaviour; but this tax is different from a consumption tax such as the GST, which, I remind the House, was taken to an election and won a true mandate before being introduced by the Howard government. This tax is different because it is a tax on producers, which drives up their costs. As I said before, changes in price change behaviour, but with a tax on production rather than consumption the effects are multiplied. Costs rise for producers, so they change their behaviour by reducing their costs through cutting services or laying off staff—no-one wins. Alternatively, they could shut up shop, unable to afford these increased costs, which would mean no services and no jobs—and definitely no winners—or they could pass their increased costs on to the consumer and raise prices.

Consumers react to a change in costs by changing their behaviour as well. But consumers must still buy food and must still buy power, so their cost of living will increase dramatically under this tax—and much more than any so-called compensation package would cover. The government's own modelling shows that under this tax there will be an immediate 10 per cent increase in electricity prices and a nine percent rise in gas bills. Food costs will increase due to the electricity price rise and increased transportation costs. Be in no doubt that the basic necessities for life will cost more. If families cannot save through not buying necessities, they will buy less—less entertainment, less clothing and less generally from the already struggling retail sector.

The Prime Minister says that this carbon tax, when the so-called tax reform compensation package is taken into account,
will cost Australians just a couple of dollars a week, if anything. But that couple of dollars a week will be on top of the 'just a couple of dollars a week' caused by the 18 other new taxes introduced since 2007, and the 'just a couple of dollars per week' not spent by every customer on just one cup of coffee or just one magazine is a big cost to small business. Across the road from my office is a coffee shop. Talk to them about the effects of 200 or more customers buying just one fewer cup of coffee a week. Ask the newsagency next door how his customers buying one fewer magazine a week will affect his margin.

The people and communities of Queensland—indeed, of Australia—need a government they can trust. They need a government that honours its commitments and delivers on its promises, and the Leader of the Opposition has stated categorically: The carbon tax will be rescinded in its entirety by an incoming Coalition Government. The first order of business for an incoming Coalition Government will be the scrapping of the carbon tax and everything associated with it. Now, this carbon tax is going to impact in every nook and cranny of our economy ... Every transaction in this country is going to be impacted by the carbon tax. Everything that people do or buy is going to be impacted by the carbon tax. That's why the best thing we can do to promote certainty and stability is to stop Labor's big new taxes starting with the carbon tax.

Lower, simpler, fairer, fewer taxes—that is what the coalition is on about.

Queensland and Australia need strong action now, not more taxes and not more empty promises and political tricks. A tax cut that is paid for by a tax hike is not a tax cut—it is a tax con. It is time to get Queensland back on track. Queensland needs Campbell Newman as Premier.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (16:15): This debate has been going on for a very long time now, as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, well know. I thought we had peaked with the overblown rhetoric and hyperbole, but the member for Ryan's opening statement pulled me up once again. Obviously, we have not heard the last of the rhetoric and hyperbole. The member for Ryan said that the carbon price is a betrayal of Australia. I need members opposite to answer: what was the carbon price that John Howard went to the 2007 election with? The carbon price that was legislated in this place halfway through last year was basically the same as the pricing mechanism—

Ms O'Dwyer: You lied about it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Higgins will leave the chamber under the provisions of standing order 94(a).

The member for Higgins then left the chamber.

Ms LIVERMORE: All of those coalition MPs who were elected to this place in 2007 went to that election pledging and advocating. So if this is a huge betrayal of Australia the question is: what was the identical carbon-pricing scheme that John Howard and the coalition were pledging in 2007? We know that the legislation passed last year is nothing more than a reasonable, moderate and considered response to the internationally acknowledged risk of climate change. The scheme is a policy response that accepts the mainstream science of climate change and it acts on advice from leading economists that the best way of reducing our emissions is to use a market based mechanism and transition to a clean energy future.

What this debate today has shown us yet again is that, when it comes to the opposition, fear will always trump fact. As we go to yet another episode in the scare campaign run by the opposition, the trouble
is that the scare campaign keeps getting undermined. They cannot stop it from being undermined. They cannot get anyone to stick to the doomsday script that they keep promoting and peddling. For a start, the resource sector companies continue to invest. We have heard from other members of the record investment that is happening in Australia in our mining sector. As someone who represents a mining region in this place, I know only too well what is happening and what my constituents, many of whom work in the coalmining industry, can see right in front of their eyes.

We have heard of Peabody Energy's $4½ billion bid for Macarthur Coal. I can tell people about the numerous meetings that I have had in the time since the carbon legislation was passed last year, whether it be with Xstrata to tell me about the continued progress on the Wandoan project and the associated infrastructure—railway lines and port facilities in Gladstone—or with BHP on the expansion of their Hay Point coal-loading facilities and the expansion of their Bowen Basin mines, whether it is Caval Ridge or the Dornier mine, and the work that they are doing on a rail line and port facilities at Abbot Point. I met with them in Canberra just two weeks ago on that particular project and they are full steam ahead on that. We are seeing in Queensland the opening up of the Galilee Basin, which is going to be bigger than anything we have seen before. We think the coal industry in Queensland is big now—we ain't seen nothing yet. Adani, Waratah and Hancock are all falling over themselves to get in there and develop those Galilee Basin resources, again with infrastructure of 500 kilometres worth of railway line up to the Abbot Point coal-loading facility, which is being developed at the moment.

All this has happened and continues to happen since the announcement of the carbon price and its passage into legislation. If you look beyond what the companies are doing—and they are the ones who are putting their money where their mouth is on this—their advocates are telling us the same story. If you look at the Queensland Resources Council's Queensland resource sector: state growth outlook study, which dates back to November 2011 and was prepared by Deloitte Access Economics, the opening line states:

All of available evidence points to the Queensland resources sector being on the cusp of unprecedented expansion.

....... ....

Capital expenditure on resource projects in Queensland in 2011 is expected to be almost double that achieved at any point prior to the Global Financial Crisis.

Again, no-one can stick to the script. The prospects for our resource sector and particularly our coal industry in Queensland are just too good. So the opposition comes in here every day, gets out on the doorstep and paints this doomsday scenario. No-one else is able to stick to the script because the future is just too bright to let anything stand in its way.

I could talk about one of our local regional economic development organisations up in Mackay. In February, the CEO of REDC was quoted as saying that there has been a 32 per cent increase in investment projects in the last six months—this is the last six months of 2011—equating to $107 billion in new projects. That is in the Mackay region in my electorate alone. I am talking about no-one being able to stick to the script. We have heard about all the opposition members who have continued to invest heavily in resource sector companies despite going out and telling everyone how terrible it is for those same companies. Most telling to me is that Campbell Newman, the leader of the LNP running to be the member for Ashgrove...
and possibly Premier on Saturday, cannot stick to the script. I can remember all the chest beating last year: this election was going to be all about the carbon tax; it was going to be a referendum on the carbon tax. He was going to teach us a lesson. It was all going to be about the carbon tax. Has anyone heard Campbell Newman talk about the carbon tax? Has anyone seen this campaign on the carbon tax? There has not been one. Quite the opposite—he has not been campaigning about the carbon tax; he has based an awful lot of his campaign, particularly in the regions, on his 'royalties for the regions' concept. In the material he has been putting out, he talks about using the long-term royalty stream from the resource sector to build long-term infrastructure in resource regions. Why would he be saying that if he, like his coalition colleagues, genuinely believed that the future is so grim for coalmining and the resource sector in Queensland and that all is doom and gloom? Why would we be making long-term investments in resource regions for long-term sustainable growth and the long-term flow of royalties out of the resource industry if we thought it was all going to dry up next year or the year after? So Campbell Newman has got a bit of explaining to do. He has sent his coalition colleagues in here today to run the campaign against the carbon tax that he could not be bothered running and that is completely repudiated by the campaign material he is putting out spruiking the long-term stream of royalties from the industries that, according to these guys opposite, are going to shut down in the next six months.

The MPI is on the massive impact on mining communities. If we want to talk about the massive impact on mining communities, it is the growth that they are experiencing and the growth that we are acknowledging here on the government side of this House through the minerals resource rent tax. We acknowledge that the profitability of the resource sector is such that those companies can afford to make a greater contribution towards the infrastructure and support that is needed for industries right across Australia but most particularly in our resource regions. If members opposite want to talk about the impact on resource regions, they need to explain why they are not prepared to back the minerals resource rent tax, which will be providing needed infrastructure and support for those communities. *(Time expired)*

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (16:25): I thank the member for Capricornia for her contribution to the matter of public importance this afternoon, but it just goes to the heart of the problem with this Labor government, and that is the fact that everything this Labor government does is entirely focused on the big end of town, the big corporate businesses in this country. Every single benefit from the minerals resource rent tax will accrue to the big corporations—and the member for Capricornia has just spent 10 minutes talking about it. It is the small to medium-sized businesses in our country communities and in our electorates that will suffer from the minerals resource rent tax.

Ms Roxon: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just asking for your assistance. I believe there is a standing order which does not allow irony.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The minister can resume her seat.

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member can resume his seat to give the member for Forde the opportunity to speak on the MPI.

Mr Tudge: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a point of order.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I know the member for Aston wants to have a point of order, but he is going to eat into his own member's time, and I am not going to allow it.

Mr VAN MANEN: I thank the Attorney-General for her contribution, but we have had 4½ years of irony from this government, so today should not be any different.

The carbon tax is based on the false premise that in Australia, a country with 1½ per cent of global emissions, a tax on carbon dioxide—and let us bear in mind that this is a tax not on carbon but on carbon dioxide—is going to make one iota of difference to the global climate. That is the whole premise for the carbon tax in the first place. Now the question is: what damage is it going to do to our economy not only today or tomorrow but also for future generations?

Small business in this country, which I mentioned in my introduction, is going to pay 100 per cent of the costs of the carbon tax because big business will pass on its costs to small and medium-sized businesses. They are the ones that are going to suffer the higher energy costs, higher costs of raw materials and input items and higher costs of transport, and they are the ones that do not have the pricing capacity in our economy to handle those increased costs. What is the flow-on cost? The flow-on cost is that employees are potentially going to lose their jobs. That has a flow-on cost to our local communities because those people then do not have the capacity to spend in their local shops, cafes and newsagents. So it flows all the way down the line.

This is the problem with everything that the government bring to this House. It does not understand the unintended consequences of the legislation it passes. If it did, heaven forbid, it would still introduce ridiculous legislation like the carbon tax. Despite the government's best efforts to assure people all over this nation that the compensation will ease the pain of the new tax, Australian people well understand that the compensation will not cover the costs of the new tax due to the cascading effect of the tax. As the member for Ryan just pointed out, rightly, the tax will impact on every single area of our lives. The carbon tax is built on the deception that corrective taxation will deliver some sort of economic or societal nirvana, but this is a complete fallacy because there is no way that any modelling can take into account all of the external variations that could possibly exist in an economy. It is just not possible. The other thing about the compensation being offered is that only 50 per cent of the revenue being raised is going back to the community in compensation. So in reality people will be worse off as a result, despite government protests to the contrary. The hardworking people in our mineral- and resource-processing communities will often not be eligible for a lot of this compensation because of the incomes they currently receive. So, again, the wealth is being taken and redistributed elsewhere, preventing access to capital to grow and build those communities locally. We already hear many stories of people on high incomes in those communities who are struggling to make ends meet because of high rents and the high cost of living. This carbon tax will only punish some of the hardest-working people in Queensland, and mine workers and their families even more.

A recent report by Deloitte Access Economics for the Queensland government showed that the carbon tax will slash economic growth by 2.76 per cent by 2020 and by 4.11 per cent by 2050. In the same report, Deloitte predicts the loss of 21,000 jobs, while Queensland Treasury modelling predicts the slightly lesser amount of 12,000
jobs lost. The carbon tax will slash jobs in Queensland mining and mineral-processing communities because of the impact on small and medium-sized businesses. But fear not: whilst these jobs are being slashed they will be plentiful in the federal government. So if you are unemployed as a result of the carbon tax come down to Canberra and jump on board one of the new bureaucracies. There are plenty of jobs on offer. For example, the Clean Energy Regulator has engaged some 207 staff to date, with 350 expected to be on board by the 1 July carbon tax start date.

It is worth noting the paper recently put out by the European Central Bank entitled 'Economic productivity and government size'. The paper warns of the negative impact of the size of government on potential economic growth, so while the government continues to increase its size the rest of our country pays for it. It has always been thus because, at the end of the day, governments produce nothing. It is the hardworking people and small businesses in our community that produce the wealth for this nation and it is the government that takes a share of that wealth and redistributes it to its favourite sectors around the economy.

The carbon tax comes as an unwanted gift and will create enormous problems in all sectors. The Energy Supply Association of Australia recently confirmed that the carbon tax is not about the environment but about filling the government's coffers. The ESAA chief, Matthew Warren, wrote in his pre-budget submission:

The industry is deeply concerned that the design features of the carbon tax pricing mechanism are being influenced by budget revenue considerations.

Mr Warren makes the point that this should not be the case. In today's Australian Tim Wilson points out that the problem with the carbon tax is not just that it is set at $23 per tonne and that that is internationally high but that it is also broadly applied. That is not happening in other countries. The government needs to disclose more information on the carbon tax and on the big companies that will supposedly be affected by it.

Another fact that is overlooked is that the hardworking men and women in our small country towns, in our small businesses and throughout the nation are looking to create wealth and prosperity for this nation's future, yet all these increases in the cost of living are making that far more difficult. Even worse is the fact that we as a nation are net importers of capital and once this carbon tax comes into place we will be sending some $3 billion a year of our hard-earned wealth offshore to buy foreign carbon tax credits to meet the carbon tax reduction targets.

Somebody has to stand up for the future generations of people living in mining and mineral-processing towns before they get turned into ghost towns. Someone has to stand up for the people working in small and medium-sized businesses around this country. Small and medium-sized businesses, like many households, are struggling with the higher costs of doing business. At the end of the day we will finish up with a carbon tax, bigger government and no practical on-the-ground environmental solutions. It will be up to a coalition government to restore hope for the future, reward for effort and the opportunity to create a positive inheritance for future generations.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:35): I live in the electorate of Blair, and the main city in the electorate of Blair happens to be Ipswich. It is the oldest city in Queensland and it was built on coalmining. Even now we still have coalmines at Ipswich, Jeebropilly and New Oakleigh which are owned and run by New Hope Coal at Rosewood. The truth is that
coalmining built Ipswich. The railway workshops and other industries, and now the RAAF base at Amberley and the woollen mills and other industries, have been integral to the industrial development of Ipswich, so Ipswich has been a mining town for a very long time.

I know the massive impact that government decision making has had on Ipswich. It has been railways and roads, community infrastructure and government assistance, and Ipswich has also been helped with respect to schools, hospitals and the building of the community. It has not been taxation; it has been that sort of initiative. This government has been utterly and completely committed to that type of investment in the mining towns and cities in regional and rural Queensland—places like Ipswich, Rockhampton, Mackay and elsewhere. We have invested, whether through the BER funding, which nearly doubled education funding in the schools in areas where miners and other workers in those communities send their kids, or through regional health and hospitals like Ipswich General Hospital in my community. What we have done in these communities is invest in infrastructure. In Queensland alone we have doubled the funding for road, rail and ports to $8.5 billion. That is double what the previous coalition government did. We have not done it through taxation. The massive impact on these communities comes from infrastructure spending by this government, allied with our colleagues in the state Labor government. We have seen it, whether it be the State Schools of Tomorrow in Ipswich from the Queensland Labor government or the BER in Ipswich from this federal government.

I went to an election in 2007 with the carbon pricing mechanism. I remember that my opponent, the incumbent member for Blair, talked about this issue and about the fact that the coalition as well believed in a clean energy future. I do not know how all those people opposite who were candidates in 2007 and who subsequently supported various opposition leaders until the current opposition leader got elected by one vote in a caucus ballot just a year or so ago can sit in this place and criticise us for adopting what the Productivity Commission recommends is the most effective and efficient way to deal with the challenge of climate change—that is, putting a price on carbon. We know that the same Treasury officials who costed the impact of the GST at 2.5 per cent on the households, individuals, businesses and economy of Australia back in the coalition's day, when the coalition sat on the Treasury bench, say the impact of a carbon pricing mechanism will be 0.7 per cent. That is just over a quarter of the impact of the GST.

You would believe the jeremiads of those opposite if you believed in the tooth fairy, the Loch Ness monster, the yeti or other mythical creatures. You would think that Armageddon was coming on 1 July. It is extraordinary. It will be a 'massive impact', the coalition says. The massive impact in regional and rural Queensland and in mining communities has been made by this government with its massive investments in infrastructure, rail, road and community facilities. That is the impact that we have made massively. It has not been made by those opposite, who have simply neglected those areas. Their attitude to the mining towns and towards regional Queensland and Queensland generally has been characterised by inertia, inactivity and idleness. That is what their attitude to Queensland has always been. From the 1970s until we got elected in 2007, the only major investment we saw from a federal government in Ipswich was the Ipswich Civic Centre. It was opened by Gough Whitlam in his day. The coalition neglected Ipswich and its surrounds for ages.
It was a coalmining town. They neglected it. Why? Because they felt it would only vote Labor. They have always punished the people of Ipswich—and every mining community, including Rockhampton, in the member for Capricornia's electorate—by not funding them.

I can remember the state member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone, telling me that when he first got elected—he is now retired; he is a great bloke who did a lot for Ipswich West and the rural parts of Somerset as well—he asked for the road projects that were then made available by the coalition government to other conservative governments in Queensland at the state level. What road funding projects were available? What was the plan for the next five years? He told me there were none—and why should we be surprised? The coalition has always neglected these regions.

I can give you a perfect example from this campaign. A massive impact on my community in Ipswich is the refusal by the LNP opposition in Queensland to commit to the Ipswich Turf Club. We have committed $6 million. The racing authorities in Queensland have committed it. Six million dollars has been committed by the Bligh Labor government for the turf club in Ipswich. There is $110 million on the table for this, according to the coalition opposition in Queensland, but they will not invest in Ipswich. They will not do it, but we will. The most visited regional race in the country is the Ipswich Cup. About 21,000 people went to the Ipswich Cup last year. I go every year. That has a huge impact on the economy of Ipswich—on the retailers, the service stations, and the pubs and clubs in Ipswich. It is important community infrastructure in the mining town of Ipswich, and guess what? Those opposite will not support it. They talk about 'massive impact' in mining areas. What about supporting the Ipswich Turf Club? We get 'no' as an answer from those opposite. And why would they? They have opposed, repeatedly, funding in South-East Queensland and in Queensland.

The big infrastructure funding we have talked about, the 'massive impact' that the Leader of the Nationals talks about in this motion, is being affected and is going to be affected by this government and our regional infrastructure funding. Under the minerals resource rental tax, we are putting about $5.6 billion into railroad and port funding across the country. Two billion dollars has been earmarked for Queensland and $2 billion has been earmarked for Western Australia, the resource-rich states. We are going to benefit. Every single member of the LNP from Queensland who has sat in this place during question time and has stood and made speeches here has opposed the funding for that. That is what will make the massive impact. It will not be the carbon pricing mechanism, for which we will compensate with family tax benefits, tax cuts and assistance through pensions. We will more than compensate many. It is a 'battlers' buffer', the Deputy Prime Minister and the Treasurer always says. The carbon pricing will not make the massive impact, but the regional infrastructure funding and the minerals resource rent tax, the $2 billion, will. In places like Mackay, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Ipswich that will make a 'massive impact'.

The Queensland LNP members opposite really should hang their heads in shame that they have the gall to come into this place and criticise us and say, with these jeremiads: 'The carbon tax will have a massive impact on regional and rural Queensland.' The massive impact, in a positive way, on regional and rural Queensland has been made by this government, in conjunction with the Bligh Labor government, to benefit Queensland. It has always been that. It is
interesting that the Leader of the Opposition in Queensland, the putative parliamentarian for Ashgrove, is saying, 'We're going to provide about a billion dollars on the Bruce Highway', but he wants federal government funding for it. He should talk to his LNP colleagues from Queensland, who actually voted against the kind of funding that will assist him if he happens to win on Saturday. The coalition will say one thing when they are here, do one thing and vote against funding for their communities, but back home they will not. Back home they will be great local members and talk about how they want to fight for their constituents, but here they vote against them. The 'massive impact' will be made in my home state of Queensland by the infrastructure spending that this government is undertaking in conjunction with the Labor government of Queensland. I urge the people of Queensland to think about the consequences of their vote next Saturday. Vote for your Labor candidates who will work with this government to make sure we invest in Queensland and that will make the 'massive impact' in Queensland. (Time expired)

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

BILLS

Minerals Resource Rent Tax Bill 2011


Minerals Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—General) Bill 2011

Minerals Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2011

Minerals Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2011

Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Assessment Amendment Bill 2011

Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—General) Bill 2011

Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2011

Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2011

Tax Laws Amendment (Stronger, Fairer, Simpler and Other Measures) Bill 2011

Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Amendment Bill 2011

Telecommunications (Industry Levy) Bill 2011

Returned from Senate

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

Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Bill 2011

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with requested amendments.

Senate’s requested amendments—

SCHEDULE A

Schedule of the requests by the Senate for amendments

(1) Clause 4, page 9 (after line 2), after the definition of vacancy, insert:

voice customer migration policy objective means the policy objective set out in paragraph 11(e), in so far as that objective relates to either or both of the following:

(a) customer information programs;

(b) customer cabling installation programs.

(2) Page 25 (after line 26), after Division 4, insert:
Division 4A—Facilitation of the voice customer migration policy objective

Subdivision A—Access to information or documents held by a carriage service provider

29A Access to information or documents held by a carriage service provider

Scope

(1) This section applies to a carriage service provider if TUSMA believes on reasonable grounds that the carriage service provider has information or a document that is relevant to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Requirement

(2) TUSMA may, by written notice given to the carriage service provider, require the carriage service provider:

(a) to give to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner and form specified in the notice, any such information; or

(b) to produce to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner specified in the notice, any such documents; or

(c) to make copies of any such documents and to produce to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner specified in the notice, those copies.

(3) A period specified under subsection (2) must not be shorter than 14 days after the notice is given.

Compliance

(4) A carriage service provider must comply with a requirement under subsection (2) to the extent that the carriage service provider is capable of doing so.

(5) A carriage service provider commits an offence if:

(a) TUSMA has given a notice to the carriage service provider under subsection (2); and

(b) the carriage service provider engages in conduct; and

(c) the carriage service provider's conduct contravenes a requirement in the notice.

Penalty for contravention of this subsection: 50 penalty units.

29B Copying documents—compensation

A carriage service provider is entitled to be paid by TUSMA reasonable compensation for complying with a requirement covered by paragraph 29A(2)(c).

29C Copies of documents

(1) TUSMA may:

(a) inspect a document or copy produced under subsection 29A(2); and

(b) make and retain copies of, or take and retain extracts from, such a document.

(2) TUSMA may retain possession of a copy of a document produced in accordance with a requirement covered by paragraph 29A(2)(c).

29D TUSMA may retain documents

(1) TUSMA may take, and retain for as long as is necessary, possession of a document produced under subsection 29A(2).

(2) The carriage service provider otherwise entitled to possession of the document is entitled to be supplied, as soon as practicable, with a copy certified by TUSMA to be a true copy.

(3) The certified copy must be received in all courts and tribunals as evidence as if it were the original.

(4) Until a certified copy is supplied, TUSMA must, at such times and places as TUSMA thinks appropriate, permit the carriage service provider otherwise entitled to possession of the document, or a person authorised by that carriage service provider, to inspect and make copies of, or take extracts from, the document.

29E Law relating to legal professional privilege not affected

This Subdivision does not affect the law relating to legal professional privilege.

Subdivision B—Disclosure of information

29F Disclosure of information

Scope

(1) This section applies to information that:

(a) was obtained by TUSMA under section 29A; or

(b) is contained in a document, or a copy of a document, that was produced to TUSMA under section 29A.

Disclosure
(2) TUSMA may disclose the information to a carriage service provider if the disclosure is for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Subdivision C—Consent to customer contact

29G Consent to customer contact

Scope

(1) This section applies to a carriage service provider if:

(a) TUSMA believes on reasonable grounds that, if the carriage service provider were to consent to another person (the third person) contacting:

(i) the carriage service provider's customers; or

(ii) customers included in a particular class of the carriage service provider's customers;

for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(b) the carriage service provider is not a contractor in relation to a section 13 contract entered into for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(c) the carriage service provider is not a grant recipient in relation to a section 13 grant made for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Requirement

(2) TUSMA may, by written notice given to the carriage service provider, require the carriage service provider:

(a) to consent to the third person contacting:

(i) if subparagraph (1)(a)(i) applies—the carriage service provider's customers; or

(ii) if subparagraph (1)(a)(ii) applies—customers included in a specified class of the carriage service provider's customers;

for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(b) to do so within the period and in the manner specified in the notice.

(3) A period specified under subsection (2) must not be shorter than 14 days after the notice is given.

Compliance

(4) A carriage service provider must comply with a requirement under subsection (2).

(5) A carriage service provider commits an offence if:

(a) TUSMA has given a notice to the carriage service provider under subsection (2); and

(b) the carriage service provider engages in conduct; and

(c) the carriage service provider's conduct contravenes a requirement in the notice.

Penalty for contravention of this subsection: 50 penalty units.

SCHEDULE B

Amendments made by the Senate

(1) Clause 4, page 8 (after line 22), after the definition of telecommunications industry, insert:

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has the same meaning as in the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999.

(2) Clause 38, page 30 (line 2), omit paragraph (2)(d), substitute:

(d) consumer affairs;

(3) Heading to clause 122, page 73 (line 3), omit "the ACMA and the ACCC", substitute "certain bodies or persons".

(4) Clause 122, page 73 (line 5), omit "authorities", substitute "bodies or persons".

(5) Clause 122, page 73 (lines 6 and 7), omit "authority to perform or exercise any of its functions or powers", substitute "body or person to perform or exercise any of the functions or powers of the body or person".

(6) Clause 122, page 73 (line 9), at the end of subclause (1), add:

; (c) the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman;
(d) the Regional Telecommunications
Independent Review Committee;
(e) the Secretary of the Department.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-
General and Minister for Emergency
Management) (16:46): I move:

That the amendments requested by
the Senate be considered at a later hour this day.
Question agreed to.
Debate adjourned.

Telecommunications Legislation
Amendment (Universal Service
Reform) Bill 2011

Consideration of Senate Message
Bill returned from the Senate with a
requested amendment.

Senate's requested amendment—
(1) Schedule 1, page 8 (after line 27), after item
28, insert:

28A Section 284 (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

284 Assisting the ACMA, the ACCC, the
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or
TUSMA

28B At the end of section 284
Add:

(4) If information or a document is disclosed
to a person as permitted by subsection 284(4) or
this subsection, the person must not disclose or
use the information or document except for the
purpose of, or in connection with, the carrying out
of TUSMA’s functions and powers.

28E Section 299 (note)
Omit "or the Telecommunications Industry
Ombudsman", substitute ", the
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or
TUSMA".

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-
General and Minister for Emergency
Management) (16:46): I move:

That the amendment be considered at a later
hour this day.
Question agreed to.
Debate adjourned.

Intellectual Property Laws
Amendment (Raising the Bar) Bill
2011 [2012]

Report from Federation Chamber
Bill returned from Federation Chamber
without amendment; certified copy of bill
presented.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading
Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-
General and Minister for Emergency
Management) (16:47): by leave—I move:

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

BUSINESS
Rearrangement
Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-
General and Minister for Emergency
Management) (16:48): I move:

That orders of the day Nos 1 and 2,
government business, be postponed until a later
hour this day.
Question agreed to.

BILLs

Family Law Amendment (Validation of Certain Orders and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (16:48): The Family Law Amendment (Validation of Certain Orders and Other Measures) Bill 2012 has been necessitated by the failure of the government to provide for the proclamation of the provisions of the Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Act 2008, which was passed with coalition support and relied on referrals of power by the states to the Commonwealth, with the exception of my home state of Western Australia, agreed through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in 2002. The intention of the legislation was to provide for national uniformity for all relationship breakdown matters and to confer jurisdiction on the courts with the best resources for resolving the breakdown of relationships, namely the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court. Section 40(2) of the Family Law Act 1975 provides that any addition to the jurisdiction of the federal Family Court is not conferred until there is a proclamation by the Governor-General to that effect under section 40. No such proclamation was made following the passage of the 2008 act and this omission was not detected, as the coalition understands, until it was picked up by a sharp-eyed judge in December last year.

Even so, relevant proclamations were not made until 9 February this year fixing 11 February as the date on and after which the jurisdiction of the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court could be exercised in de facto financial matters. The failure to proclaim the relevant amendments had the result that property and maintenance orders by the federal Family Courts in de facto matters from 1 March 2009 to 10 February 2012 were made without jurisdiction and are invalid. Orders of the Family Court in appeals from the Family Court of Western Australia which do not require the vesting of jurisdiction are similarly affected.

This legislation is therefore required to validate those orders retrospectively and the coalition, as my colleague the shadow Attorney-General Senator Brandis foreshadowed in February when this problem first came to our attention, will certainly be happy to cooperate in ensuring that certainty can be returned to the jurisdiction.

What is difficult to understand, however, is how slack and uncomprehending the Gillard government has been in dealing with this matter. Literally thousands of orders are in doubt, affecting thousands of Australian families. In the Australian of 29 January, we read of a Melbourne mother of five who faced losing her home because her former partner had stopped paying the mortgage, as the Federal Magistrates Court had ordered him to do last August. The mother, we are told, would have spent at least another $6,000 on legal fees because her original court orders were invalid. Many Australian families whose principal source of income is from property and maintenance orders have been left in limbo dependent on the good faith of their former partners and without recourse to enforcing it, as so often happens in family law matters, as former partners seek to skip out on their obligations. This therefore is a matter of great urgency, but you would not know it from the actions of the Labor government. The problem, which was an inexplicable bureaucratic oversight, was detected last December. While courts typically go into recess over December and
January, the family law jurisdiction is different. Those familiar with the family law jurisdiction will know that it can be a time of immense stress about finances in relationships, and any family lawyer would be able to tell you that they have a busy time over the summer period.

Yet when did the government act? In December, when they were first alerted to this problem? In January, when an urgent proclamation could have been made to ensure that prospective orders would be valid and the opposition could have been requested to cooperate with this being made the first item of business for the resumption of parliament? No, I am afraid to say that the proclamation was quietly made on 9 February, at the end of the first sitting week. Still the government said nothing when the professions, the media and the opposition heard about it on 21 February and started clamouring for a response. Indeed, the government continued to say nothing for another week, until the following sitting week drew to a close, when the Attorney-General finally announced that the government would introduce remedial legislation.

One must ask, therefore, where the government's priorities lie. There are still thousands of families whose financial affairs and whose power to do anything about it remain in limbo whilst this government fusses about to ensure that its prosperity-sapping deals with the Greens continue to keep it in power.

The coalition take this matter very seriously, so seriously that we publicly indicated to the government almost four weeks ago, without being prompted by the government, that we would support legislation to fix this problem—and that, as I said, we would support legislation to fix it as a matter of urgency. It is not a difficult piece of legislation to fix but it does fix an enormous problem. We understand why this is a priority, but it is very difficult to understand through the government's actions why they did not seem to think it was. I therefore 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 and condemns the incompetence of the Government in:

(1) failing for almost three years to proclaim the relevant provisions of the Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Act 2008;

(2) thereby needlessly permitting invalid orders to be made by the federal Family Courts and throwing the financial affairs of thousands of Australians into confusion;

(3) failing to act promptly to correct the problem after it was first brought to its attention; and

(4) failing to immediately bring remedial legislation before this Parliament."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Ewen Jones: I second the amendment, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I reserve my right to speak.

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

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:55): I speak in support of the government's legislation, the Family Law Amendment (Validation of Certain Orders and Other Measures) Bill 2012. Most people do not get charged with criminal offences, they do not end up in
traffic accidents and they do not have accidents at work but, sadly, about one in three marriages end in separation and about one in two second marriages end in separation. The statistics in relation to de facto relationships or common-law relationships are even worse. So people are subject to the family law when they separate from marital relationships or de facto relationships and, if they have children, what we used to call custody and now call residence and what we used to call access and now call contact become enlivened. Then there are issues of child support, property settlement and the like.

When areas of family law are considered for reform it is always done by Labor governments. It took a Labor government, the Whitlam Labor government in the 1970s, to institute the Family Law Act. It came in after the Matrimonial Causes Act 1959, which had a whole host of areas which justified divorce, including separation. There were private eyes snooping on people. There were drunkenness, adultery and a whole host of different grounds for divorce. The Family Law Act introduced one ground for divorce. It was irretrievable breakdown of marriage evidenced by people living separately and apart for a duration of 12 months and there being no reasonable likelihood of cohabitation resuming. That was the definition at law for the basis of a divorce. It was a step forward in the right direction. It narrowly got through this place when it was brought forward in the mid-seventies.

We made changes—and I say this in consequence of the criticism that has been made of us by the previous speaker. It was the Hawke and Keating governments in the 1980s that extended the situation and got around the problem of section 51 of the Constitution, which specifies only the Commonwealth having the power to deal with marriage, matrimonial causes and divorce. The Keating and Hawke governments got around this problem, extending the jurisdiction of the Family Law Act to include not just children of marital relationships but exnuptial children, as they used to be called, and the states sensibly referred these issues to the federal government. Regrettably, the previous speaker's home state of Western Australia has always been out on a limb in the area of family law. I do not quite understand, having done cases in WA in my legal practice, why it was out of the mainstream.

But reform of this area was always done by Labor governments. Sadly—and I have spoken on this many times in my previous life as a lawyer—the coalition government, in its obsession with listening to some of the men's rights groups, took a really difficult and wrong approach with respect to family law in part VII of the Family Law Act and put in place as a parenting law a whole host of difficult and bureaucratic mechanisms which parties had to go through, and it became more difficult. There were some aspects of that legislation which were good—the emphasis on children knowing both parents, children having the right to be cared for by both parents and both parents being integral to the care, welfare and development of their children. I acknowledge all that.

But it has always been Labor governments which have driven the reform agenda in this area. This Labor government has put forward a number of changes which I think are relevant. One of them relates to this bill. The first change we have made is in the area of making definitions of domestic violence and abuse more contemporary. The Family Law Act's definition of assault and violence was pretty much limited to physical or sexual assault, or to the threat of physical or sexual assault. People's understanding of what abuse and violence is has moved beyond
that. So we have contemporised the definitions in the act to include familial isolation, financial intimidation and a whole host of other things. That is one area of reform.

The other major area of reform is the one which relates to this legislation. It is bringing de facto property settlements out of the state jurisdiction into the federal jurisdiction. In Queensland we used to have to rely on the Property Law Act for de facto relationship property settlements and we had to take such matters to the Supreme Court. This was far more costly and it was far less likely that people would get justice. But the biggest and most vexed question in all of this—and this is why we pursued this reform—was that a person's contribution as a homemaker and parent was not provided for in the Property Law Act in Queensland. We have brought this issue under the jurisdiction of the Family Law Act by amending part VIII. This means that the Federal Magistrates Court and the Family Court can now deal with this area. We did this to make sure that people, regardless of their circumstances and regardless of the nature of their relationship—heterosexual, gay or lesbian—can have their cases heard in the one jurisdiction under the one law. It does not matter whether they live in the Torres Strait or Tasmania, Palm Beach or Perth—the law is effectively the same. The dingo fences are gone. That is what we did.

Regrettably, there is a problem with respect to the proclamation. The problem is found in section 40 of the Family Law Act. Subsection (2) says:
The Governor-General may, by Proclamation, fix a date as the date on and after which the jurisdiction of the Family Court under this Act—and thereby the Federal Magistrates Court—may be exercised in respect of all proceedings, or a class of proceedings, in such States and Territories as are specified in the Proclamation.

The problem is the absence of a proclamation. That is the problem. So we are fixing up this problem. It is regrettable that people have had uncertainty in relation to this, but this bill provides certainty about the status of orders made by federal magistrates or Family Court judges with respect to de facto property and spousal maintenance matters and about orders made by the Family Court on appeal from Western Australian family law magistrates. It corrects oversights. We accept that there were oversights and that these need to be corrected. Between 2006—and I note that we were not actually in power in 2006—and 2009, proclamations were not made to bring changes to the Family Law Act into effect. The previous speaker's criticisms of us for the problems from 2006 are a bit rich, given that the Howard coalition government were in power at that time. There were mistakes made on the watch of both sides of politics.

The bill will create new rights and liabilities to make sure individuals are in the same position they would have been if a proclamation fixing a date on or after which jurisdiction could be exercised by the court had been made at the time jurisdiction was originally conferred. It will preserve the rights of the parties to appeal the affected orders or to have their rights and liabilities under the affected orders varied, revoked, set aside, revived or suspended. It does not create statutory rights and liabilities in relation to those orders which have been declared invalid or which were made without power prior to the commencement of the bill, respecting the outcomes of the appeal processes which had been finalised before the bill commences.

The bill solves the problem of section 40 so that we do not need this type of proclamation in the future. Instead of requiring a proclamation to transfer jurisdiction, the bill permits regulations to be
made to restrict the jurisdiction of the court under the act. So this legislation has a number of purposes. It is sad and regrettable that people have been impacted by these problems and by the uncertainty of orders. It happened on the watch of both sides of politics and we are now fixing those problems. I commend the legislation to the House.

**Mr EWEN JONES** (Herbert) (17:04): I rise to speak on the Family Law Amendment (Validation of Certain Orders and Other Measures) Bill 2012. In doing so, I would just like to pick up on a point made by the member for Blair. There was one bill which was not proclaimed by the Howard government in 2006, but nothing turned on it. It did not matter; it did not affect anyone. The difference between that bill and this bill is that the lives, futures and status of orders for thousands and thousands of people are determined by this bill.

This bill provides statutory rights to anyone covered by two proclamations, related to de facto financial causes, that have not been made under section 40(2) of the Family Law Act 1975. This bill has been necessitated by the failure of the government to provide for the proclamation of the provisions of the Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Act 2008. This bill seeks to provide those affected by the failure to make these proclamations with certainty in their situation and to make sure that they are not disadvantaged as a result of these proclamations not being made at the intended time.

The Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures Act) 2008, which passed with coalition support, relied on referrals of power by the states, with the exception of Western Australia, to the Commonwealth as agreed through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in 2002. I do agree with the member for Blair—I do not understand what the Western Australians do. In the words of Nino Culotta, 'They're a weird mob.' The intention of the legislation was to (1) provide for national uniformity for all relationship breakdown matters and (2) confer jurisdiction on the courts with the best resources for resolving the breakdown of relationships—that is, the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court.

The failure to proclaim the relevant amendments resulted in property and maintenance orders made by federal family courts in de facto matters after 1 March 2009 being, in fact, invalid. So the whole reason for this legislation is to cover up this government's poor management and to validate those orders retrospectively. How this happened, no-one knows or is willing to admit. Maybe we could pass it on to Fair Work Australia and they could take four years to find out.

The Family Law Act states that the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia cannot exercise jurisdiction until the Family Court of Australia is able to do so. Consequently, this bill provides a similar coverage of decisions relating to de facto financial causes for the Federal Magistrates Court. This bill will apply to court orders made between 1 July 2010 and 10 February 2012 in South Australia and to court orders made between 1 March 2009 and 10 February 2012 in all other states. By creating statutory rights and liabilities identical to those intended under the original proclamations, this bill gives the clarity and verification needed for the court orders given during this time. We have moved a second reading amendment on this bill but will support its passage, as we have previously done.
In discussing this bill and the impact that it has on the Family Court of Australia, I would also like to raise an issue of significance for the legal community in Townsville and the families in North Queensland that require their services. Since 1983 Townsville, as the member for Blair indicated, has had its own locally based Family Court judge. For close to 30 years the judge in that position has served the needs of not just the Townsville community but the whole of North Queensland. Until November, that position was filled by the Hon. Justice Robert Monteith. Since his retirement, however, Townsville has had to go without, with the position still remaining vacant.

Just last month in a Senate estimates hearing Senator Ludwig announced that expressions of interest in the position would be sought. He suggested that the government would want to keep the position based in Townsville after all. But another month has gone by, and, with no action being taken, the legal community in Townsville is still wondering whether this government will do the right thing and appoint a locally based Family Court judge. Townsville is experiencing rapid levels of population growth at the moment. The government recognised that there was a need for a Family Court judge to be based in Townsville in 1983, when the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa had a population approaching 75,000. With the region's growth the demand for these services has only increased and there should be no doubt that we still need a Family Court judge today, with the population of the twin cities approaching 200,000.

The government's position on this matter has been anything but firm. When I first raised it with the then Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, he said no decision on the replacement for Justice Monteith had been made. We subsequently heard rumours that the government was content to circuit a Family Court judge from Tasmania. The coalition's shadow Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, came to Townsville for Justice Monteith's farewell sitting—a feat not matched by any member of the government—and he spoke with local practitioners in family law who expressed real concern about the way this court was being treated by the government. At estimates, the Attorney-General's representative in the Senate, Senator Ludwig, told Senator Brandis that the need for a Townsville based Family Court judge had been heard and that that was now their preferred option. In interviews and in statements North Queensland based Senator Ian Macdonald and I both cautioned the people of North Queensland that this was not a delivery of the service but merely an acknowledgment of the need.

North Queensland lawyers were recently told that the position of a Townsville based, or preferably Townsville based, Family Court judge would be advertised at the end of February or in the first week of March. To date, no such advertisement has appeared. In the Senate last week, answering a question from Senator Macdonald, Senator Ludwig refused to give any commitment on the issue of a Townsville based Family Court judge. This is simply treating the people of North Queensland with utter contempt. There is enough work for a Family Court judge in North Queensland, based in Townsville and circuiting to Mackay, Cairns, Mt Isa and even to Darwin now that Air North have commenced direct flights between Townsville and Darwin.

The Family Court does the toughest of cases. It does the difficult custody matters. It deals with complex matters. Townsville needs to be home to a Family Court judge and this government needs to come clean.
with its plans. All of us in this House spend a lot of time dealing with family law matters. It has been the toughest part of my job so far as the member for Herbert—dealing with people who are going through the pain of family law and divorce and separation. There are property matters and custody matters and support matters. To have these problems exacerbated by government incompetence is just wrong at every level.

At its core, this bill is about allowing the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia and the Family Court of Australia to do their job and to not disadvantage the people they are there to help. That is also what we are asking for in Townsville. We have had a locally based Family Court judge for close to 30 years in recognition of the region's need for family law services and the need for these services to be provided by someone who understands local nuances. Senator Brandis has promised the North Queensland legal fraternity that, should this government remain inactive, once we are in power after the next election we will appoint a Townsville based Family Court judge.

I support this bill for its intent to provide clarity and fairness through the justice system, even if it would not have been necessary had the government just done the right thing four years ago. All I want for the north of Queensland is fairness of representation. I ask the government to take the same view and finally take action to support the Family Court in Townsville.

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (17:13): The opposition's second reading amendment is yet another example of the negativity that has become a consistent pattern in this parliament. The Family Law Amendment (Validation of Certain Orders and Other Measures) Bill provides for Family Court orders in regard to matters following two proclamations in the Family Law Act that were not made in 2006 and 2009. In both instances this was a departmental oversight, given that these are very rarely required proclamations under the act. Yes, it is the case that, in 2009, it happened under the Labor government and it is the case that, in 2006, it happened under the Liberal-National government. So while the opposition are trying to turn this into another points scoring exercise, a political exercise, it is worth while for the House to bear in mind that one of the issues this bill corrects happened under the watch of the Howard government in 2006. It is important in this House that we focus on developing policies, not on trying to score political points, which is what this amendment appears to be doing.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the words proposed to be omitted— that is, Mr Keenan's amendment—stand part of the question.

The House divided. [17:19]

(The Speaker—Hon. Peter Slipper)

Ayes ...................... 68
Noes ...................... 75
Majority ............... 7

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Forrest, JA
Gambino, T
Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Kelly, C
Ley, SP

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gash, J
Haase, BW
Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Macfarlane, IE
While we are waiting for the count to be concluded, I think that honourable members would be pleased to know that my attendant Lupco Jonceski is celebrating his birthday today. On behalf of all honourable members, we extend to him many happy returns. 

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER (17:23): I will not notice that clapping is disorderly. Also, I have been advised by the parliamentary secretary that the honourable member for Lingiari is apparently celebrating a similarly significant event.

The question now is that this bill be read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (17:25): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Bill 2011

Consideration of Senate Message

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation for requested amendments announced.

Bill returned from the Senate with requested amendments.

Ordered that the requested amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's requested amendments—

SCHEDULE A

(1) Clause 4, page 9 (after line 2), after the definition of vacancy, insert:

voice customer migration policy objective means the policy objective set out in paragraph 11(e), in so far as that objective relates to either or both of the following:

(a) customer information programs;
(b) customer cabling installation programs.

(2) Page 25 (after line 26), after Division 4, insert:

Division 4A—Facilitation of the voice customer migration policy objective

Subdivision A—Access to information or documents held by a carriage service provider

29A Access to information or documents held by a carriage service provider

Scope

(1) This section applies to a carriage service provider if TUSMA believes on reasonable grounds that the carriage service provider has information or a document that is relevant to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Requirement

(2) TUSMA may, by written notice given to the carriage service provider, require the carriage service provider:

(a) to give to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner and form specified in the notice, any such information; or
(b) to produce to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner specified in the notice, any such documents; or
(c) to make copies of any such documents and to produce to TUSMA, within the period and in the manner specified in the notice, those copies.

(3) A period specified under subsection (2) must not be shorter than 14 days after the notice is given.

Compliance

(4) A carriage service provider must comply with a requirement under subsection (2) to the extent that the carriage service provider is capable of doing so.

(5) A carriage service provider commits an offence if:

(a) TUSMA has given a notice to the carriage service provider under subsection (2); and
(b) the carriage service provider engages in conduct; and
(c) the carriage service provider's conduct contravenes a requirement in the notice.

Penalty for contravention of this subsection: 50 penalty units.

29B Copying documents—compensation

A carriage service provider is entitled to be paid by TUSMA reasonable compensation for complying with a requirement covered by paragraph 29A(2)(c).

29C Copies of documents

(1) TUSMA may:

(a) inspect a document or copy produced under subsection 29A(2); and
(b) make and retain copies of, or take and retain extracts from, such a document.

(2) TUSMA may retain possession of a copy of a document produced in accordance with a requirement covered by paragraph 29A(2)(c).

29D TUSMA may retain documents

(1) TUSMA may take, and retain for as long as is necessary, possession of a document produced under subsection 29A(2).

(2) The carriage service provider otherwise entitled to possession of the document is entitled...
to be supplied, as soon as practicable, with a copy certified by TUSMA to be a true copy.

(3) The certified copy must be received in all courts and tribunals as evidence as if it were the original.

(4) Until a certified copy is supplied, TUSMA must, at such times and places as TUSMA thinks appropriate, permit the carriage service provider otherwise entitled to possession of the document, or a person authorised by that carriage service provider, to inspect and make copies of, or take extracts from, the document.

29E Law relating to legal professional privilege not affected

This Subdivision does not affect the law relating to legal professional privilege.

Subdivision B—Disclosure of information

29F Disclosure of information

Scope

(1) This section applies to information that:

(a) was obtained by TUSMA under section 29A; or

(b) is contained in a document, or a copy of a document, that was produced to TUSMA under section 29A.

Disclosure

(2) TUSMA may disclose the information to a carriage service provider if the disclosure is for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Subdivision C—Consent to customer contact

29G Consent to customer contact

Scope

(1) This section applies to a carriage service provider if:

(a) TUSMA believes on reasonable grounds that, if the carriage service provider were to consent to another person (the third person) contacting:

(i) the carriage service provider's customers; or

(ii) customers included in a particular class of the carriage service provider's customers;

for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective, that consent would be likely to facilitate the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(b) the carriage service provider is not a contractor in relation to a section 13 contract entered into for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(c) the carriage service provider is not a grant recipient in relation to a section 13 grant made for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective.

Requirement

(2) TUSMA may, by written notice given to the carriage service provider, require the carriage service provider:

(a) to consent to the third person contacting:

(i) if subparagraph (1)(a)(i) applies—the carriage service provider's customers; or

(ii) if subparagraph (1)(a)(ii) applies—customers included in a specified class of the carriage service provider's customers;

for a purpose relating to the achievement of the voice customer migration policy objective; and

(b) to do so within the period and in the manner specified in the notice.

(3) A period specified under subsection (2) must not be shorter than 14 days after the notice is given.

Compliance

(4) A carriage service provider must comply with a requirement under subsection (2).

(5) A carriage service provider commits an offence if:

(a) TUSMA has given a notice to the carriage service provider under subsection (2); and

(b) the carriage service provider engages in conduct; and

(c) the carriage service provider's conduct contravenes a requirement in the notice.

Penalty for contravention of this subsection: 50 penalty units.
SCHEDULE B

(1) Clause 4, page 8 (after line 22), after the definition of *telecommunications industry*, insert:

*Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman* has the same meaning as in the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999*.

(2) Clause 38, page 30 (line 2), omit paragraph (2)(d), substitute:

(d) consumer affairs;

(3) Heading to clause 122, page 73 (line 3), omit "the ACMA and the ACCC", substitute "certain bodies or persons".

(4) Clause 122, page 73 (line 5), omit "authorities", substitute "bodies or persons".

(5) Clause 122, page 73 (lines 6 and 7), omit "authority to perform or exercise any of its functions or powers", substitute "body or person to perform or exercise any of the functions or powers of the body or person".

(6) Clause 122, page 73 (line 9), at the end of subclause (1), add:

; (c) the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman;

(d) the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee;

(e) the Secretary of the Department.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (17:28): I move:

That the requested amendments be made.

The government supports the amendments requested by the Senate because they will assist TUSMA to carry out functions in relation to the migration of voice-only customers. TUSMA will arrange for the provision of information to voice-only customers prior to a copper service being disconnected and, if necessary, supporting any basic in-home rewiring required for voice-only customers to continue receiving a voice-only service over the NBN fibre network.

These amendments will enable TUSMA to require information or documents from the carriage service provider and to require that a carriage service provider consents to a third party contacting that provider's customers. This will be important to enable TUSMA and relevant carriage service providers to accurately identify voice-only customers so that they can be notified about their service options and the processes involved if they wish to maintain a fixed-line voice service during the migration to the National Broadband Network. I therefore ask the House to support the amendments that are before it from the Senate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms K Livermore): The question is that the requested amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Universal Service Reform) Bill 2011

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

*Senate’s amendment—*

(1) Schedule 1, page 8 (after line 27), after item 28, insert:

**28A Section 284 (heading)**

Repeal the heading, substitute:

**284 Assisting the ACMA, the ACCC, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or TUSMA**

**28B At the end of section 284**

Add:

(4) Sections 276 and 277 do not prohibit a disclosure by a person of information or a document if:

(a) the disclosure is made to, or to a member of the staff of, TUSMA; and
(b) the information or document may assist TUSMA to carry out its functions or powers.

28C Section 299 (heading)
Repeal the heading, substitute:

299 Assisting the ACMA, the ACCC, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or TUSMA

28D At the end of section 299 (before the note)
Add:
(4) If information or a document is disclosed to a person as permitted by subsection 284(4) or this subsection, the person must not disclose or use the information or document except for the purpose of, or in connection with, the carrying out of TUSMA's functions and powers.

28E Section 299 (note)
Omit "or the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman", substitute "the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or TUSMA".

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (17:29): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The government considers that this amendment will facilitate TUSMA's achievement of its public interest telecommunications policy objectives. The amendment will allow for the flow of relevant information to TUSMA as the statutory agency with responsibility for entering into and managing contacts and grants for universal service and other public interest telecommunications outcomes. This amendment achieves this by permitting industry participants such as carriers and service providers to disclose information or documents to TUSMA where this would assist TUSMA in carrying out its contract and grant related functions and powers. The amendment mirrors existing provisions in part 13 of the Telecommunications Act 1997 that currently provide for disclosure of information to the ACMA, the ACCC and the TIO to enable those entities to carry out their functions or powers. I commend the Senate amendment to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms K Livermore): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011
Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012
Second Reading
Cognate debate.

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

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (17:31): The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and cognate bill both have misleading titles. The main bill, the maintaining address bill, should in fact be called the 'changing address bill'. The Minister for the Public Service and Integrity, in introducing that bill, said in his second reading speech that it would not cause automatic enrolment, and discussion at that stage was, 'We are only going to change addresses; we are not going to go to automatic enrolment.' However, shortly thereafter, we received the second bill, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill, which in fact should read 'electoral amendment (automatic enrolment) bill', because that is precisely what it does. It takes people off lists which are compiled for another purpose and data matches and decides that, if someone who has a particular address is not on the roll, they will automatically be placed on the roll. This follows in the footsteps of the dying days of the New South Wales parliament and the
Victorian parliament, when both thought they would get an electoral advantage from doing this, and the Commonwealth is following for the same reasons.

This is one of a series of bills that have been designed to give Labor and the Greens an electoral advantage. When we were in office we had removed prisoners from eligibility to vote, but the Labor Party changed it so that, unless prisoners had a sentence of more than two years, they would be allowed to vote. This of course disclosed that there are really bad criminals serving two years who are allowed to vote, and perhaps the Labor Party rightly made the conclusion that those sorts of people would vote Labor rather than Liberal and it would give them an electoral advantage.

In all the inquiries of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, when we have asked questions and tried to find any evidence that this would be really beneficial, all we have found is that this has been a proposal of the Labor Party and the Greens, who have been in lock-step. Unfortunately, the AEC has been in lock-step in suggesting it would be an advantage as well.

I think it is important that we look at other people's writings on the nature of electoral law in this country to find a way in which we should progress these matters. Professor Orr in his excellent book *The Law of Politics* writes: 'The roll is essential to the franchise. Without it the franchise as a mass electorate would be very hard to police. It also serves in practice to limit the franchise.' As Acting Chief Justice Brennan put in Muldowney and the Australian Electoral Commission, the electoral roll is pivotal to the electoral system. He held that the qualifications to vote include enrolment, noting that the term 'elector' is defined to mean someone on the roll and that mandating an administrative hurdle like enrolment created no undue hardship.

The Electoral Act does put an onus and a responsibility onto the individual. Once they become a citizen and are 18 years of age they must enrol. It is compulsory. In fact, last night the Electoral Commission held a function to celebrate 100 years of compulsory enrolment. It also was celebrating 50 years of Indigenous Australians being included on the roll. That indeed is a celebration. I pointed out in my speech last night that I was very proud to be a member of the Liberal Party, the party of which the first Aboriginal Senator, Senator Neville Bonner, was a member, and the party of which the first person of Aboriginal heritage in this House, Mr Ken Wyatt, is also a member. I could point out that the government could have had the opportunity of having a senator of Aboriginal descent, Mr Mundine, who would have been a grace to the Senate, but of course he was overlooked in favour of Mr Carr, the failed former Premier of New South Wales.

In looking at that celebration last night, it was interesting that all the material that was on display was about encouraging people to meet with their obligations to enrol and to change their address when they move, because that is the law. Currently, until this bill is passed, the law is that the responsibility is the obligation of the person who has attained the age of 18 and is a citizen of this country. As Acting Chief Justice Brennan pointed out in his decision, it is not an onerous one. But there are provisions in the act which say that, if you do not enrol or notify the AEC of your changed address, there is a fine, which is applicable; it is strict liability. There are no fines paid because the AEC does not enforce the law in this regard. In fact, when you look at the letters that the AEC write to people whom they believe through their data-
checking may not be at that address, the AEC simply say: 'Remember you are eligible. It is the legal requirement to enrol and failure to do so may result in a fine.' Of course, it never does. Under the law it should say, 'You will be subject to being fined' and those fines should be collected—but no. This legislation removes that obligation from the Electoral Commission. Under this legislation, the commissioner is no longer required to fine people once they have been automatically enrolled or had their address changed by the AEC.

If you go to the second reading speech of the Special Minister of State, it is full of statements which are simply not borne out by the facts. He says in his second reading speech:

… there are one and a half million Australian citizens who cannot choose their representatives in parliament.

Well, yes they can. All they have to do is comply with the law and enrol or notify the AEC of any change of address. Their ability to vote is entirely within their hands. They have the interim period between the last election and the one that follows—that entire period. Indeed, under legislation brought in by this government, this includes the period of time from when the writs are issued; it has been lengthened. So people can enrol almost up to the last minute.

The minister says in his speech:

This bill will protect the participation of eligible Australian citizens in the electoral process by establishing a safety net for enrolment and voting.

No, it will not. It will automatically add names to the roll without people's authority or consent. The minister goes on to say:

This amendment will not affect the integrity of the electoral roll …

No, it will not. It will in fact reduce the integrity of the roll. This is where a philosophical divide exists between the coalition, and the Labor Party and the Greens. We say that the first and foremost obligation of the Electoral Commissioner is to uphold the integrity of the roll—that is, to make it as free from error and fraud as can possibly be done. The system that is being introduced will simply add names to the roll, without adequate checking and without the consent of the individual elector. It is the obligation of the elector to do it. The proposed system opens up the roll to fraud and to error. We were very obliged to Dr Clarke from the Privacy Foundation, who came before our committee, for giving us very useful evidence about the way in which data processing is utilised, how it is subject to false positives and false negatives and how it is not to be relied upon as being safe to use at all.

But to go back to the speech of the Special Minister of State, he said:

The bill will ensure the accuracy and completeness of the roll …

No, it will not. It will leave it open to more errors and to the possibility of fraud. During evidence given by Mr Killesteyn, I asked him whether, if a particular set of circumstances were a reality, someone could be struck from the roll improperly. I asked him this question: 'Supposing we had Mrs Bloggs, who in fact had not moved from her address. She is one of those people who have a second house. Her principal place of residence is X but on the list that you have obtained—that is, Mr Killesteyn—her address is shown as Y and she is not going to get your letter.' Mr Killesteyn gave evidence that he only writes to the new address and not to the old. 'She is not going to reply to you in 28 days and you are going to change her address. She is going to rock up on election day and be told she is not on the roll because her other address is in a different electorate. She has no right to be on the roll.

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in the different electorate but someone who perhaps knew that it had been changed could rock up in her name and it could be a marginal seat and someone could vote in her name. She would be denied her vote and a fraudulent vote would be counted in a marginal electorate. How are you going to overcome that difficulty?

Mr Killesteyn replied:

Going back to the original proposition, everything you said about the address change is true. But one would wonder why that individual would have changed the address either with Centrelink, Australia Post or the Roads and Traffic Authority—

The fact of the matter is that, under this legislation, the Electoral Commission is given the absolute right to choose any list they like to data-match, to change addresses and to enrol people who are not presently enrolled. Mr Killesteyn said that he currently uses only the RTA or the equivalent thereof from various states, Australia Post and Centrelink. Centrelink, I think it is sensible to realise, is the collection database of 100 agencies. So there are an enormous number of scrubbed databases already fed into the one that the Electoral Commissioner uses. The question as to why anyone would do that really does not answer the question. Mr Killesteyn said that everything I said was correct, and it can and no doubt will be done at some stage.

But now we go to the evidence about what transpired in New South Wales and Victoria. It is important here to again go to the second reading speech of the minister. It says:

This notice will advise the recipient that they have 28 days to inform the Electoral Commissioner that they do not live at that address or are not entitled to enrolment.

Of course, we have established that the Electoral Commissioner only writes to the new address. That is the one he has gained from the databases. He does not, as he has specifically told us, write to the old address. Very simply, we will have people who can be wrongly enrolled. Further in his speech the minister says:

This is similar to the successful processes currently used in New South Wales and Victoria.

Let us look at the success rate. In New South Wales around 92 per cent of people are on the good old-fashioned roll, the one that is properly compiled by people who actually sign an enrolment form and lodge it with the Electoral Commission. All of that will be going, as a necessity. People can still do it, but it will not be essential to get on the roll. Of the people who were automatically enrolled, only 64 per cent of them voted. Of those on the properly established roll, 92 per cent voted. Of the 64 per cent who voted on the new automatic enrolment, the commissioner now writes to them and says that they have been placed on the roll in either New South Wales or Victoria but that that does not put them on the roll for federal elections and would they please fill out the relevant forms and send them back, or if it is to be an online change of address do it there. Their success rate from that letter is 20 per cent. That is an 80 per cent failure rate. In the minister's words, 'This is similar to the successful processes currently used in New South Wales and Victoria.' If that is a success rate, then we can do without it federally, thank you very much.

We go on to the question of reliable sources. The minister says:

Information from reliable sources is already used by the Australian Electoral Commission to monitor the accuracy of the roll and to remove a person from the roll through objection action.

Under this legislation the objection process goes. So there will be no cleansing of the roll for people who are wrongly placed in that address. There will merely be the affirmative action process of people being put on the roll
because of another collection of data on another list not compiled for this purpose and their address changed similarly. The minister says that this is not an automatic process. Yet, when the Electoral Commissioner writes to these people he says that they have been automatically enrolled by, what he calls, successful New South Wales and Victorian processes. Clearly, it is an automatic process.

The minister in charge of the bill further states in his speech:

The existing law provides that where electors have been removed from the electoral roll due to an administrative error or a mistake of fact, their votes can be admitted to further scrutiny after the Electoral Commission has verified the elector's enrolment and voting entitlement. However, being removed from the roll through objection action does not currently constitute an administrative error or mistake of fact.

Therefore, there is provision for checking and provision for declaratory votes.

The very useful book, which I quoted from before, The Law of Politics by Professor Graeme Orr, draws our attention to the important fact that the roll is the final determinant of who is entitled to vote. He says: 'Like other official public registers, such as land registers, a chief feature of electoral rolls is their finality. The purpose of a roll is to be a definitive statement of the entitlement to vote'—leaving aside the potential for provisional declaration votes by those erroneously omitted from the roll—'Thus there is a rule that the roll is conclusive evidence of the entitlement to vote. Reinforcing this is the secondary rule in almost all jurisdictions that a court of disputed returns is not to inquire into the correctness of the roll.'

Again, I come back to this philosophical divide that on this side of the House we say that the integrity of the roll is the first responsibility to be pursued at all costs by the Electoral Commission whereas, on the other side of the House, the government says, 'No, just adding numbers is far more important.' That is a very important philosophical divide. But our contention is backed up by judicial findings. In the case of Perkins and Cusack, the federal Court of Disputed Returns faced a petition claiming that many people were on the roll for the seat of the Eden-Monaro, whose real place of living was outside the electorate. Imagine that! Even though it was alleged that some enrolled electors lived at addresses that lay outside the divisional boundaries, Mr Justice Starke refused to allow any evidence to be tendered that might contradict the face of the roll.

In the case of Re Berrill's Petition in 1975, a three-judge bench of the High Court sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns rejected the claim on jurisdictional grounds where Mrs Berrill had complained about the state of the electoral roll. The court rejected that claim on jurisdictional grounds, citing the prohibition of going behind the roll. Importantly, Mr Justice Stephen noted that this did not mean that errors in the roll were completely unreviewable. This is a very important finding. Rather, he noted that the prohibition assumes that errors on the roll ought to be put in order before an election rather than risking dislocation of the democratic process through illegal challenges to the roll during the campaign or after it. That is why we say the integrity of the roll has to be foremost and why we reject the proposition that the government puts forward that merely adding names to the list at any cost is the correct way to proceed. This is certainly backed up by that ruling by Mr Justice Stephen, because it is implicit in automatic enrolment and automatic changing of addresses that there will be errors brought into the roll that otherwise would not be there.
I go back to the points that were made by the minister in charge of the bill, the Special Minister of State. He said:

With the trend in declining enrolment participation, it is no longer possible to keep doing the same things in the same way, particularly as superior processes have been successfully implemented in New South Wales and Victoria.

The desperate measures put in place by the New South Wales Labor government and the Victorian Labor government did not save them from being defeated. The fact of the matter is that they introduced into their rolls errors which are the result of the process that this bill will bring in. There are two things to say about some of the technicalities associated with data-matching and the use of rolls created for another purpose. Firstly, on the government's own privacy website, at Privacy.gov.au/law/other/datamatch, it states:

Data-matching involves bringing together data from different sources and comparing it. Much of the data-matching done by agencies subject to the Privacy Act aims to identify people for further action or investigation. ... Data-matching poses a particular threat to personal privacy because it involves analysing information about large numbers of people without prior cause for suspicion.

That is very important in the privacy aspects of the roll. There is provision in the current act for people to be exempted from being placed on the roll because they may be fearful of domestic violence or for a number of other reasons. There is provision for that and many people are indeed exempted. But, under this system, as the government itself warns, wearing another hat, there is the problem that people who would rightly be entitled to be not on the roll would be put automatically on the roll. That does not necessarily mean people who have already applied and are off the roll; it also means people who are yet to apply to not be on the roll, who would simply be automatically put on. That would apply particularly to young people, because they have not had the opportunity, prior to their turning 18, to be concerned about this issue.

So, on the one hand, the government warns, through its privacy website, that there are a great deal of problems in using data-matching because, in its words, 'it involves analysing information about large numbers of people without prior cause for suspicion,' and yet, on the other hand, the government brings in a bill which is going to overlook all of that because it thinks that there is a political advantage for it.

We are very obliged to Dr Roger Clarke, from the Privacy Foundation. I am very proud to say that I have worked with that foundation before, when I worked with many others to fight off the Labor Party's Australia Card, which was to be a national identity card and which we were successful in defeating.

Mr Garrett: We were indeed.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: We were on the same side on that one. It was quite remarkable. That was before you got seduced, dare I say.

Dr Clarke said, in his evidence to us:

The point about data matching is that it is extraordinarily error-prone. It is based on, firstly, name; secondly, usually, elements of address and, thirdly, date of birth. Date of birth is commonly unreliable. People fib about their ages. Many people are not very pleased about having to disclose their ages, and that includes males as well as females. Address in this context cannot be used because the whole purpose of the study is to come up with different addresses and therefore you cannot match on it. So you have you got to reduce quality of data matching in this data-matching program compared to all the other data-matching programs that go on in government.

Name is enormously variable in its recording and is routinely 'scrubbed'—that is the term used—in
order to try to muck around with the data, modify the data, in order to make it seem right. It is differently scrubbed by every different agency, so we have differential collection for different purposes in different ways with different data-quality measures with different data-scrubbing measures, and then we bundle all this together and match it. The false positives that arise from this are enormous, as indeed are the false negatives, because there are enormous numbers of occasions where matches could in principle be discovered which in fact are not discovered by the algorithms that are used. It is extraordinarily error prone. In circumstances like these you would think enormous care would be taken, enormous justification would have to be provided, proportionality would be taken account of and it would only be done when there are very serious benefits to be gained. Unfortunately that is far from the case.

In other words, Dr Clarke, who is skilled in the e-business industry, has pointed out to us the use of scrubbing, the way in which data is collected and modified to suit the purposes for which it is collected, and such data is now going to be bundled together and used by the Electoral Commissioner to change the electoral roll, the integrity of which is fundamental to running a proper democratic system.

I think we have to conclude, unfortunately, that the government and the Greens, who have been pushing this agenda for a considerable period of time because they feel it gives them an electoral advantage, are going to be able to force this legislation through the parliament. However, it will certainly be looked at should we be successful in being elected to government at the next election. At the last gasp, the failed Victorian and New South Wales governments tried this ploy to enhance their chances of re-election. I suspect the same outcome as befell them will befall the Gillard government and its aspirations to try and gain an electoral advantage from this. I would like to conclude by saying that I suspect the next piece of legislation in this train of manipulation of the electoral process will be to try to introduce the South Australian voting system whereby, if you do not complete your ballot paper, a bureaucrat will take it over for you if there has been a registered ticket. Watch this space. I fear that the evils that can be done to the electoral system are not yet finished.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (18:00): Let me say at the outset that, with that contribution, the member for Mackellar has shown that she will be never known as the guardian of the franchise. The debate we are having today in relation to these two bills, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012, is an argument about enfranchisement and disenfranchisement. The drivel that came from the member for Mackellar would have you believe that there is a conspiracy between the Labor Party and the Greens, in lockstep with the independent Australian Electoral Commission. During the hearings in relation to these two matters and on other occasions—and indeed, I am told, last night at a function held at the Electoral Commission; I had to leave early and so I have heard this second-hand—the member for Mackellar has continually asserted a connection between the Electoral Commission and the government.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Electoral Commission is independent and has shown itself to be independent. On Saturday I will celebrate 22 years in this place, and for most of that time I have been on the commission—yes, it was a Freudian slip. For most of that time, I have been on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. I have seen arguments of the commission with all the political parties. The commission has on numerous occasions put
submissions to the committee that the political parties have not accepted. In a number of instances in relation to these bills, a proper reading of the transcripts and submissions over time will show that the commission was ahead of the action when it came to some of these measures, as against the political parties, and was arguing for these measures because they would assist with enfranchisement.

The member for Mackellar did not tell you that, in the joint standing committee report tabled in February 2012, on the maintaining address bill, at paragraph 1.4, on page 4, the following appears in relation to the first bill we are debating today, which blows the conspiracy theory out of the water. There is a conspiracy. There is a conspiracy by the member for Mackellar to confuse and dissemble. At paragraph 1.4, the committee report says:

The Bill is described in the Explanatory Memorandum (EM) as implementing recommendation 10 of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters’ Report on the conduct of the 2007 federal election and matters related thereto. It was a unanimous recommendation. The members of the committee for that report were—

And there is a list of the Labor members and others. The Liberal members were: Scott Morrison MP, Bruce Scott MP, Senator Simon Birmingham and Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson. Senator Ronaldson was the shadow minister in charge of the Electoral Act. Mr Morrison is a former state director of the Liberal Party. The point I am making here is that they agreed to the contents of this bill before the House. The change to the recommendation only occurred when the member for Mackellar got onto the committee and, for political advantage, changed the position of the Liberal Party. These reports are based on amendments that were made in some instances by the former government and we now know their effect, which is that they resulted in the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of people. The report in relation to automatic enrolment and other matters obviously shows that there has been development in a number of the states, and it is all about enfranchising people from reliable sources.

In my time in this place there is only one area where I have argued for disenfranchisement, and I do not apologise for it. The member for Mackellar would be surprised to learn that my supporter in the recommendation I made arising out of the 2007 election was none other than Alan Jones. The recommendation I made was that those British subjects who have had their vote protected since 1984 should at least have to take out Australian citizenship by 2014 in order to maintain their right to vote in this country, so that citizenship should be a requirement. That is the only time in my time on the electoral committee and I was the only one who signed it, for a particular reason.

It is not unique to Australia. It happens in Britain and it happens in New Zealand, so there is an argument there. But on every other occasion what motivates me is not political. It is not: do these people vote Liberal or Labor? Or is it like the hanging chad instance in Florida? It is to ensure the franchise, protect the franchise and enable it, and not have administrative features that result in disenfranchisement. That is what some of the provisions of the former government have done in relation to prisoners and, in the second case, in relation to the declaration votes, where people might not have responded to correspondence and have had their name taken off the roll. They show up on the day and the proof of identity provisions and a combination of all these matters has resulted in a massive reduction in the reinstatement of people who were
otherwise entitled to vote. So paperwork, a bit of slackness or an error resulted in their losing the important right to vote. We should err, with some constraints, on the side of the franchise. That is why the High Court in a number of recent cases basically said, of the former government's legislation in relation to prisoners, 'Bad luck. You got it wrong', and said in relation to the seven-day closing of the rolls, which was brought forward, 'You got it wrong. Fix it up,' because tens and tens of thousands of people were disenfranchised.

What I say to my colleagues who are listening and to those who are following this debate is: actually analyse what the member for Mackellar has said and you will find that most of it is rubbish—paranoid, delusional, conspiratorial theory about the Labor Party and the Greens being worried about a block of votes that votes for them overwhelmingly. That is not my concern. I am actually not frightened of losing, if that is what the people want. I have to say the member for Mackellar has been consistent; I will give her credit for that. But her view is not uniform, even within the Liberal Party, and it is the same on our side of the chamber. A number of the provisions are reinstating because we now have the results of what those changes meant. The proof of identity, which meant tens and tens of thousands, is an example.

What are we, as parliamentarians, to do—make it hard with lots of loops? The Liberal Party is supposed to be the party that gets rid of red tape. We had 11½ years of red tape inserted into the Electoral Act, which has resulted in numerous people being disenfranchised. We have one of the best electoral systems in the world and one of the best electoral commissions in the world. They are truly professional and truly independent. They should not have to put up with the rubbish and garbage that comes out of the member for Mackellar with an inference that they are somehow doing the Labor Party's bidding—far from it. I have some views that certainly differ from the Electoral Commission, but you can respect professionals who have different views. The member for Mackellar seems to be saying, 'Unless you agree with me, your view is not worth pursuing.' I say to the member for Mackellar that the worst thing she can do, or I can do, is pursue political advantage.

The Liberal Party have actually done quite well out of the electoral system. Some want to have optional voting. Compulsory voting was actually introduced by the conservatives in the twenties. Many good electoral features have been introduced by the conservative side of politics, and they have done pretty well at a federal level. Indeed, since Federation conservatives have ruled for 65 or 66 per cent of the time. But what they cannot stand, and what this is about, is a class of people, those whom they regard as a different class of uneducated and uninformed people, having equality and the right to vote at the same level. I have to tell you, a lot of people are confused by the electoral system because they do not have our obsessions. Some of us are obsessed with electoral systems. Why? Because it is a precious right to be able to go along and vote for your representative in your area, whether they be Labor, Liberal, National or Callithumpian. People are fighting overseas to defend democracies or to create democracies so that dictators, totalitarian regimes and tanks are not the basis of a vote.

In my humble opinion, we have one of the best democracies in the world, the best electoral systems in the world and the best commission in the world. Regarding the idea that fraud is rampant in our society, we have had members of the Liberal Party, the former member for McEwen, members in Adelaide, and Chris Gallus as well, elected by a handful of votes, and there has been the opportunity to put up or shut up and show
there is electoral fraud. We have provisions in the Electoral Act where, if there is multiple voting that makes a difference, you provide the evidence and if it affects the result you get a fresh ballot. They are all there.

We make the rules and, in my opinion, if there is a problem it is our fault and not the commission's. They have to implement the rules and the law as they are. Do not blame them; blame us. In the time of the Howard government the former commissioner defended a number of matters that the government was pushing forward. That was his role, and we were critical of it in relation to some amendments to the Electoral Act. But an independent Public Service is required to provide the material as an independent Public Service, not to take a partisan position, and it is not right of me to criticise members of the commission if they do not happen to agree with me and are asserting it.

I am disappointed with the member for Mackellar. I know she is passionate. I know she genuinely believes in what she is saying. But there is a saying 'garbage in, garbage out', which is, really, how you can judge a lot of the contribution that has been made in relation to—

Mrs Mirabella: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I find that offensive and I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Melham: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms K Livermore): I thank the member for Banks.

Mr Melham: It was not meant to be offensive but, if it is offensive, I withdraw. That is not the nature of what I am trying to say. What I am saying is: have a look at the quality of the material that the member for Mackellar is putting up. I have looked at it. I know she is genuine about it and I do not really question her genuineness. But she is wrong; she is absolutely wrong. If we followed what she said, tens of thousands of people would be disenfranchised. We were not inundated by submission after submission from groups who have an interest in electoral matters saying, 'You're on the wrong path.' This is not the first inquiry we have had in relation to each of these bills, because they arise out of submissions to the inquiries into the 2007 election and the 2010 election. People had an opportunity then to submit to the bills but we did not get many submissions. We struggled to get people and the member for Mackellar was allowed the opportunity to bring along anyone she wanted. If what we were doing was wrong, if what we were doing was crooked, if what we were doing was partisan, this parliament and the committee would have been inundated, before, during and after the event, with criticism.

The Privacy Foundation people again were genuine. I missed the first hearing—I had another commitment—but I was there for the second and I listened respectfully to them. Again, the transcript speaks for itself. It did not convince me that we were going down the wrong path. I believe in my heart of hearts that what we are doing by these two measures is enfranchising. We should pursue them to the end and enact them, because many tens of thousands of eligible people will then have their vote counted; otherwise, they will continue to be disqualified, morally and in every other way wrongly, from having their vote counted to elect their parliament, their representative, their government.

Mrs Mirabella (Indi) (18:16): In speaking on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and cognate bill I will attempt to be more sober in my approach than the member for Banks. It is understandable at times that there is a competition about who can be
more hairy-chested about being more democratic in this place, and the integrity of the electoral roll is absolutely fundamental to the integrity of our democracy. We do not have huge variations in the number of seats which switch from one party to another when there is a general election. Often an election is decided on a handful of votes in a handful of seats. That places an even greater emphasis on doing what we can to have as accurate an electoral roll as possible. That is why the integrity of the electoral roll is absolutely central to the integrity of our democracy.

I was rather perplexed by some of the comments made by the member for Banks when he spoke of some people in the opposition wanting to disenfranchise people and somehow having different classes of people. What absolute rubbish! What absolute rubbish, invoking some nebulous class war argument that here is the opposition thinking there are classes of people who we should lock out of the voting system. How absolutely absurd. This is obviously just another time filler, because at the moment everyone is equal. Everyone who qualifies as an Australian citizen has gained the privilege of enrolling and of voting in our system. Somehow there is this Orwellian language when we speak of our democracy and elections—it is quite perverse—saying that somehow we are a better democracy if Big Brother decides on people's enrolment and their change of address details; Big Brother is there to look after all these people who are incapable of doing it themselves. That, friends on the other side, is the arrogance and the elitism that is a central part of your argument, because, in our current system, Australians who are eligible to vote have the right and the obligation to enrol.

We have significant problems on this side, and it begins with but goes beyond the fundamental belief that individuals should be active participants in their democracy. We cannot force people to be active or to care. Quite frankly, when they look at the state of the current political system federally, do you wonder why they do not care and that they watch events in this place with utter despair and disappointment?

This legislation removes personal responsibility from an elector to fill out an enrolment form, to fill in their details. At the 2007 election over 20,600 votes were multiple votes. It has been noted, particularly by opposition Senator Scott Ryan, who takes a particular interest in these matters, with great disappointment, which I have to say I share, that the Australian Electoral Commission did not prosecute any cases of fraudulent voting. It disturbs me that there were so many multiple votes, and these sorts of things should be investigated. If we want to say that we have an open and transparent democracy, we need to look at these issues and examine them. Another significant problem is: how can you arm appropriate authorities with the best information to tackle fraud when you remove one of those matters that is examined in determining whether there has been electoral fraud—that is, an elector's signature? When they enrol, they fill in the enrolment form and sign it. Automatic enrolment just does away with that. That disturbs me significantly. And we see how automatic enrolment will occur. We are told that the AEC will use data sources. They will have the sole discretion to use so-called 'reliable and current data', and it is an opt-out system. If you do not object within 28 days, then you are automatically added to the roll. There are significant problems with that. Can someone in the Labor Party please explain why a potential elector is not trusted to fill in their enrolment form but they are trusted with a vote? Why cannot those opposite, who are pursuing this legislation,
have the basic respect for potential voters to allow them the privilege to actually enrol to vote and to change their details?

We can see an enormous array of problems when it comes to updating people's enrolment details, for a whole number of reasons, and yet these are utterly brushed aside. When we look at the so-called reliable data that is going to be used, let us look at some government information. I can see the member for Melbourne Ports bursting to have a go. I think you are on next, mate, so just do not get too excited. The fact that one government, which may have been of my persuasion, at some time in the past used data for a particular purpose does not mean that that data was absolutely accurate and infallible. No government data in an aggregate sense would be more accurate than an individual actually choosing to fill in the electoral form, whether to go onto the roll or to change their details.

So what is reliable and current data? We are told that this will be determined by the Australian Electoral Commission themselves, and we have serious concerns about this because there are flaws in data that the government collects. Let us just look at some details. There are 185,000 potential duplicate tax records for individuals; 62 per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased in a sample match; and, when we look at tax file numbers, there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia at the last census. So there are flaws. There are mistakes with data because it requires data entry. There is human error involved in all of that. So let us not pretend that Big Brother, assembling and amassing a whole lot of information, is superior to that individual Australian who has the privilege of filling out that enrolment form. It just makes absolute nonsense to say that that is the case. The Labor Party goes on to essentially say: 'Well, everything is excusable. There'll be a few mistakes. That's okay because our overriding concern is maximising the franchise.' That is the argument.

**Mr Danby:** Democracy! Democracy!

**Mrs Mirabella:** 'Democracy!' my friend from Melbourne Ports calls out. As a proud custodian of the culture and philosophy that gave the world democracy, Member for Melbourne Ports, I am a very proud advocate of democracy, but don't we find it somewhat ironic that we have a government saying, 'We want democracy'? What is democracy? If we break it down, it is the will of the people. So we have Big Brother telling the people: 'This is your will. We will enrol you.' How utterly absurd. How counterintuitive. The Labor Party can talk about democracy all they like, whilst they disrespect the intelligence of the Australian people to enrol to vote. If there are issues, we have worked over decades on electoral education, on getting people onto the roll. But this attempt to introduce automatic enrolment and to have automatic changes to people's address details will only increase problems with the integrity of the roll because there are already embedded problems with the correctness of the information in the data with which this automatic enrolment and changes to the enrolment will be undertaken.

It is not actually that difficult and it is not actually that onerous to fill out an enrolment form. It is absolutely absurd to say, 'That is such a high bar.' If you take that to its logical conclusion, then, for so many things that we need to be proactive to fill in forms about, why don't we just dispense with that? Why don't we have Big Brother in every department just making decisions about what we should do? That is the logical conclusion of what the Labor Party are proposing. They expect us, on this very, very important issue
of the integrity of the electoral roll, to just have blind faith that the 'reliable and current data source', which has no definition, which will be at the discretion of the commission, will be absolutely flawless. We cannot accept that because we have seen data that is flawed.

They hold up the automatic enrolment in New South Wales, and that has not been without its problems. Only 12 per cent of people who had their details automatically changed in New South Wales—at the state level—then enrolled themselves federally. As a result, electoral commissions at both federal and state level are having extraordinary difficulty in contacting people. This is just one example of the problems you get with automatic enrolment.

We do not believe that government knows best. We do not believe in the nanny state. We believe in upholding and respecting the rights and responsibilities of individual Australian citizens to change their enrolment forms and details. Beyond that, we think there is great scope to water down the integrity of the electoral roll. I do not have a view about the voting intentions of one group of people as opposed to another—we see a very fluid change in the Australian community. What I am concerned about is Big Brother making big mistakes and watering down this great democracy of ours.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (18:31):
It is a great pleasure and honour to speak on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address Bill) 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012 and to respond to some of the points made by the members for Indi and Mackellar. I particularly want to commend the Special Minister of State for tackling this matter and taking up the decline of enrolment across Australia.

This legislation will mean that, when it comes to elections, more Australians will have a say in who represents them. I will provide some of the extraordinary facts—as opposed to the rhetoric from obscure professors cited by the member for Mackellar—outlined by the Electoral Commission in their report on these changes to the roll. In 2001, there were 0.9 million electors not on the roll; in 2004, there were 1.2 million electors not on the roll; in 2007, there were 1.1 million electors not on the roll; and, in 2010, there were 1.4 million electors not on the roll. At the parallel elections of 2001, there were 12.6 million Australians on the roll; in 2004, there were 13 million on the roll; in 2007, there were 13.6 million on the roll; and, in 2010, there were 14.1 million on the roll. The Australian Electoral Commission estimate that, at the end of 2011, the federal enrolment participation rate was 90.2 per cent. This means that around 1.5 million people who are eligible to vote are not enrolled and consequently cannot vote.

Indeed, at the 2010 federal election, 2½ million Australians did not effectively exercise their vote. Of these, 1.4 million were not enrolled, 729,000 were enrolled but did not show up, 400,000 cast informal ballots and 166,000 provisional voters thought they had cast a valid vote but in fact had their vote excluded. These issues were all handled by other aspects of the government's electoral legislation, but I want to go back to the Electoral Commission's cool, rational, dispassionate explanation of the decline in the percentage of people who are enrolled and of the massive increase in the absolute number of Australians who are not enrolled.

The estimated enrolment participation rate on 31 December 2011 was, as I said, 90.2 per cent of the eligible population. That sits near the bottom end, the Electoral
Commission said, of any recently recorded measure of enrolment participation. The problem of non-enrolment extends beyond an asserted disengaged youth issue. Enrolment rates do not reach 90 per cent of voters until voters reach 40 years of age and the AEC’s whole-of-population target of 95 per cent enrolment is not met until electors reach their mid-50s or late 50s. Worse than that is the fact that not only is the absolute number of Australians not enrolled increasing but the percentage of the population not enrolled is also increasing. So the Electoral Commission has a very substantial problem, a problem not addressed in the remarks of either the member for Indi or the member for Mackellar.

The member for Indi spoke of a class war and used the Liberals' favourite cliches—'the integrity of the electoral roll' and 'Big Brother'. The integrity of the electoral roll involves more than just cutting people off and making it harder for them to be enrolled; it involves seeing that the Australian electoral roll accurately represents the broad mass of citizens of Australia as best it can. Some of the remarks of the member for Indi would make former Prime Minister John Howard turn in his grave—if he were in it, which thankfully he is not at the moment. But the point is that continuous roll update was used by the previous Howard government to—

Mr DANBY: I was reflecting on the content of what the member for Indi said, not on her or on former Prime Minister Howard. My point was that continuous roll update using existing databases has been used for years. Mr Howard, I seem to remember, won every election from 1996 until 2007—and what were the sinister databases provided by Big Brother? They were the very same databases that are to be used by the Electoral Commission in this proposed enrolment procedure.

The member for Indi was complaining about the failure of prosecutions which have to be initiated by the police at the recommendation of the Electoral Commission. I have often recounted to the House that between 1999 and 2010 there were six electoral events, including a referendum, and 72 proven cases of electoral fraud. In those six events approximately 72,000,000 votes were cast and there were only 72 proven cases of electoral fraud. The effect of this fraud on individual electorates has not been identified by any of the premier electoral experts—Professor Mackerras, Professor Hughes and Professor Costar.

The issue of the integrity of the electoral roll is a nonsense, and it has been raised to avoid addressing the major issue—the increasing number of Australians who are not enrolled. The number enrolled is down to 90 per cent. That means very large numbers of our fellow Australians are excluded by a process that used to take place of cutting them off the roll. As the member for Mackellar correctly pointed out, only 20 per cent of them responded to letters from the Electoral Commission. We know they can be at new addresses, and that is confirmed by two or three independent databases—whether they be Centrelink or Transport Accident Commission or other databases. This hollows out the electoral roll and makes it less valid. If you indeed value democracy,
if you indeed believe the words of the members for Mackellar and Indi about the integrity of the electoral roll, you cannot have more and more people being affected by the unintended consequence of cutting people from the electoral roll, as the Electoral Commission used to do when people did not sign bits of paper. We know the reason young people do not do that is that most of them are on email and they do not respond to hard mail. We see the huge numbers of Australian tourists going overseas. How many people are doing fly-in fly-out all around the country? We can see how mobile modern Australians are. All of these factors contribute to the old snail mail CRU 'cut them off the roll' system, effectively disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of Australians over time. This is something that any democratic parliament should have to weigh against a few cases of electoral fraud—as I said, 72 out of 72 million votes cast over a 10-year period.

This legislation is part of an effort to ensure the majority of Australians are enfranchised. Those opposite speak of the integrity of the roll when they oppose changes to our electoral laws. Today I would like to tell them we are doing something to maintain the integrity of the roll—we are ensuring that Australians have a chance to cast a vote at the ballot box. It is not Big Brother telling them how to vote; it is just giving the opportunity to vote to the hundreds of thousands of people who have been kept off the roll by the unintended consequences of a system of continuous roll update that the Electoral Commission had been legislated to undertake. Keeping people off the roll is a wrong attitude. Disenfranchising Australians is a wrong attitude. It is reprehensible that those who are now in charge of the Liberal Party oppose giving more Australians a chance to be involved in the electoral process. I am not surprised—the Liberal Party now opposes us along every step of the way, and this includes opposing changes proposed by the government to the egregious and toxic legislation the Liberals passed in 2006. As the member for Banks correctly pointed out, and as have former members of the Electoral Commission and members of the opposition—Ronaldson, Morrison, Scott et cetera—this process of more and more Australians not participating in the vote, not enrolling, being cut off, was covered in a unanimous committee report and a unanimous recommendation: no conspiracy by the Electoral Commission there.

The Liberal Party and the National Party, which remembers the good old days when 5,000 persons and 100,000 sheep were accepted as part of a rural electorate, now oppose the changes made to repeal early closing of the electoral rolls. They oppose changes to amend provisional voting laws. In my electorate, and it would be the same in everyone's electorate, you would have 1,800 people apply for a provisional vote—they had changed their address at the last minute but they lived within the electorate and they were able to provide an electricity bill or some other identification. Increasingly, because of the Liberals' 2006 changes, more and more people were cut off between 2007 and 2010. In my electorate—it is typical of what happened across Australia—of the 1,800 people who applied, only 370 got their vote. Some shocking things have happened recently. I cited the electoral experts before—Professors Mackerras, Hughes and Costar—and they agreed that the existing laws were partisan and unfair and bad for our democracy. No-one can say, having gone to the last election with these issues in front of us, that we do not have a mandate for this measure. We have a compulsory voting system in Australia and it is disturbing to me, as it should be to every Australian, that, with
a democracy like ours and compulsory voting, 2½ million Australians at the last election did not exercise a vote. It is the responsibility of this parliament to look at the fact that 1.5 million of the 15.5 million people who should have been on the electoral roll at the last election were not. The integrity that the members for Mackellar and Indi spoke about so passionately is not a matter of excluding as many Australians as you can—it is a matter of seeing that the electoral roll is current, accurate and, yes, has integrity as a result of including as many Australians as possible.

My colleague the member for Banks, who is the Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, neglected to point out one other political factor. Not only do we have the Electoral Commission, the government, others in the House and independent electoral experts supporting this legislation, but we also have the governments of New South Wales and Victoria supporting it. Excuse me, but as far as I understand it they are both of the conservative hue. Mr O'Farrell is the Premier of the New South Wales and Mr Baillieu is the Premier of Victoria. Neither of those two gentlemen or their governments seem to share the prejudices of the members for Mackellar and Indi. They do not seek to overturn the attempts to enfranchise as many Australians as possible—or, in their cases, as many Victorians or New South Welshman as possible. They are quite happy with these changes—changes accepted with the more rational support of people like Morrison, Ronaldson and Scott, who were on this committee previously.

Over time, the changes will see more Australians on the electoral roll. That will ensure its integrity. If there is any attempt to enrol people unfairly or illegally, this should be looked at by the Electoral Commission and by the Australia Federal Police. As I have said on previous occasions, attempts to look at this kind of behaviour have been minimal at best. In fact, most of the 72 cases were of people in northern New South Wales who were trying to get drivers licences in Queensland and had nothing to do with trying to rort electoral procedures. These are very great amendments and a great progress towards democracy of which this government can be very proud.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (18:46): I rise to speak on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the cognate Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. I take on board the previous speaker's comments with reference to the declining number of people not on the roll. From memory, the number was 2.9 million people not on the roll and, of those, 400,000 people cast their votes in an invalid format. Listening to the trend regarding Australians choosing whether or not to be on the roll, as a parliament we need to look at ourselves and do some soul-searching when it comes to asking why people are not motivated to be enrolled and participate in the direction of our nation.

I suggest that there is an increasing number of people who do not trust either side of government. I hear this often on polling days in Queensland. I will be joining state candidates and incumbents in Queensland this Saturday and I know I will get the standard line from a select number who roll up to polling booths and say, 'I don't trust any of you @#$%&* and I wish I could park my vote informally.' I suggest that maybe our behaviour in the House is one way we could address the concerns people have about the integrity of the parliament. I suggest a little more honesty and sincerity.

We do not have to go too far back before the last election when it comes to electoral
matters to see that we had a potential Prime Minister looking down the barrel and saying one thing and then directly after being elected doing another. It comes down to the integrity of government. When you are watching which way the data is skewing there could be some collegial evidence to support why people are choosing not to vote.

We have supported nearly 78 per cent of the bills that have come before this House. That is a staggering number given the lines that the government throw out about us—that we oppose everything, that we say no, no, no. The data I received from the library in the last term—

Mr Gray: You’re opposing this.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: Yes, I am opposing this one. You have that right. The point I am making is that we do not oppose everything. I do not suggest that the introduction of this legislation is going to change the trajectory of the figures. The coalition support the concept of less government, less intervention and the freedom for people to make a choice. Get your hands out of the pockets of business and let them have a crack.

These bills amend the Electoral Act to allow the Australian Electoral Commission to directly enrol new electors on the electoral roll when the Electoral Commissioner is satisfied that an individual is living at a particular address for a period of one month and is eligible to be on the roll, and gives the AEC authority to change the address of electors when it believes they have changed their residential address. The coalition oppose this legislation because we believe it will significantly diminish the integrity of the roll. Let us have a look at some background to this legislation.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters conducted an inquiry into the 2010 federal election and reported in July 2011. One of the recommendations of the Labor and Greens committee members was to introduce automatic enrolment. This is a process by which an individual can be placed directly on the roll without ever filling out a form and, more to the point, without their knowledge. I suggest that that is where we should not be heading. This process would enable the AEC to use information from other government sources to make a determination about who should be on the roll. There are a couple of issues here. Firstly, it is highly likely that this process will diminish the integrity of the roll—and I will talk more about that—and, secondly, it will remove the responsibility on electors to update or maintain their enrolment details when they change addresses. Currently, the honour of living in a democratic society where we have the freedom of a vote comes with some responsibility and that responsibility as an Australian is to keep the Electoral Commission informed of your whereabouts. Forms for that to happen are readily available throughout the community.

As we on this side of the House are fond of saying, we are big believers in individual responsibility. The nature of our compulsory voting system in Australia is unique among Western democracies; nevertheless, it has resulted in some of the highest voter turnout statistics in the world, which can only be a good thing. In the US for example, voter turnout frequently struggles to creep over the 50 per cent mark. At the last federal election in New Zealand, where the vote is not compulsory, turnout was about 73 per cent and, at the last British election, barely 65 per cent of voters turned out. In Australia, that figure is consistently over 90 per cent. One vote, one value—a new voter turning 18 carries exactly the same weight and the same value as the people the government scorns, such as the likes of Gina Rinehart or Clive Palmer. That is the great thing about our democracy.
The Australian population is engaged in a political process. As such, the coalition believes it is reasonable to expect that each Australian should take responsibility for enrolling to vote, maintaining their enrolment details, casting a vote when an election is called and fully extending preferences to candidates contesting elections for the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, the Labor Party and their rainbow coalition partners, the Greens, are still furiously insisting that the above requirements are simply too difficult for Australians and therefore government intervention is required to ensure that people carry out their democratic obligations.

Personally, I feel that this sort of condescending paternalism is unbecoming of the government of a politically literate and engaged country. As we often say, the coalition believes in individual responsibilities. We believe that the voter should be in charge of enrolling to vote and maintaining their own details. They do not need the government to do it on their behalf. Again, we believe in less government and, as testament to that, we are on the record as saying that when in government we will reduce the size of the Public Service. That is why every second bit of legislation the government brings to this place involves unnecessary meddling in people's lives. Why does every policy come bundled with a year's supply of cotton wool and a subheading which reads, 'We don't believe you can be trusted to do the right thing so we're going to do it for you'?

As I mentioned a moment ago, one of the big concerns the coalition has with this legislation is that it will corrupt the integrity of the electoral roll because of electors being put on the roll without their knowledge. This in turn will lead to a number of potential irregularities in the electoral process. This bill gives the AEC the discretion to determine what sort of data sources are appropriate for determining an individual's eligibility to be on the roll. We believe this goes far beyond the purview of the AEC and that it should be up to the individual elector to supply details about their enrolment. Furthermore, there is reason to be extremely concerned about the reliability of the data sources used to determine eligibility to vote. As coalition members on the joint standing committee in their dissenting report noted: The reliance on external data sources that have been collated and that are utilised for other purposes does not make it fit for them to use in informing the electoral roll.

As outlined in the previous report on these proposals, a 1999 report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration titled Numbers on the run: a review of the management of tax file numbers found that there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than there were people in Australia. How can that be? How can there be 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia? It also found that there were 185,000 potential duplicated tax records for individuals and that 62 per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased in sample matches.

That is where this legislation potentially takes the roll. That is where this legislation will end up. I know it is not the intent of any like-minded government to jeopardise this document of integrity. Similarly, not too long ago an Australian National Audit Office report found that half-a-million active Medicare enrolment records were probably for people who were deceased. But, suddenly, it all makes sense. Suddenly we can see why Labor is so keen to implement this legislation. Those of us with long memories might recall that approximately 10 years ago, hot on the heels of the Shepherdson inquiry, the committee on
electoral matters conducted an inquiry at which it was revealed that members of the Australian Labor Party, particularly in Queensland, had been systematically rorting the electoral roll for their own advantage. During its hearings, committee members heard not only of long-dead people miraculously coming back to life and casting a vote but also one bizarre incident of a cat voting. Is that what we have come to?

This is the response from the Labor Party to the fact that those who are living are so unlikely to vote Labor; it looks for ways to start enrolling the dead. I remember being part of a football tour to Blackwater. I caught up with the local candidate a couple of weeks after a state election in Queensland. He made the point to me that he thought things were travelling all right on the ground, but he was absolutely devastated when he did not get over the line as a candidate. Later, when he made investigations, every single vacant block of land in that township had people linked to the electoral roll. Obviously, the electoral roll in that process was fictitious.

All I can say is that if we are about to start using government data to automatically enrol people, it would need to be an awful lot more reliable than the data that I have just mentioned. There is incredible evidence that automatic enrolment does not work anyway. Both New South Wales and Victoria recently introduced automatic enrolments ahead of their state elections. As the ABC’s highly respected election analyst Antony Green noted in an article on 16 July 2011, only 64 per cent of those people automatically enrolled for the first time during the 2011 New South Wales election actually turned out to vote. Such a high non-participation rate suggests that information used to put new electors on the roll is unreliable and could result in electors being issued with a fine for not voting when they should not really have been on the roll in the first place.

Again, I make the point that I have come into the House as part of a coalition team and collectively we have supported 70 per cent of the bills that have gone through this place. Of the bills that we have not supported, we have had real concerns about them. I join with my coalition partners in raising suitable concern about the integrity of this bill and the unintended consequences that will be a by-product of the legislation. There are so many potential issues with this legislation that it is hard to know when to stop. Suffice to say, the coalition will not be supporting this bill.

Ms O’NEILL (Robertson) (19:00): I am delighted to rise to speak to the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and cognate bill, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. The words ‘protecting elector participation’ are very good and appropriate words. Let me repeat them, to declare clearly the intention of these bills: protecting elector participation. This is at the core of our democratic Australian society. It is also at the core of the legislation that this Labor government has been bringing before the House to enable as many people as possible to benefit from participation in our economy, in the same way that this legislation seeks to enable as many people as possible to benefit from participation in our democracy.

Stories from places around the world where democracy is not quite as stable and developed as it is here in this country reveal to us that the desire of people to vote is such a powerful thing, such an important thing, that people actually give their lives for this opportunity. We could perhaps do a much better job, through civic education and citizenship education in our schools, to help
young people, who we fund as citizens through our taxes, to more deeply understand their rights and responsibilities in participating in voting and setting the direction of the nation.

I would like to put on the record again what this legislation actually does. It amends the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 and the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984 to provide for direct enrolment and the reinstatement to the electoral roll of certain persons casting declaration votes. The bill will implement the government's legislative response to recommendations 1 and 24 of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in its report entitled The 2010 federal election: report on the conduct of the election and related matters. I commend the chair of that committee, the member for Banks, and his colleagues for the work of the committee—and also the member for Melbourne Ports—and for their continuing and passionate advocacy for this particular cause. They are certainly true believers in freedom and will always support Australians in their capacity to exercise their franchise.

This bill deals with a number of elements. One of them is direct enrolment. The proposed bill will amend the electoral act to allow the Electoral Commissioner to use accurate and timely information received from a reliable source—not just anywhere; it is not a note from your mother—to enrol an eligible person without the person submitting a claim for enrolment. Direct enrolment will assist in meeting the urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia by ensuring the federal electoral roll is as current and accurate as possible. Direct enrolment without having to submit a claim-for-enrolment form is particularly important for those Australians for whom schooling might not have been the most positive experience and whose literacy efforts might not have been 100 per cent successful. Because people might not be able to read, because they might not be able to write or because they might be limited in their capacity to participate in the form filling that is part of our modern society does not make them any less valuable as a citizen of this country and should not impinge on their capacity to participate in voting. The whole notion of agency and the capacity to participate is one that we take very seriously and it is important that we make it as easy as possible for any Australian who wishes to vote and exercise their rights and responsibilities in this democracy to participate.

This bill also deals with the problem of reinstatement to the electoral roll. The amendments will provide that, where a declaration voter who is entitled to vote has been omitted from the electoral roll and the omission was due to an error or mistake of fact, then his or her votes may progress to further scrutiny in certain circumstances. This is very important to make sure that people who find that there is a problem very close to the date of a poll still have the capacity to participate and that their vote is part of setting the direction of this country. The bill will also amend the electoral act to provide that the Electoral Commissioner may enrol a person who meets certain criteria. Reinstatement to the electoral rolls and the admission of votes to scrutiny will assist in ensuring that the votes of otherwise eligible electors are counted.

Sadly, as many of those who have spoken before me have indicated, there is a decline in enrolment rates across Australia, and I am sure members here would agree with me that we must ensure that as many votes as possible are counted at the next federal election. That is not controversial at all, but it is certainly the right thing to do. I know there are some on the other side of the chamber who represent rural and regional
areas. This legislation will raise enrolment rates in rural and remote areas. The bill will amend the electoral act and the referendum act to allow the Electoral Commissioner to place a person on the electoral roll at a particular address if the Electoral Commissioner is satisfied that the person is entitled to enrolment, has lived at an address for at least one month and is not enrolled. As a result of this legislation, the commissioner will have the capacity to make sure that that enrolment goes ahead and that the vote is able to be counted.

This process will take place following the receipt and analysis of reliable and current data from sources external to the Australian Electoral Commission that indicates that a person is an eligible Australian citizen and actually lives at the particular address. An electricity bill, for example, would provide a reliable source. The bill does not amend the qualifications for enrolment. It is very important that this goes on the record. The bill requires the Electoral Commissioner to inform a person that the Electoral Commissioner is proposing to place them on the electoral roll at that address and provide the person with 28 days in which to object to the proposed enrolment. The decision to enrol a person or not enrol a person is ultimately able to be reviewed. That would be undertaken by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The bill will also allow the admission to scrutiny, in specified circumstances, of the declaration votes made by people who had been enrolled but were removed from the roll due to an error. The bill will return the law to the pre-2006 position so that, if a person has been removed from the roll by objection action on the mistaken belief that they were not living at the enrolled address, this will constitute a 'mistake of fact'.

Sadly, there are no prizes for guessing which party was actually responsible for this attempted mass disenfranchisement of the Australian people between 2006 and 2007. Some of it was revealed in the language choice of the member for Wright who was just speaking before—the 'honour of voting' I swear I heard him say. I suppose you might think about it as an honour, but in fact it is a right and a responsibility. That is quite a different frame to put around what a vote is. As I and many others have noted in this place, the result of this incredibly disappointing period of our history was a period of gross disenfranchisement by the most mercenary government of this country; it happened under the Howard government. It saw more than 100,000 people miss out on the close of rolls at the deadline of the 2007 election.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms O'NEILL: Members opposite might find that quite humorous. My response is that that is an absolute disgrace. If it were to happen in another country where we were looking to support free and fair elections, we would be reporting that as inappropriate behaviour. I find it hard to stand here in this legislative chamber—

Mr Robert: Then sit down.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): Order!

Ms O'NEILL: and think that that piece of legislation was actually put forward. While I have the opportunity to stand here and speak for ordinary Australians who have the right to speak, I will certainly take every moment of that time, despite the discouragement of those opposite who tried to shut down voters then, just as they would like to shut down my speaking right now.

Amongst those who missed out in 2007 were more than 4,000 18 year-olds who would have been voting for the first time. I have actually met a few of these 18-year-olds. I have spent a lot of my time working
with young adults, and I know that there are moments when there is an opportunity for engagement. As a teacher you see them and you know that there is a teachable moment in it. And one of the most important things that can happen for an Australian citizen is to engage in voting at the very first opportunity. Through that act, young adults participate fully and come to an understanding of the power of their vote, collectively with others, to set the course of this nation, to contribute in a real and tangible way to a democracy. There is the whole process of going to a polling booth, taking one or a number of indications of how you might cast your vote, going through the process of having your name marked off, looking at the pages and pages of names of citizens there beside yours, taking those appropriately signed papers and going into a booth to cast your ballot in private. Yet, having desired to have that experience, as was their right at age 18, that experience was rudely ripped away from these young people as they were about to enter into that contract with our nation.

It is appalling that that actually happened and it indicates incredible cynicism and incredible negativity. It reveals the very significant difference between the Labor Party on this side of the House and the Liberal-Nationals on the other side, who still hold on to some notion, disconnected from our modern reality, that there are some people who should have rights, some people who should have a big voice, and that some people who have a lot of money can buy more place in our public debate than others. While those opposite support that, they oppose the participation of ordinary young Australians.

Those opposite also seem to engage in putting up arguments about the integrity of the roll. But I think it is important to put on the record how dangerous that fearmongering is. When I looked back at some remarks I made last year in a previous contribution on an electoral legislative amendment, the facts showed that there were 71 proven cases of electoral fraud over a whole decade, which amounts to one in a million of the votes cast. Those opposite enacted a legislative amendment that saw the disenfranchising of half-a-million voters to catch 71 fraudulent voters over a period of 10 years. I would say that that is like cutting off your head to fix a broken fingernail. There is no sense of proportionality there whatsoever.

But I will return to what the bill does. It provides the Electoral Commissioner with the discretion to enrol, in specified circumstances, those people casting declaration votes who had been enrolled but were removed from the roll due to an error by an officer or a mistake of fact. The bill will also stop the divergence and inconsistency that is occurring between state and Commonwealth electoral rolls in the largest jurisdictions of New South Wales and Victoria. That is a significant improvement that the bill will bring.

Most importantly, the bill will enable the Australian Electoral Commission to deliver a more accurate electoral roll, because the Electoral Commissioner will be permitted to use accurate and timely information from reliable sources to maintain the current address of already enrolled electors. This bill will ensure that an elector will be notified of the Electoral Commissioner's intention to enrol him or her at a new residential address and be given the opportunity to object to the change. The bill will not provide the capacity to directly enrol new electors. People who are not on the roll will still need to enrol, in accordance with the current requirements of the Electoral Act. Perhaps that is the part where the Australian populace, and particularly those who lead in our communities—community leaders who are
involved in politics at all levels of government, community leaders who are involved in schools, and community leaders who are involved in great institutions that help us stay alive, such as surf life saving clubs, and in Lions and Rotary clubs—can take part in actively supporting a citizenry to understand the full responsibility and capacity of engaging in casting a vote.

I commend the important changes that are embedded in these bills to enhance our democracy, and I commend the bills to the House.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (19:14): I am very pleased to speak on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the cognate bill, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. I am pleased to speak on these bills because I have always been very concerned about maintaining the integrity of the electoral roll. One of the great features of the Australian electoral system and our system generally is that we were able to maintain the integrity of our electoral roll to the best of our ability for many years without the technology that we have today, but we certainly knew where people lived, we knew who they were and we were able to track them when they moved.

The dissenting report by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on the maintaining address bill said:

… this legislation has been designed by Labor and the Greens solely for their own electoral advantage.

It went on to say:

The Coalition believes that the Bill will lead to a weakening of the integrity of the Electoral Roll, a significant decrease in privacy for individual electors and will remove virtually all responsibility for individual electors to take care of their own enrolment.

That is really at the nub of the bills. It has gone from the individual looking after their own status on the electoral roll to allowing the Australian Electoral Commission to take over that responsibility. Everything else between that goes to the discussion that we are about to have. There have been a whole lot of reasons given as to why you would shift the onus from the individual to the Australian Electoral Commission, but, at the end of the day, what was the matter with the individual getting themselves on the roll, maintaining themselves on the roll, notifying when they shifted and notifying when they were not on the roll? It really takes away the individual's responsibility in this area, and I think that is a quite disappointing aspect of what is happening with these bills.

For many years there have been concerns about the agenda for watering down the integrity of the electoral roll. We also have integrity issues involving border protection—those who come here not through the proper channels but by boat. We think that maintaining the integrity of our borders is very important. The government changed those rules so that border protection has been watered down. With these bills, integrity is again being questioned.

As a person in a marginal seat, I have always been very interested in the integrity of the roll. One of the things that has happened since I came to this place in 1996, and came back again, is that I did my best to assist the AEC in maintaining the integrity of the roll in terms of those people going on and those coming off. That is one of the reasons I sign every letter to new electors personally. Not one has been electronically generated. When somebody is getting on the electoral roll I think it is quite rude for a member of parliament to send an electronic signature on a letter that says: 'Welcome to my electorate for the following reasons.' It is not only about that, but signing those letters allows
me to find out a whole lot of interesting things: multiple people at addresses or an interesting drift towards new parts of my electorate, like Piara Waters. That is an interesting area, because people have to get themselves on the electoral roll.

Part of what the bills are saying is that the AEC will use a whole lot of government agencies to track people, such as the tax office or Centrelink. One of the ways to help them track who is new in an area is by the number of bins given out by the local government authority. I suppose that is one way of doing it, but it is not very scientific.

In terms of electoral integrity, we know that the Labor Party has form in this area. Dare I refer the House to the book The frauding of votes? by Dr Amy McGrath, which is introduced by Bob Bottom who, as we know, was a very good crime fighter. There have been a whole lot of books written, such as this, about fraudulent electoral practices.

You can look at some interesting anecdotes. The Labor Party have done it to themselves. Many years ago there was the great story about Paul Keating and Laurie Brereton heading off into the night with a box of electoral votes on the back of his motorbike to run them away so that they could not be counted, to skew their own electoral result. It is all in history. How the Labor Party like to manipulate their elections is folklore.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): Order!

Mr RANDALL: Well, it is part of Australian folklore, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address the bills.

Mr RANDALL: And I am. I am just giving an illustration of how—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will resume his seat. The honourable member will address the bills and deal with the matters before the House. The honourable member for Canning.

Mr RANDALL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a sensitive issue—we know—and I am dealing with it as sensitively as I can.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will address the bills and not reflect on the chair.

Mr RANDALL: When I talk about the responsibility for individual electors, there is the incentive for eligible voters to update their address details when they move. For example, if they fail to address this in 21 days they can be fined $110. That is part of the rules. That is an incentive to do so. We believe that the bills are a mere ploy by the Australian Labor Party and the Greens to improve their own electoral chances at the expense of the integrity of the roll. This was in part of the dissenting report, which is part of the deliberations that have been taking place in this parliament.

I give the example of the marginal seat of Canning. When I first won the seat of Canning in 2001, I won by about 526 votes. When there are 46 polling booths you do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that I could have lost if something like 12 people—15 people at the most—at each polling booth had either voted twice or manipulated their vote.

We know that the electoral roll on the day is not electronically connected to all the polling booths. Somebody gets a pencil out and rules a line in a particular book. That is fine when they collate them all after election day and find out that somebody has voted early and often—you know, a Labor Party mantra: vote early and vote often. The fact is that when you actually line them up it is too
late because the votes have been taken and collated. The scrutineers have no ability to do anything about this because there is no corroboration with the other 46 polling booths—as is the case in my electorate—to check whether somebody has voted more than once.

Another issue—and I have done a fair bit of doorknocking in my time—is that people put themselves down at some very interesting addresses. I noted with interest when I was doorknocking over the years that around Falcon in my electorate there are a lot of empty beach houses, yet it was brought to my attention by some of the residents there that people were receiving electoral enrolment information at houses that had not been occupied for years. I am sure that the only body that would have the ability to control a whole lot of those sorts of votes would be something like a union that has a huge database and that can say, 'Look, you need to put yourselves down at that address because if you can get a couple of hundred people in that area that will help us with our votes.'

Mr Gray: Lots of union officials own houses at Falcon!

Mr RANDALL: They not only have houses but they probably have a lot of good friends. They might be workers in some of the drive-in drive-out areas in and around my electorate. That is how you warehouse votes in areas like that to dilute the high conservative vote. That is my suspicion when neighbours say to me, 'No-one has been living here for years but they have been getting electoral enrolment information.'

Further to that, when the AEC officers came into my office the other day—and I am sure the member for Brand will enjoy this—I handed them some letters from people who had written 'Return to sender. This is a vacant block,' on the envelope. People had been registered at that address for the purposes of enrolment.

Mr Gray: Report it to the commission.

Mr RANDALL: I did. I handed them to the officers when they came to visit my office. That is the sort of thing that causes people to question the integrity of the electoral roll.

The other area is caravan parks. There is a very transient population in caravan parks and it is difficult to track them and make sure that they stay on the roll in the area they have previously designated. It is the same with homes with tenancies and with fly-in fly-out workers. The member for Brand has the highest number of fly-in fly-out workers in a metropolitan electorate in Western Australia. I have the second highest number in my electorate. They are very mobile and very transient. Tracking them is very interesting. I note that the AEC is trying to do something about dealing with them at the airports. This has been a little bit difficult to deal with over the years. They are having to find new ways of either getting the people on the roll or, when they need to vote in the various state or federal elections, getting them to vote in time. As you know, those workers can have two or three weeks on and one week off. They might miss the opportunity to vote. I had people from mines ringing me and saying, 'I'm on a mine and I haven't voted. I don't know how I'm going to vote because I don't get back until after Saturday. Can you tell me what I can do. They do not have a polling booth at the mine.'

It is all interesting stuff. What I am saying in relation to this bill is that giving the onus to the Australian Electoral Commissioner to make a judgment, based on a range of factors where he believes somebody should be entitled to vote, is drawing a very long bow and it is rather risky. For those who want to
ort the system this is a precarious position in a marginal seat. Over the years there has been plenty of evidence to that effect from inquiries that have delved into the rorting of these systems.

We do not want to be a Zimbabwe or somewhere where you have to dip your finger into a bottle of indelible ink to check that you have not voted twice. We have been to those countries and we know that we are better than that. We need to ensure that the maintenance of the electoral roll stands up to scrutiny. We do not want to see the support diluted by taking away resources such as electoral officers from our electorates.

Return mail is another example. We used to be able to send bulk return mail to the AEC for checking. You will recall that the member for Hinkler said in this place that, if he had not kept the return mail in one particular election some years ago and checked it against those wanting to do provisional votes, he would have lost his seat. He was able to provide that database to the scrutineers and to the Electoral Commission during the count and have those votes set aside until they were checked.

Mr Gray: You still can.

Mr RANDALL: We are not able to return the return mail now, Member for Brand, because they do not accept it any longer.

Mr Gray: Yes, they do.

Mr RANDALL: My Electoral Commission office told me recently that they do not want any of my return mail because they are doing it themselves.

In their endeavours to reduce spending, the Australian Electoral Commission are undertaking very few habitation surveys. That is a real worry. In new areas and new housing estates, like mine, they need to get out there and undertake habitation surveys in areas of growth or areas where there is quite a transient population due to certain demographics. I ask, through this mechanism, that that be looked at further, because that is another way you can maintain the integrity of the electoral roll.

We will not be supporting this bill because we do not think it does the right thing in terms of maintaining integrity. I would like to see it beefed up rather than watered down.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (19:29): 2012 is the Year of Enrolment. I find it absolutely breathtaking that the member for Canning chose, in his contribution to this debate on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and cognate Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012, to celebrate the Year of Enrolment by seriously proposing that we disenfranchise the poor people who live in caravan parks and the people who fly in and fly out for their work. That is what he is seriously proposing. He stood up just a moment ago and objected to the electoral and referendum amendment bills on the basis that they would provide a vote for people who reside in caravan parks or people whose occupations are as fly-in fly-out workers. What a way to celebrate the Year of Enrolment!

2012 marks two significant federal electoral events: the centenary of compulsory enrolment and the 50th anniversary of the Indigenous right to vote. Since the scheme of compulsory enrolment commenced in 1912 it has served this country very well. It marks one of the differences between the political system of this country and that of our friend and ally the United States of America, which does not have a system of compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting.
Since 18 June 1962 all Aboriginal people have been entitled to enrol and to vote at federal elections and referenda. From that date, Aboriginal people were able to take up the franchise alongside eligible British subjects, aged 21 years or more. In 1973, as we know, the voting age dropped from 21 to 18 years of age. In 2001 an Australian National Audit Office investigation found that the electoral roll was around 95 per cent complete. That is not good enough—but it is not a bad result when you compare it with international standings.

I regret that since 2001 the situation with regard to electoral enrolment has deteriorated—so much so that the Australian Electoral Commission now estimates that only 90 per cent of eligible Australian citizens are enrolled to vote. That means that around 1½ million Australian citizens do not exercise their electoral franchise to choose their representatives in parliament and in others. It also means that 1½ million Australians do not have a say in referenda proposals to amend Australia's Constitution.

This situation calls for action. I commend the actions of the Special Minister of State, the member for Brand—who is in the chamber at the moment—for taking that action and bringing these bills before the House. We must do what we can to ensure that those missing 1½ million Australians are included on the electoral roll and are able to exercise one of the most important rights and responsibilities of their citizenship: the right to vote.

As part of its celebration of the Year of Enrolment, the Australian Electoral Commission is conducting a campaign to enrol those 1.5 million eligible Australians who are not on the Commonwealth roll, which is good news. It is a worthy endeavour, and I wish them well in reaching their target. Australia has a proud history of ensuring access to the franchise for federal, state and local government elections. That is why, together with the Year of Enrolment campaign by the AEC, the legislation before the House today is so very important. As members of parliament we share the aims of the enrolment project—or at least we on this side of the House do. We each have our part to play. As members of parliament we each work daily to engage with our constituents to help them engage with the work that we do in this place in their name. It is in Australia's national interest that in each electorate we have an active constituency that engages in the democratic process and that can make an informed decision at election time, in its best interests.

It is important that we ensure that electoral legislation does not create unreasonable barriers for those who qualify for enrolment and voting and who, rightfully, expect to be able to exercise their franchise at elections and referenda. Unfortunately, between elections some constituents can drop off the electoral roll. Between elections the AEC works hard to maintain the integrity of the electoral roll and to ensure that those who are eligible to vote are correctly enrolled. The AEC utilises a number of strategies—strategies the member for Canning was just complaining about—aimed at providing electors and potential electors with opportunities to enrol or update electoral enrolment details. For example, enrolment forms are widely available from AEC offices and the AEC website and from the Post Office, Centrelink offices and the like. The AEC also uses approaches to facilitate the updating of the electoral roll, including visits to residences, mail-outs to residences, mail reviews—in which the AEC writes to residents and to addresses seeking updated electoral roll information—advertising designed to raise awareness of the need to update enrolment details, and
attendance and provision of information at citizenship ceremonies.

I pause to make the observation that the member for Canning said that this is critical work, although at times he criticised some of the work done. I would submit that this critical work is going to be made all the more difficult if those on the other side of the House have their way. We know their plan at present is to slash 12,000 Public Service jobs—to push 12,000 public servants from their jobs—and we can only anticipate that a good number of those public servants would be from the Australian Electoral Commission. We also know that 12,000 public servants is only the tip of the iceberg. If those opposite are to fill their $70 billion black hole it will take a lot more than 12,000 public servants. Agencies like the Australian Electoral Commission will be in the firing line. Jobs in the Australian Electoral Commission will be at risk, and the capacity to fulfil those important approaches to ensuring and maintaining the integrity of the electoral roll will be at risk. The AEC will not be able to do the things it has routinely been able to do to maintain the integrity of the Commonwealth electoral roll.

So what is this legislation? What is Labor's approach to dealing with these issues? We have two bills before the House. The first bill, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2012, amends the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 and the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984. This bill, in line with other legislation brought before this place by the Special Minister of State, implements the recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and its report into the 2007 federal election. In examining the electoral issues arising from this election and in its report, this committee has done important work for our electoral franchise. The main focus of the committee's work was to look at whether changes made to enrolment and voting provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act by the previous Howard government had the effect of enabling or restricting the franchise and, if the changes were found to be restrictive, whether those restrictions were in any way offset by the achievement of greater electoral integrity in the lead-up to and at the 2007 election. That is to say, in shorthand, were the changes that were brought into place by the previous Howard government restrictive? Did they deny people their right to exercise their vote in a Commonwealth election?

As we know, preceding the 2007 election were a number of legislative changes that significantly altered the processes for applying to be on the electoral roll, updating enrolment details and voting. At the 2007 election, election enrolment saw an increase of just 1,466 electors over the close-of-roll enrolment figures. History has told that some of these changes have subsequently been chucked out by the High Court of Australia and the legislation was returned to its pre-amendment condition. But this legislation furthers the work. The bills before the House further the job that needs to be done to ensure people are not denied their right to vote.

The joint standing committee report found this to be an extremely low increase compared to the high of 97,425 electors added to the roll in 1998 and the previous low of 35,671 electors added in 1993. I will not use the word 'rort' but you can see that the changes put in place by the former Howard government had the effect, in the 2007 election, of denying somewhere between 34,000 and 95,000 Australians their right to vote. On that basis alone these bills should enjoy the support of every member of this House.
The committee report found the significant decline from 2004 to 2007 to be the product of the legislative changes that were made between 2004 and 2007, when those on the other side had control of the House. The bill before the House can be seen in one sense as remedial legislation, restoring to those affected Australians the right to vote at the next election.

The second measure, the maintaining addresses bill, will allow the Australian Electoral Commissioner to directly update an elector's enrolled address following receipt and analysis of reliable and current data sources from outside the AEC that indicate an elector has moved residential address. The bill will implement the intent of the government response to recommendation 10 of the report from the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the JSCEM report, on the conduct of the 2007 election. The bill will assist in meeting the urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia by ensuring that the federal electoral roll is as current and accurate as possible.

The second bill, the protecting elector participation bill, will amend the Commonwealth Electoral Act to provide for direct enrolment and reinstatement to the electoral roll of certain persons casting declaration votes. This protecting elector participation bill implements the government's legislative response to recommendations 1 and 24 of the JSCEM report on the 2010 federal election. The proposed bill will amend the Electoral Act to allow the Electoral Commissioner to use accurate and timely information, received from reliable sources, to enrol an eligible person without the person submitting a claim for enrolment. Direct enrolment will assist in meeting the urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia. It is a measure that is in place in many state jurisdictions of Australia and works very well.

The amendments will provide that, where a declaration voter who is entitled to vote has been omitted from the electoral roll, and the omission was due to an error or mistake of fact, his or her vote may progress to further scrutiny in certain circumstances. The bill will also amend the Electoral Act to provide that the Electoral Commissioner may enrol a person who meets certain criteria. Reinstatement to the electoral roll and the admission of votes to scrutiny will assist in ensuring that the votes of otherwise eligible electors are counted.

Amendments in both these bills are needed as soon as practicable to ensure that the measures are implemented to deliver an accurate electoral roll before the next federal election. Australia has a tradition of inclusive entitlement to the voting franchise; it is what distinguishes us from many other countries around the world. It is why we have a healthy and robust democracy. It is something that all Australians should be very proud of. This inclusive franchise has been a feature of federal elections throughout our history as a nation. The bill before the House today strengthens that franchise. For these reasons and all the reasons adumbrated by those on this side of the House, I commend the legislation.

Mr Ramsey (Grey) (19:43): I rise to address the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. I oppose both bills. They are designed to tilt the electoral system in Australia in the Labor-Greens direction.

Why is that? It is because they enrol the uninformed. We know the best chance Labor has of scaring up votes is by appealing to the uninformed, because if they knew what a
Labor Party government was like they would never vote for them. The member for Throsby, who has just left the chamber, justifies these bills by quoting the findings of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. This was, of course, a Labor-Greens based committee. Both bills devalue the integrity of the electoral roll.

Australia has generally enjoyed a reasonably clean electoral system. It is the norm. I often say that the reason it is relatively clean in Australia is that we just expect this to be the natural course of events. We are not naturally cheaters—but you do not need many. Not everyone is as pure as the driven snow, which is why we should have robust systems.

I am particularly concerned about these bills’ ability to identify identity integrity. I am wary of the electronic world when it comes to security. Just type the word 'hacking' into a search engine on your computer and you will bring up hundreds of examples of individuals having hacked into computers such as NASA’s and the US Senate’s, not to mention the actions of WikiLeaks. We are advised by our banking institutions that we should change our passwords every three months at least. These bills represent great opportunities for those wishing to corrupt the system, promote mayhem and undermine the system by suggesting electronically that people live in places that they do not. It is a very dangerous area, because these bills will place people on the electoral roll without their knowledge. Individual electors will be put directly onto the electoral roll without ever filling out even an electoral form.

The bills empower the Australian Electoral Commission to update the rolls from 'reliable and current data'. It does not say what the objective measurement for reliable and current data will be. It is a case of beauty being in the eye of the beholder. If the AEC decide on a particular day that a certain list looks good to them that is what they can use. It raises many questions, including questions about where people live, because people do not actually have to respond to their compulsory enrolment. What about people who have two addresses—a primary address and a secondary address? They may well elect to receive their electricity, phone, gas and rates notices directly at the secondary address—the address they do not live at. It is quite conceivable that some reliable and current database may well pick this up as their place of residence and the AEC will send them a letter welcoming them into the new electorate. What if people are overseas for an extended period and have a mail forwarding address—maybe their relatives' address—in a different electorate?

Would a reliable and current database be the tax files database? I am indebted to the member for Mackellar, who raised in the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters the fact that in 1999 there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people. I hope they do not use the database that sees mail still being sent to my father, who died three years ago—it comes pretty regularly. Would that be a reliable and current database? The Australian National Audit Office found that up to half-a-million Medicare enrolments were probably for people who are dead. I would think that, at this stage, the electoral roll itself is the database in Australia with the most integrity. Anything we choose other than that will be of lesser value.

Under the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill, the Australian Electoral Commission will write to you at your new address. If you do not answer you will be enrolled at that address. That seems illogical. Surely, once they write
to you, you should have to respond and say: 'Yes, it's me. I'm here. I'm hearing what you say. I've been put on the electoral roll.' But, no; if you do not answer, you will be enrolled.

The second bill is innocuously subtitled 'Protecting Elector Participation'. It should be called 'Undermining Electoral Integrity'. There is no way in the world that this protects elector participation; it mandates automatic enrolment. In New South Wales, where there is already automatic enrolment, Antony Green of the ABC raised the fact that, of those automatically enrolled for the first time for the 2011 New South Wales election, only 63.4 per cent voted. Did the other 37 per cent even know they were on the roll? Did they have any idea at all? This probably came as a complete surprise to them. If that 37 per cent did not know they were on the electoral roll, there is a possibility for someone else to exercise their right to vote. Remember, you do not know that you are on the roll. Imagine, for instance, that your electricity supplier sent you a bill at the end of the month but you did not respond to it. Would they then consider it settled? Would they say: 'You didn't respond to the bill? Don't worry about that mate. We'll fix it up for you. Just forget about it?' In fact, the way electricity prices are rising, it might be a good thing for the government to institute!

It is preposterous that we would automatically enrol someone without their knowledge and leave them on the roll, possibly still without their knowledge, for other people to move into that space. How long will it be before someone inevitably leaks the list of those who have been enrolled but have not responded? An electronic list of that style would be of great value to people who wish to distort the system. Someone who does not know they are on the roll is obviously the person to vote in place of, particularly because when we roll up at a polling booth on election day we are not asked to prove our identity—although that would be a true reform of the electoral system. That kind of electronic list, of people who have been enrolled against their will or without their knowledge and who have never responded, would be a green light to those who choose to cheat the system.

The passage of these bills will mean the immediate death of the traditional enrolment method. I heard just before I rose to my feet the member for Throsby going through the many things the Electoral Commission does now to educate voters, to encourage voters to enrol and to engage with them. What would be the point of any of those things if they were going to be automatically enrolled? Why would schools, for instance, spend any of their time trying to educate children about their future responsibilities? I know this happens now within my own electorate. Schools will, in fact, help the kids fill out their electoral forms and give them a lesson about the Australian political system. There will be a distinct disincentive for them to waste their time on these matters, so the very small amount of engagement that we have with young people now, in trying to bring them up to speed and engage them with the system, is likely to be obliterated virtually overnight. Why would the Electoral Commission encourage anybody to enrol to vote in the traditional manner if in fact it is all going to be done electronically, without their knowledge and superquick overnight?

These bills are a terrible move. They will open up the opportunity to bring Australia's electoral system into disrepute. I understand why the government are putting the bills forward. It is because they think that this is going to be a free kick for them. That is the worst reason to bring these bills into the House, and I oppose them.
Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:54): I rise to speak in strong support of the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. Here in Australia we enjoy a healthy democracy. It has endured, stable and strong, since Federation without civil war or major crisis—Remembrance Day 1975 aside. In fact, Australia is one of the longest standing democracies in the world. When Australian citizens head to the polls, as Queenslanders will do this weekend, they do so without fear, and governments are elected peacefully without a shot being fired. There may be a few tears, but it is a peaceful process. To paraphrase Malcolm X, in Australia it is always the ballot, not the bullet. Australia's democracy is free from the allegations of fraud and intimidation that mar elections in developing democracies.

The integrity of our election process is crucial for our democracy. That is why I was so disgusted with the former Liberal-National coalition government's efforts to manipulate our electoral process. The 41st Parliament oversaw a shameful moment in the history of our democracy. By closing the electoral roll to new enrolments on the same day as the issuing of the writ, former Prime Minister Howard ensured that thousands of pesky young people did not get an opportunity to vote in the 2007 election. It is the Australian Electoral Commission that is responsible for running elections in this country. Part of that job involves maintaining the current electoral roll. Today there are more than 14 million Australians on the Commonwealth electoral roll. As we well know, the electoral act states that enrolling and voting are compulsory for every Australian citizen over 18 years of age. Compulsory electoral enrolment and compulsory voting makes our democracy strong. Anyone thinking we should adopt optional voting need only to look at voter turnout in so-called democracies—for example, the United States. In fact, in the 2000 election that saw George W. Bush become president there was a 51 per cent voter turnout. You might remember that George W. Bush only just scraped in. It was a very closely fought election. Barely over a quarter of eligible Americans voted for the President of the United States.

Optional voting is not the way to go. In Australia, we want everyone to have a say—the motivated, the not-so-motivated, the disillusioned and everyone in between. If they do not want to have a say, I can give them a long list of countries to move to where they will not have to worry about their voice being heard on election day.

The AEC are required to ensure that every elector knows about our electoral laws and adheres to these laws. Electors are required to, firstly, enrol and, secondly, keep their enrolment details current. But, as we know, whether you are moving across town, across a suburb or changing states, moving house can be a very stressful experience. After dealing with real estate agents, lawyers, banks and removal companies, redirecting mail and possibly starting a new job, with a new school for the kids, and changing the phone, electricity and utilities et cetera, often the last thing on many Australians' minds after they have moved house is notifying the Electoral Commission about their change of address.

Currently, the AEC are able to use information from reliable sources to monitor the accuracy of the roll, but they do not have the power to change or update an elector's details. They are, however, able to remove someone from the roll. The result of this anomaly is that eligible voters are being removed from the roll, resulting in dropping
enrolments across the country. We need to be doing whatever we can to ensure that there is greater participation in our wonderful democracy. That is why the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 amends the Electoral and Referendum Act to allow the AEC to update an elector's enrolled address when it becomes apparent from other reliable data that the elector has moved residential addresses. The bill requires that an elector be notified about the AEC's intention to enrol them at a new residential address. They will also be given an opportunity to object to the change. This common-sense bill will ensure that there is a more accurate roll, using information that is already available to the AEC. It will not, however, enable the AEC to enrol people not already on the electoral roll, which is the subject of the related bill before the House.

The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012 is another measure on the part of the Gillard government to improve the accuracy of the electoral roll. The AEC go to a lot of effort to encourage young people to enrol to vote. For example, before the 2010 election they were part of a youth enrolment program called 'Count me in!' with the United Nations Youth Association and the Australian Youth Forum. They hit the streets to enrol as many young people as possible over one weekend. The AEC also run many other campaigns, including 'enrol to vote' week in schools, aimed at making sure all young people are ready to vote when they turn 18; university campus O week activities, to encourage university students to enrol to vote; and youth enrolment campaign Rock Enrol with Triple J, which I know is your favourite radio station, Deputy Speaker!

Despite these efforts, there are still too many young people who miss out on voting because they are unable to enrol before the rolls close before an election. I understand that there are still at least 1.5 million eligible voters not on the rolls, and at least a third of these are aged between 18 and 25. That is about another 15 or 16 MPs who are not here in this chamber. This bill will allow the AEC to place a person on the electoral roll at a particular address if the Electoral Commissioner is satisfied that: (1) the person is entitled to be enrolled—that is, they are an Australian citizen over 18 years old; (2) they have lived at the address at least one month; and (3) they are not currently enrolled.

For the first time people will be enrolled without submitting an enrolment form. Direct enrolment will directly turn around declining enrolment rates across Australia and make the federal electoral roll as current and as accurate as possible. New South Wales and Victoria already have a system of direct enrolment and therefore we are seeing a growing inconsistency between the state and federal rolls, something which cannot continue. This bill will bring greater consistency between these state and federal electoral rolls.

I can understand why in years gone by there was a reluctance to embrace direct enrolment. In the days of paper records, pencils and horses and carriages, ensuring the integrity of records might have been a bit more difficult. But today a number of government departments operate accurate databases that the Electoral Commission uses to verify the integrity of the rolls. We are not talking about information that falls off the back of a truck. This is reliable information that is currently obtained from road traffic authorities, Centrelink, Australia Post and other such respectable institutions.

It was not that long ago that women were not allowed to vote. Even a little closer to my time, it was Indigenous Australians.
When I was born, Murrays in Queensland could not participate in the electoral process—and I am not that old, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know. The idea that anyone could be excluded from the electoral process is downright repulsive to every decent-minded Australia. As a parliament, we should do whatever is necessary to ensure the integrity of our electoral process. Certainly, the Gillard Labor government believes that all eligible people should be given the opportunity to vote, but the opposition, in voicing their opposition to this bill, have strayed dangerously close to the land of the hypocrite on this issue. You cannot on the one hand say that you stand for transparent and free elections and on the other hand put in place roadblocks that stop eligible people from participating in the electoral process. What is there to be scared of?

This Labor government wants to ensure that all Australians who are eligible to vote are on the roll and able to do so. The integrity of our strong democracy requires no less. The quick passing of this bill will ensure that these reforms are in place before a 2013 federal election, and I hope still for bipartisan support from those opposite. I strongly commend the bill to the House.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (20:03): The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012 seek to amend the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 and the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984. The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 seeks to allow the Electoral Commission to directly update an elector's enrolled address following the receipt of analysis of reliable and current data sources from outside the Australian Electoral Commission that indicate an elector has moved residential address. What this bill fails to do is set controls on what is a reliable current data source outside of the Australian Electoral Commission. This bill hands over the burden of responsibility for updating a person's electoral address from the voter to the Electoral Commissioner, with no controls, no checks and balances and no parameters as to where the Electoral Commissioner can source the information. To me that is very, very disturbing. This bill will bypass many of this government's own fundamental privacy principles and add yet another element of Big Brother to this government's already overregulating and overreaching scope of authority.

The second bill that this government has put forward, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012, is yet another attempt by this government to take our nation down the very, very slippery slope of automatic enrolment. Automatic enrolment has been the brainchild of the Greens for over a decade. The travesty of this bill is that it represents a key component of their Orwellian nightmare for this nation and our prestigious democratic record. Australia has long been a shining example of democracy to the world. While we may only be a young country, we have been fortunate that until recently we had a good national leadership, a booming economy and a healthy democratic system of government. Indeed, we were envied across the globe. But these two bills represent a paradigm shift in the way our system of democracy operates at its most fundamental level.

In this great nation voting is a right, but it is also an obligation enforced by the law. The right to have your voice heard and the right to have your vote counted is a sacred thing. It should not be taken lightly and it should not be handed out frivolously. People in nations less fortunate than ours have died
trying to exercise this right. Voting in our nation comes with rights, obligations, responsibilities and duties. These obligations are not onerous. They do not require a citizen to jump through legislative hoops. A person need only fill in a form and provide identification in order to enrol to vote. Once enrolled, an elector can update their details by fax, mail or in person. In fact, an elector can even update their details online; it is not too hard to do. If a person can jump on the internet and update their drivers licence online, why can't we trust them to do the same thing through the AEC?

The Special Minister of State in his second reading speech for the maintaining address bill asserted:

The bill will assist in meeting the urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia by ensuring the federal electoral roll is as current and accurate as possible.

However, in spite of the minister believing this to be an urgent need, he did not make a single mention in either the speech or the explanatory memorandum of any evidence of the scale of these inaccuracies. I submit that in Australia we have a far more urgent need to crack down on multiple voting and voter fraud than to directly update voters' addresses without the voters' knowledge or consent. You have only got to look at the last federal election—I am standing here next to the federal member for Hume—to know what the Labor Party's policy is: it is vote early and vote often. If that was not enough of an assault on the integrity of the roll, now they want to add electors to the electoral roll without their knowledge or their consent. These two bills create the possibility of a person being enrolled without their knowledge at an address where they may or may not reside. There are a couple of examples in my electorate, with the urban renewal programs in our public housing areas, the One Minto Project or the Airds renewal program or Rosemeadow and Claymore. People are put into temporary accommodation in hotels and motels out of their electorate. The member for Grey mentioned people being informed voters. These people have lived most of their lives in my electorate. If they are moved out of the electorate for temporary accommodation and live outside the electorate for one month, they might find themselves on a roll in a different electorate, when they do not want to even participate in the election of that candidate. These informed people want to vote for the person they know who is doing the right thing by their community, and, all of a sudden, because we are going through this urban renewal process and they have been shifted out of their area, they will be put on a roll without their knowledge and asked to vote for somebody else. Some great thought must have gone into this legislation!

Who is the Einstein who came up with this one?

What about people with domestic violence issues? You might have a couple who have a domestic violence issue and one takes out an AVO, with part of the condition of the AVO being that the other person must live in another electorate. They might have to live there for four, five, six, nine, 12 or 18 months or longer to resolve their dispute with their spouse, and all of a sudden they will find themselves on an electoral roll somewhere else. Once again, it is a case of an informed voter being taken out of their electorate through secondary advice given to the Australian Electoral Commission, who will put them on another roll without their knowledge. Absolutely incredible—how good is this legislation! There are people on the other side of the House saying, 'We're proud of this legislation!' Not enough thought has gone into this legislation.

There are going to be other circumstances where people will be out of their area
temporarily, put on a different electoral roll without their knowledge and asked to vote for someone they do not even know, because they have lived most of their life in another electorate. I am talking about informed voters who know their candidates and want to make a decision that will change things in their electorate, but they will be asked to vote in another electorate where they do not know what is going on.

Mr Schultz interjecting—

Mr MATHESON: Absolutely. Anything to hold their seats. You are right, member for Hume. They then could be sent a fine for not voting, which they may not receive and, as a result, they could have their drivers licence cancelled, because this government wants to allow the Electoral Commissioner free rule over additions and amendments to the electoral roll, with no restrictions and no requirements for identifying or regulating information sources. I just keep looking back. How good is this legislation! There has been a lot of thought put into this! I hope that those of us in this chamber today respect and uphold the values of democracy when voting on this bill. Put some thought into it, guys!

We must stop this insidious campaign launched by the faceless men of the ALP, who are attempting to compromise the integrity of the electoral roll for their own selfish purposes. Just last month we saw the damage that the same faceless men in the Australian Labor Party have done not only to the parliamentary wing of the ALP but to what is left of the grassroots movements of their party. These bills represent the same phenomenon in our nation. They give the AEC the power and authority to add electors to the roll without their knowledge or consent. These bills allow the Electoral Commission to access private information and records from secondary sources to update the residential addresses of electors.

This is not and should not be the function of the AEC. Not only will people have their addresses updated without their knowledge, but it may result in electors being incorrectly enrolled or even removed from the electoral roll entirely, denying them the chance to vote in an election. There will be many circumstances like this brought forward, I can tell you, by disgruntled voters who cannot vote for the candidate that they love. This will be further exacerbated by the government's second bill, which will use information and data from unspecified secondary sources to determine if a person has been living at that address for at least a month and is eligible to be on the roll. A month is not a long time. It is an incredibly short period of time. This legislation is very, very poor.

Antony Green exposed the fundamental flaw of automatic enrolment in his July 2011 article analysing the dismal failure of automatic enrolment in the most recent New South Wales state election. We all know about Antony Green, don't we? He is a great expert, on top of his game. While the New South Wales Labor Party had hoped that the automatic enrolments would be their saving grace at the ballot box, only 64.3 per cent of the electors that were automatically enrolled actually turned up to vote—64.3 per cent! This incredibly high non-participation rate demonstrates the point that a massive number of those people automatically enrolled to vote were completely disenfranchised by the electoral system or, alternatively, those people were not actually entitled to vote in the first place or were not living at the address where they had been automatically enrolled. So there are systematic failures already.

The notion of directly updating a person's details on the electoral roll or enrolling them to vote without their knowledge or consent will lead to a high number of potential
irregularities. Further to this point, the bill is lacking in consistency and detail. It gives the AEC complete discretion to determine what it believes are reliable and current data sources to obtain information about elector addresses. This goes far beyond the scope of authority traditionally bestowed upon the AEC. Imagine some of the information they might get from the courts or the local police about people who have been locked up and charged and part of their bail conditions is that they have got to go and live in another electorate—away from their local member, all their family and their house. This is incredible legislation! It's brilliant!

While on this point, I refer to the submission by the Australian Privacy Foundation to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in February 2012. The Australian Privacy Foundation makes two very valid arguments relating to the collection and use of secondary sources of information. The first argument is that this bill seeks to undermine the fundamental privacy principle that personal information collected by a government body or agency should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. If the government body or agency intends to use this information for a secondary purpose, then consent of the person from whom it was collected should be given. They have got to legally give consent. I tell you, this legislation is fantastic! Of course, there will be exceptions for special circumstances where the public interest outweighs individual privacy. Does the public interest outweigh individual privacy? I do not think so. The minister's supposedly urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia does not weigh up against any public interest test. I have got to meet the person who put this legislation together. It is absolutely brilliant! Perhaps he is trying to weigh it up against his own party's self-interest! That might be the key to it all—his own party's self-interest.

Second, and equally important, is the reality that data and information collected by any government agency is collected for a specific purpose and in a very different context to the Australian electoral roll. The coalition members on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters noted in July 2011 in their dissenting report:

The reliance on external data sources that have been collated and that are utilised for other purposes does not make them fit for use in forming the electoral roll.

It had to be the coalition—a bit of thought has gone into it. Of course, it is a dissenting report. To demonstrate this point, we need to look no further than our own government agencies' records. Let us look at a bit of history here. Let us look at the data. Let us have a think about it. It is one month. Do not rush into things. Have a chat about it. Talk it through. You will get a bipartisan approach on good policy in this chamber.

For instance, the Australian National Audit Office Audit Report No. 24 2004-05: Integrity of Medicare enrolment data stated:

ANAO found that up to half a million active Medicare enrolment records were probably for people who are deceased.

Further to that point, the Review of the ANAO Report No. 37 1989-99 on the Management of Tax File Numbers, found that at the time of the last census—namely, 1996—there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia. Who is going to get that data? Is it going to be the Labor Party, with the old vote early, vote often policy? Are they going to know who all these deceased people are or who has all these tax file numbers? Are they going to run around and vote at so many booths it is not going to be funny? We know who is putting this legislation together. It is a beauty. It is
vote early, vote often and try to vote Labor if you can.

The data included 185,000 potential duplicate tax file numbers of individuals, and a sample match showed that 62 per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased. Who picks up on that? We know who picks up on that. The AEC's reliance on secondary data sources, as stipulated by this bill, is very concerning. However, what is of even greater concern to me is that this bill gives the Australian Electoral Commissioner the discretion to determine what reliable and current data sources he should use to derive information regarding elector addresses and voter eligibility.

That is a huge responsibility. It is unbelievable. There has been no real train of thought behind any of this. It has been rushed through at a hundred miles an hour: 'Let's get as many votes as we can while the opportunity exists. The crossbenchers will probably support it so let's get this legislation right through because it helps us.' As a former police officer for over 25 years, I have a keen understanding of the challenges posed by relying on secondary sources of information to make an informed and accurate assessment. A lot of people go out of their way to supply secondary sources of information that are not correct. They do not want to be found. They will be on a couple of electoral rolls; it is absolutely brilliant!

My point is that secondary sources, any secondary source, are of variable quality. Even secondary sources that one would think would be up-to-date and accurate, such as Medicare, Centrelink or the department of immigration, collect their information for different purposes and in widely different contexts than that of maintaining an electoral roll. That is the crux of the matter. A document as important to our democratic process as the electoral roll should only ever be updated, amended or added to based on primary information, not secondary information. You actually have to know where they really do live. This is astonishing. Secondary information to create an electoral roll. This is great stuff! You should be proud of it! It should be primary information collected for the sole purpose of updating or amending the roll itself. Anything less constitutes a profound lack of respect for democracy in this great nation.

We have heard a range of arguments from the other side of the House about how voters find it too difficult to update their addresses on the electoral roll. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you this: regardless of whether the government thinks that people are too lazy to update their own address or apply to be included on the electoral roll, why do they believe that the government should take this responsibility themselves? In Australia, our traditional personal responsibility has resulted in a nation of concerned, sympathetic and proactive citizens. Australia's democratic system is unique in the world and, simply put, we should not be messing with it if it is not broken—and it is not broken.

Democracy is alive and well in this nation, much to the chagrin of the faceless men of the ALP. Voters have been updating their electoral addresses and applying to be placed onto the electoral roll for decades past, and they will do so for decades to come. We as a parliament must stop this insidious encroachment of the Big Brother style of government that is so beloved by this Prime Minister and this government. (Time expired)

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (20:18): To say that that was an interesting contribution to this debate is an understatement. That part of it that I could actually understand was an interesting
contribution to the debate on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and cognate bill. I was very surprised to hear that the member for Macarthur had been a police officer in a previous life. When he is talking of domestic violence and the placing of people in different electorates, surely he knows that somebody who is a victim of domestic violence would probably suppress their address and that it would not be available to other people.

He was all over the place, and I am really pleased to hear that, for once, members on the other side of this parliament are interested in letting people in public housing have a vote. Under the Howard government, absolutely everything that could be done was done to prevent people who were in public housing, who were homeless or who moved around from having a vote. Absolutely every possible action was taken, and here we have the member for Macarthur being the great advocate for democracy! I suspect that he actually does not know how to spell the word. Here he is, being the great advocate for democracy, arguing in favour of making sure that people know who they are voting for, that maybe they had been living somewhere else for 12 months but they still want to vote for their original member. It is not on.

This legislation is not something that has been rushed through the parliament. It has been examined by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and is implementing recommendations of the joint standing committee. There were public hearings on the recommendations by the joint standing committee, and those recommendations were drawn up after considerable thought, consultation and discussion. This government does not ignore the recommendations of parliamentary committees. If I remember correctly, when I was on the committee on health and ageing and the Howard government was in power, we brought down the Blame Game report, but they did not respond to it. Unlike the Howard government, we actually picked it up and ran with it as policy because we could see that it was a good report. So this government looks at the recommendations of standing committees. We looked at the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and we decided that we should implement the recommendations. On this side of the House we believe in giving everybody the opportunity to vote and on that side of the House they believe in giving their friends the right to vote. They believe in making it as difficult as possible for the people who are the most disadvantaged to have the right to vote.

This legislation lines up the Commonwealth and the states so that their legislation is similar. It removes confusion and it gives people the maximum opportunity to vote. In Canada, if a person turns up to vote on election day and they are not on the roll they are allowed to vote; they do not have to enrol. In Canada, they believe in doing everything they possibly can to ensure that a person can cast a vote. Those on the other side of this parliament believe in doing everything in their power to stop people from having the right to vote. I see the member for Mitchell trying to google the Canadian system. Believe me, he should have a talk to the ambassador. The ambassador was the person who shared that information with me when he visited me in my office. He was talking about elections and he was quite mystified by the fact that it is so difficult for people to be enabled to vote in Australia.

Before the last election I had constituents coming into my office who had moved into my electorate and wanted to cast a vote. They had been taken off the roll of the
electorate in which they lived previously and had sought to be enrolled within the Shortland electorate. When it came time to cast their vote, they found out that they could not vote. It is beholden upon us as a parliament to maximise the number of people who are able to vote. It is beholden upon us as members of parliament to do everything in our power to increase people's ability to vote and to broaden the democratic process. It should not be about placing barriers to voting before people; it should be about ensuring that every person has the ability to have a say.

The member for Macarthur talked about 'vote early, vote often'. It seems that he has written the handbook on it, doesn't it, Mr Deputy Speaker Thomson? He seems to be quite across the process of how to distort the electoral system. It seems to me that he is following the doctrine of the Howard government, which was all about distorting the electoral system and creating a system that advantaged them electorally, whereas we on this side of the parliament are about ensuring that every person has the right to vote.

This bill will really assist in meeting the urgent need to assist people to get onto the roll. It is quite difficult, and people become quite confused about how to update their enrolment. Constituents in my electorate find the process very difficult. Particularly if they are a little older, they find it quite hard to navigate the system. Members on the other side of this parliament are about ensuring that every person has the right to vote.

This bill is very much along that line. He believes that only people who are going to vote for the Liberal Party and the Nationals should be allowed to be on the electoral roll and that everyone else should have barriers put in place that make it difficult for them to enrol to vote, which subsequently makes it difficult for them to cast a valid vote on election day.

I strongly support the legislation we have before us tonight. I encourage members opposite to look at the real issues that are involved here and to make sure that people who would like to vote have the right to vote, even if they are not going to vote for them. I always ensure that every constituent in my electorate who wishes to enrol or who would like to vote has the ability to enrol to vote, even when I know that they are not going to vote for me. I encourage the member for Macarthur—who, I discovered, used to be a police officer—to look at this a little bit more closely. I thought he would have a greater understanding of domestic violence and of issues surrounding bail conditions. I would encourage him to be just a little nicer and to look at things in a kinder way—not to be a nasty little chappie but to look at things from the perspective of making sure that people have the right to vote.

It is about democracy. It is about ensuring that people actually can vote if they choose to vote. I strongly support the legislation.

**Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (20:29):** As I continue to say in this place, it is my particular curse in life to be doomed to follow the member for Shortland in debates. Let's be nice—and that might be the slogan for the legislation we are considering today, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the cognate bill, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector
Participation) Bill 2012. We could say to the 3.2 million tax file numbers, the 185,000 duplicates, 'You're not just a number,' except that they are just a number and they do not represent real human beings.

The member for Shortland made an extraordinary contribution, which I endorse in all its glory. In particular, it gave some reinforcement to my thinking—that is, if you were an architect of this legislation, what would be your intention? As a proponent of moving to voluntary voting one day in Australia's future, I would have to say that you would really be an architect of voluntary voting because these two bills undermine the integrity of the electoral roll.

Having listened to the member for Shortland, I am concerned that perhaps she is an advocate of voluntary voting because the Canadian system, which she referred to in eloquent and withering destruction of the member for Macarthur, is in fact a voluntary system. She says if an elector turns up to vote on election day in Canada and is not on the roll, they get to vote. That is because it is a voluntary system and completely different from ours. The entire point she was making goes to reinforce in my mind that this is a secret plot by the Special Minister of State to move us to voluntary voting. 'Bring it on,' is what I say.

The legislation before us does enormous damage to what has been a well-run system in Australia with a roll of high integrity. While there have been individual concerns and individual cases in elections and electorates over many years, generally we have seen high voter turnouts, high rates of integrity and good quality investigation and follow-up of problems. It is very disturbing to think that the New South Wales data referred to by many coalition members shows that up to 37 per cent of people do not turn out to vote. That is a real concern, which has so far not been addressed by the government. When we go from 95 per cent in Australia to a system where one-third or more, potentially 40 per cent of the people enrolling, are not turning out to vote, essentially we are turning to a voluntary system.

Having come back from Japan recently, I know that voluntary voting there works very well, with a 60 per cent turnout. If the government are suggesting 60 per cent is acceptable, that 37 per cent not turning out is acceptable, they are advocating a total change in our voting system.

Moving along, I want to endorse the member for Macarthur's contribution and the dissenting reports put forward by the member for Mackellar, Senators Scott Ryan and Simon Birmingham, and the member for Fairfax. These are really high-quality dissenting reports which outline specifically why these two bills are going to be a retrograde step for the quality of the electoral roll and the electoral system in Australia today. In particular I would draw the House's attention to the integrity of the electoral roll section in the dissenting report on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011. In that dissenting report there is a fascinating exchange between the member for Mackellar and Mr Killesteyn of the AEC about the process the AEC would undertake under the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill.

That dissenting report shows on pages 22 and 23 that, in writing backwards and forwards, the onus on an individual is completely and utterly removed, not just to enrol or prove where they live, not just to prove who they are, but even to respond to the Electoral Commission. People do not even have to respond to the Electoral Commissioner. In fact, not responding gets
you a new address. It is completely and utterly counterintuitive. It is against the entire system on which our electoral set-up has been framed, which relies on the individual maintaining their own address. The frightening thing coming out of this exchange is that only 20 per cent of people currently respond to the Australian Electoral Commissioner. So 80 per cent of people do nothing, do not respond. They are obviously, as the member for Shortland so eloquently put it, having some confusion about their electoral roll details. The 80 per cent who are currently written to by the AEC are going to be given a new electoral roll address without their knowledge, without their consent and presumably with a high rate of error. Once again, this is a counterintuitive process, but at least it is consistent with the way government has been approached by the Gillard-Rudd government since coming to office—turning gold into lead, the counter-Midas touch.

Moving to the detail of this legislation and looking through the dissenting reports, members will find further concerning developments, including what is considered to be a reliable and current data source being open to interpretation. I do not believe, and I agree with the opposition's position, that this should be within the purview of the Australian Electoral Commission, and there are good reasons for that to be the case. There must be independent, legislated standards. I do not believe we want to add power to this agency to interpret what is a standard. It should be defined by this parliament. While I am not ascribing any ill motive to the Australian Electoral Commission, the power to deem data sources trusted, and to deem some not trusted, will leave future potential loopholes for things to be done incorrectly. When designing legislation, this is the kind of thing that you need to tighten. It is the kind of thing the government ought to look at and say, 'Oh dear, we forgot about that.' To say, 'What is deemed a reliable source? We will let a body outside this parliament determine that,' I do not believe is a good way to approach the consistency and integrity of the electoral roll, and I endorse the comments of the coalition members who put this dissenting report together. Moving along: this continues to tie into other matters such as privacy concerns. If the AEC determines that certain sources are trusted and accesses that information, as the member for Macarthur said, what are the privacy concerns with that? If that information is supplied for a particular purpose under the law, it is not to be used for any other purpose under current legal frameworks, so the questions start to come into play about what information is being used for what purposes. Privacy still ranks as a very serious concern in an age of data collection, in an age of cybersafety and other concerns to do with online presence, and I think it is a valid concern in relation to this legislation that people should be able to provide information, including tax file information and other information, without compromising their electoral roll address. As we know, if you do not respond, you are re-enrolled at a new address without your consent or knowledge, and 80 per cent of people, the Australian Electoral Commissioner advises us, fall into this category.

We have heard quite an extraordinary set of arguments in relation to this, which really lead one to think there is no real motivation for legislation such as these two bills except for electoral advantage. The member for Shortland discussed disadvantaged people being on the electoral roll. I just do not think that the purpose of these two bills is to enrol masses of disadvantaged people who are not on the electoral roll—except, as one of my colleagues pointed out, perhaps dead people
or people who have existential challenges, because that is what will happen if the provisions of these bills are enacted by this parliament. We are going to have a massive increase in non-existent people being enrolled on the electoral roll, leading to higher non-turnout, higher opportunity for voter fraud, and an electoral roll where—if we look at the stats in New South Wales—almost 40 per cent of those in the new enrolled data do not turn out on election day.

It is of great concern, and I think that these sets of arguments, whether they be about disadvantaged people or arguments that we are trying to just enrol our friends, were quite a difficult pattern to understand. It does lead one to think that, as the electoral situation federally gets much tighter, we are seeing more and more bills from the government in relation to amending the electoral roll and the Commonwealth Electoral Act, seeking to enrol so many people.

There were of course, as we know and have heard so many times, up to 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia at the last census, so why would we possibly go there? That is from the ANAO report. There are 185,000 potential duplicate tax records for individuals. Sixty per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased in a sample match. These are serious statistics. So, when a government is saying that automatic enrolment will apply to these categories of people and statistics, you have to ask yourself the question: what is the government doing with this legislation? There has not been any coherent explanation as to why.

Other electoral bills that we have seen in this House in the past few years have ensured that prisoners with custodial sentences will have the right to vote. The franchise being extended to people who exist and also the people here who clearly—according to the ANAO audit report, the tax office and other agencies—just do not exist or are duplicates is a very problematic question. I think the opposition is right to say, 'Let's not have tampering with the electoral roll which weakens the integrity of the roll.' This government has accused the Howard government of doing that, but the Howard government simply set up a firm set of deadlines for individuals to meet their obligations and responsibilities.

This government talks frequently about the responsibility of voters to vote but not the responsibility of voters to enrol themselves to vote. So you take the responsibility that you have to vote, that you should vote and that it is a good thing but not that it is a good thing for you to maintain your right to vote—or that responsibility will be taken from you by this nanny-state government, which of course will enrol millions of tax file numbers and duplicate records and all sorts of people who do not really exist. It is a great concern.

It is, of course, the duty of each Australian citizen to enrol to vote in a compulsory system, to accurately maintain their roll and their residence and to cast a vote—and of course to ensure that they extend their preferences. That is the current legislation. That is the current system that we have.

I do not believe this is too onerous for individuals. I do not accept the member for Shortland's dark construct of Australian society that there are masses of confused people in her electorate. I find this entirely ridiculous. I do not accept that there are masses of confused people in the electorate of Shortland who do not know how to put themselves on the electoral roll, who do not know how to maintain their own address and who do not know their responsibilities about voting. In fact, I would suggest that every
electoral statistic since Federation and since the seat of Shortland was created would suggest that the vast, vast, vast majority of people understand that obligation, have met their obligation and are quite capable of meeting their responsibility. As to this contention that there is massive confusion over the electorate of Shortland, I think the member for Shortland should step outside her electorate office more often. She would find that the world is not such a confused place beyond the doors of her own electorate office.

While there has been some humour in the last few presentations, this is actually quite a serious issue. I think the matters that we are considering here today—giving an agency like the Electoral Commission the power to deem their own trusted sources of reliable data; automatic enrolment of people regardless of whether they exist or not; and the other tampering that we see in the so-called 'protecting elector participation' and so-called 'maintaining address' bills, following the Orwellian approach of this government of naming bills for the almost exact opposite of what they represent—are serious and they are going to lead to a detrimental effect on the integrity of the electoral roll.

As an advocate of voluntary voting in Australia's future, I would say that I believe that these two bills, if passed today, will actually help us along that path towards voluntary voting because our system will be degraded. I think people will see, when they start seeing the integrity of the electoral roll degrading, that we would be better off having a system where people vote voluntarily and enrol themselves voluntarily.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (20:44): I rise this evening also to make a contribution on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012, but I will be focusing my remarks on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011. The coalition will be opposing this bill. The Labor Party unfortunately have form when it comes to amending electoral legislation and they have shown a disturbing tendency to rush in with a lot of legislation and sort out the problems later on. This bill raises a number of concerns. At the moment we are facing a state election in Queensland, where the Bligh government have introduced stringent caps on the amounts individuals can donate to political parties. They have, however, included a provision to allow certain third party organisations to spend up to $500,000 each on party campaigns. It will surprise no-one that the definition of 'third party organisations' just happens to include union bodies. So every union organisation can spend up to $500,000 on Labor campaigns whilst at the same time there is a restriction on the amounts that individuals and companies can donate—up to $2,000 per campaign and up to $5,000 to a party head office. This situation will hopefully be rectified on Saturday when a 20-year-old Labor government gets consigned to the scrapheap of political history.

But the specific bills we are debating tonight would allow the Australian Electoral Commissioner to update the electoral roll using data and information from other sources. Apparently, according to the explanatory memorandum, the commissioner will be able to directly update an elector's enrolled address following the receipt and analysis of 'reliable and current data sources'—whatever those are—from outside the Electoral Commission. As the Australian Privacy Foundation noted, this effectively changes our system from opt in to opt out.
The coalition believes it is important to ensure Australian citizens maintain responsibility for their own enrolment.

I will come to the effect of these changes and why they will be detrimental to the electoral system. But I would like to make some comment on the basis for these changes. The government states, in the explanatory notes to the maintaining address bill:
The Bill will assist in meeting the urgent need to arrest the decline in enrolment rates across Australia by ensuring the federal electoral roll is as current and accurate as possible.

Firstly, I will address the decline in enrolment rates and then, secondly, the assertion that this will ensure the roll is as current and accurate as possible.

The Australian Electoral Commission claims that there are approximately 1.4 million Australians who are not on the electoral roll and that the participation rate is declining. This is based, as I understand it, on a simple theoretical calculation. The AEC believes the provisions in this legislation will help the AEC increase the participation rate.

However, it is clearly much more complex than this. An online article from the Age on 30 July 2010 said:
Aaron Martin, lecturer at the Australian National University's School of Politics and International Studies, said the reason was largely demographic - young people aren't interested in federal elections.

"Young people are not as interested in electoral politics, and this a trend found in other countries among young people," Mr Martin told The Age.

"Of the 1.4 million were eligible to enrol, the AEC said one-third of those people were aged 18 to 24, and 70 per cent of them were aged 18 to 39."

"The 18 to 39 group area also the most socially mobile. When they move house they could also drop off the roll."

Further, Mr Martin said issues like population growth, mining taxes and border protection simply may not excite young people.

This is an interesting observation suggesting that the real reason for declining enrolment rates lies with demographic issues. As Professor Martin says, this is reflected in the experience of many other countries, including countries in Europe.

I am supportive of efforts by the AEC to increase enrolment amongst young people through the provision of information. I must applaud them for the targeted campaigns they have run in the past to ensure that young people enrol.

We do not, however, support using external information to change the roll on behalf of people. The coalition believes this will lead to inaccuracy in the electoral roll and that it may compromise the integrity of the electoral process. Here is an exchange from a hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters:

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I want to go back to the process. Supposing you have decided, because of your checking with your material, that Mrs Bloggs has actually moved from her previous address. Under this legislation, you would write to the new address and say, 'We have changed you', because you are satisfied that she has moved.

Mr Killesteyn: We would not say that we have changed it; we would write to the individual and say, 'We have information which leads us to believe that you are at this address. You have 28 days to advise us whether that is not the case.' If there were no response, then we would change the address at that point.

There are many perfectly legitimate reasons why a person might provide different agencies with different addresses. I visited a friend of mine recently who runs a general store in a country town. She also runs the Australia Post franchise where, she tells me, some people have up to three PO boxes.
Another example is university students. In my inner city electorate of Brisbane, there are many students who live in temporary accommodation while they are studying. Their home or primary address might actually be outside of Brisbane. So the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, the ATO and the AEC will have one address. But it is quite common for Centrelink and Australia Post to have a different address. According to this legislation, the commissioner would send them a letter saying, ‘We think you have moved.’ If the letter is not responded to within 28 days, confirming or denying that they have moved, their address will automatically be changed on the roll without them even knowing. This is one practical example of how this legislation will lead to the electoral roll being inaccurate. Some seats are very marginal—and I certainly know about that! Sometimes members might be elected to this place with margins of only 10 or 20 votes. So this is a serious issue. It is a serious issue about the integrity of the electoral process.

This legislation will also seriously affect people who move temporarily whilst changing their primary address. As I stated before, young people are a lot more mobile than young people were, say, 20 years ago. There are also people who own more than one home or who have multiple addresses. Here is another example where different government agencies might have different addresses, or more than one address, for the same person. As pointed out in the coalition’s joint standing committee dissenting report, the ATO has confirmed that there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than there were people at the last census. I am quite familiar with this, because several years back A House Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration prepared an in-depth report into the ATO and tax file numbers. I think most of us were quite astonished that there were more tax file numbers than people in Australia, and that is the case here. So using this information as a primary source of data is filled with misconceptions. Clearly it is neither accurate nor appropriate to draw from information given by private individuals to government agencies.

The Australian Privacy Foundation also expressed very strong concerns about this bill in their submission to the joint standing committee. I refer to one quote in particular, where they say:

We submit that the existing basis of enrolment, only on the basis of a positive action by an eligible voter, should not be abandoned lightly. It is consistent with fundamental privacy principles, which favour use of personal information only for the purpose for which it is collected, with exceptions being strictly limited, and a preference for consent for any secondary use.

The other very concerning aspect of this bill is that the sources of data that the commissioner can draw from are not subject to government regulation and therefore parliamentary disallowance, so the commissioner has sole discretion on which sources of data he or she believes are accurate. Surely it is far better for electoral enrolment to be a proactive step on behalf of an individual, and we should do everything to encourage individuals to be proactive—as opposed to someone being enrolled at an address they have given to Centrelink and losing or missing the notification in the mail, therefore being wrongly enrolled.

This is another flawed bill from this incompetent government and it should not be supported by the parliament.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (20:54): There is nothing more fundamental to democracy than elections. And there is nothing more important to proper, honest and fair elections than the integrity of the electoral rolls. It is
It is accurate to say that the integrity of our electoral rolls is the very rock upon which our electoral system stands. It is for that reason that I rise to speak today on the two electoral and referendum amendment bills—the maintaining address and the protecting elector participation bills.

The coalition opposes both changes proposed by this Labor-Greens government. We oppose these changes as a matter of principle. We strongly believe in maintaining fundamental principles and long-held conventions of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. Our very system of democracy depends upon the principle of ensuring that all citizens are entitled to vote and to choose their member of parliament. It is as simple as that. As soon as we begin to fiddle with the mechanisms that underpin the security of our electoral rolls we put that principle at risk and in so doing we undermine public confidence in our electoral system. Today's bills do put that principle at risk under the false underlying premise that increasing the number of people on the rolls is a desirable objective.

If you look at the titles of the bills, you can see the very euphemistic and Orwellian way in which they have been named. The bills are not about maintaining an address but about changing it—without an individual's knowledge. The bills are not about protecting elector participation but about allowing automatic enrolment of voters without their knowledge and without their consent. At the most fundamental level, all these bills do is subvert the privacy of voters and the integrity of the electoral roll simply to increase the aggregate number of people on the roll, no matter whether they are entitled to be there or not.

The bills today are the ultimate outcome of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters review of Australia's electoral laws following the 2010 election. In July 2011, the first report was tabled by the committee and it contained two recommendations which appear today in the form of these two bills. The protecting elector participation bill will allow automatic enrolment of Australians on the electoral roll—after the Australian Electoral Commission are satisfied that an elector has been enrolled at a particular address for one month and is, to their knowledge, eligible to be on the roll. The maintaining address bill subsequently gives the AEC the authority to change an elector's address where they see fit. These changes will reduce the integrity of the electoral roll at every step of the way, and the coalition is resolved to see that these changes are opposed and defeated.

In the original 2010 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters report following the 2010 election, Labor and the Greens recommended that the data sources used by the AEC should fall under the purview of the parliament. For some strange reason, they have now decided that the AEC should have sole discretion for what they consider to be a 'reliable source', which opens up the commission to a raft of problems. The coalition has time and time again reiterated to this government the huge risk involved with a move to give all control to the AEC without any further oversight by the parliament. For some strange reason, they have now decided that the AEC should have sole discretion for what they consider to be a 'reliable source', which opens up the commission to a raft of problems. The coalition has time and time again reiterated to this government the huge risk involved with a move to give all control to the AEC without any further oversight by the parliament. This is especially relevant given that the use of any particular agency will not be legislated through these bills; nor have we received any kind of final confirmation from the AEC about what types of organisations it will use to derive its data.

Of course, there is no specific legislative requirement for the AEC to check that a voter is over 18 or indeed even an Australian citizen—yet another oversight by the government. In its submission, the AEC mentioned that data from Centrelink, road and traffic authorities at the state government
level and Australia Post might be used. The AEC told the inquiry that the AEC considers these organisations to be reliable, although it neglected to inform the inquiry about why it considered them to be reliable.

With so many of the bills that the Gillard Labor government introduces into the House the devil is in the detail. Today, the devil is in the lack of detail. At this stage we have three sources—first, Centrelink, a Commonwealth agency; second, motor registries at the state and territory level; and, third, Australia Post, a federal government business enterprise. If the government are proposing a specific overlap or the sharing of information between these very disparate types of organisations, they should at least explicitly come out and say so. Would there be an explicit direction by Australia Post to share information with the AEC? Will the AEC be calling up Centrelink and using up their resources to find out someone's address, or at least the address according to a public servant? If they are proposing an impost on the privacy of Australian citizens, they should at least explicitly come out and say so. It is worth pointing out at this stage that not all Australians receive Centrelink, not all Australians have a licence and, indeed, in this day and age, not all Australians even receive mail. In any case, people are just as lax in updating their address on drivers licences with Australia Post and Centrelink.

This goes to the heart of how and why the AEC consider these sources to be a reliable source of information for someone's electoral or residential address, and the coalition are not satisfied that this has been adequately explained. It is true, however, that all eligible Australians have a civic duty and responsibility to ensure that they enrol to vote and have legal obligations under the Electoral Act as to how and when they inform the AEC of a change of details. The coalition do not believe that these responsibilities are too onerous for individual electors. What we do not want is this responsibility being taken out of the hands of the individual and handed to a government department, which is what these bills do.

It is very concerning to me that these bills will essentially extend how the government can check up on its citizens. We are not talking about voluntarily giving your details over to the AEC or signing a form indicating the veracity of such information. Indeed, we are not talking about a signature at all. These bills will allow some bureaucrat sitting in the offices of the AEC to put your name on the electoral roll without your knowledge and, more importantly, without your consent.

At present, voters have the option at any time to inform the AEC that they wish to be considered silent voters, such that their address is not listed on the publicly available roll. For victims of domestic violence, those involved in custody disputes or for any other important reason, these bills would allow such people to be put on the publicly available electoral roll without their consent. This is a severe abuse of an individual's privacy, an issue that has been completely ignored by Labor Party and the Greens. For this reason alone, the House must reject these bills. As the coalition's dissenting report notes, voters should at the very least have the option to apply for silent elector status before being added to the electoral roll.

Moreover, the coalition are very concerned that the AEC could, under these pieces of legislation, use any data source it wants which could also include records from the Australian Taxation Office or Medicare. Although the commissioner informed the inquiry on 8 February 2012 that it is not proposing to use tax records, there are no provisions in this bill that would restrict the AEC from changing its mind. Under these
bills as they stand, we could even have a horde of diligent public servants sifting through Facebook to ascertain the addresses of Australian citizens.

Regarding possible information from the Australian tax office, there was a very extensive and thorough review in an ANAO report on the management of tax file numbers that was considered by a House Standing Committee on Economics, Financial and Public Administration in 1999. The House discovered that there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia compared to the most recent census; that there were 185,000 potential duplicate tax records for individuals; and, very alarmingly, that 62 per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased in a sample match.

Regarding Medicare, a 2005 ANAO report *Integrity of Medicare enrolment data* discovered:

... that up to half a million active Medicare enrolment records were probably for people who are deceased.

Anyone interested in the integrity of the electoral roll should be very, very concerned about the amendments being debated today. I have discussed the principles involved, but there are also very concerning issues relating to the practicality of using external data to change someone's electoral details.

The coalition believe in personal responsibility, the responsibility of electors in Australia to update the AEC of a change of address. Sometimes voters are very diligent in letting the AEC know of a change. Sometimes, however, this does not occur. I acknowledge that, but I also acknowledge that there are many legitimate reasons that there might be a delay. When someone moves to a different place of residence, there are many organisations that need to be contacted immediately and some that, to be frank, do not really need to know. If you want to receive your bank statements in the mail, you tell your bank. If you want to continue to use your Medicare card, changing your address is not necessarily a high priority. Similarly, if a loved one dies, letting the Australian Electoral Commission know is most certainly not high on the to-do list.

The government would have you believe that people's tardiness in updating the AEC is justification for giving the AEC the power to update someone's roll details without their knowledge. There are also a whole host of reasons that someone may have more than one address. Many people have more than one place of residence. Some use a place of employment as a mailing address, while others might use a post office box. In my electorate, there are many thousands of students living at the colleges at the University of Queensland, while their residences may well be hundreds of kilometres away. Therefore, giving the AEC the power to decide what is and what is not someone's electoral address increases the potential for ambiguities and irregularities of the electoral roll, ultimately reducing its integrity.

Nor has the AEC come up with a way to rectify such ambiguities. Under current arrangements, only 20 per cent of electors respond to letters from the AEC, and I am not confident that somehow this figure will magically change in the future. As mentioned by the member for Brisbane, I point to the following exchange between the member for Mackellar and the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Ed Killesteyn, on 8 February 2012, in which the commission was asked what would happen after the AEC was confident someone had indeed moved, to which the commissioner responded:

... we would write to the individual and say, 'We have information which leads us to believe that
you are at this address. You have 28 days to advise us whether that is not the case'. If there were no response, then we could change the address at that point.

Such a course of action would be comical if it did not so grievously attack the integrity of the electoral roll. They will write you a letter and if it is not your genuine address, of course you will not be able to respond, but then your inability to respond means you are put at the wrong electoral address.

At the end of the day, it is inconceivable that the government cannot be alert to the real issues raised by these amendments. It leaves the electoral system at risk because a question of how the AEC should assess a source as reliable is ignored by this legislation. Our concerns are born of a genuine belief that something so fundamental as the integrity of our electoral system must be protected by legislation that reflects that importance, legislation that secures that integrity by spelling out in the clearest terms how it is to be protected and legislation that acknowledges that a flawed protection of our electoral rolls must inevitably lead to the wrong candidates being elected. It is as stark as that. This is a government driven by gross arrogance or gross stupidity. It pays lip service to democracy. It has lost touch with honesty in its actions and it has once again let all Australians down.

Mr HAASE (Durack) (21:08): I rise to speak on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012 and a related bill. This bill seeks to amend the Electoral Act to allow the Australian Electoral Commission, the AEC, to directly enrol new electors on the electoral roll when the Electoral Commissioner is satisfied that an individual is living at a particular address for one month and is eligible to be on the roll.

If this bill is passed, we are risking the integrity of the electoral roll. We are risking the people of Australia's right to vote in the electorate they genuinely live in. We are taking away the responsibility of constituents. We are not empowering people with the right to vote. In fact, we are saying, 'We do not trust you to notify authorities of your permanent address'—no reflection on you, Madam Deputy Speaker Vamvakoumis. If an elector is enrolled without their knowledge there is a significant chance for an error to occur. Under automatic enrolment, there is the potential for electors who are not Australian citizens, for electors who are under 18 and for electors who use different names to be enrolled without their knowledge, damaging the integrity and reliability of the roll.

This absurd bill is all about trust and treachery. The Labor government is asking the Australian public to trust them with the enrolment details, yet this treacherous government has proven to the people of Australia that they cannot be trusted. This government cannot be trusted on their word. Who will ever forget those infamous words, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead'—words spouted by the current Prime Minister in her first official act of deceit just days before the last election.

Not only can this government not be trusted on their word, they cannot be trusted with the Australian taxpayers' money. Why? It still irks the public of Australia that around $40 million was wasted a few years ago when 16,000 dead people and 27,000 people living overseas were given a bonus of $900 each. According to the taxation—

Mr Mitchell: I have a point of order on direct relevance, Madam Deputy Speaker. This has absolutely nothing to do with this bill in line with what we have been hearing earlier.
Mr HAASE: I am sure that is the case. The member of the government is offended by the things I am mentioning but they all tie directly into this next move by this government of failures in relation to changing the Electoral Act. I will move on in that regard. We have a $1.4 billion blowout in the laptops in schools program and they have delivered only just over half the number of computers. The solar homes program included an $850 million blowout and then the program was cancelled. We have a broadband network costing about $50 billion with no business plan. The waste continues today with set-top boxes estimated to cost $350 a home, but Senator Conroy now admits—

Mr Mitchell: I rise on a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to do this again but it has been over six minutes now and we have not heard a bit about the bill. I ask that you ask the speaker to get back to the bill and direct relevance to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Durack has the call and he will stay with the bill.

Mr HAASE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Senator Conroy now admits that the boxes could cost up to $1,528 each in rural areas. Gerry Harvey says he can do it for $168. What more evidence do I need to cite to prove that this government should not be put in charge of the asylum. It is the duty of each Australian citizen to enrol to vote—that is a given—to accurately maintain their enrolment at their permanent place of residence, to cast a vote when an election is called, and to fully extend preferences to all candidates contesting an election of the House of Representatives. Surely we as adult Australian citizens can be trusted to do this. Compulsory enrolment for federal elections was introduced in 1912, and I fail to
understand why this government is hell-bent on reinventing the wheel in this matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you may ask how the integrity of the electoral roll is at risk if the AEC is managed by a three-person Australian Electoral Commission made up of a chairperson, who must be an active or retired judge of the Federal Court of Australia, the Electoral Commissioner, and a non-judicial member. I am in no way passing judgment on the reliability of individuals. I am in fact passing judgment on a government that has proven they cannot be trusted with anything, much less trusted to pass on accurate data.

This bill gives the AEC the discretion to determine what 'reliable and current' data sources are. According to the Australian Electoral Commission's website, the AEC has seven core business functions. These are to manage the Commonwealth electoral roll; conduct elections and referendums, including industrial and fee-for-service elections and protected action ballots; educate and inform the community about electoral rights and responsibilities; provide research, advice and assistance on electoral matters to the parliament, other government agencies and recognised bodies; provide assistance in overseas elections and referendums in support of wider government initiatives; administer election funding, financial disclosure and party registration requirements; and support electoral redistributions. Surely deciding what is reliable and current data to determine where someone lives is far beyond the purview of the AEC. This bill does not give a specific definition of what the Electoral Commission may regard as a 'reliable and current data source' from which to change elector details. What is considered a 'reliable and current data source' is open to interpretation.

I believe there are significant risks to the integrity of the electoral roll by using external data sources such as the ATO, Medicare or other government agencies to update elector details. In fact the Australian National Audit Office report No. 24 of 2004-05, Performance audit: integrity of Medicare enrolment data, stated that the Australian National Audit Office 'found that up to half a million active Medicare enrolment records were probably for people who are deceased'. I wonder if I ought to be challenged on that with respect to straying from the bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure you will agree that it simply supports my argument that this government has no track record that demonstrates their ability to get anything right, let alone taking over the electoral roll.

A 1999 report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration, Numbers on the run: review of the ANAO report No.37 1998-99 on the management of tax file numbers, found that there were 3.2 million more tax file numbers than people in Australia at the last census that had been undertaken, that there were 185,000 potential duplicate tax records for individuals and that 62 per cent of deceased clients were not recorded as deceased in a sample match.

This government has ruined the reputation and standing of the office of Prime Minister, it has ruined the reputation of Speaker of the House, it has ruined our international reputation as a country with low sovereign risk and now it seeks to ruin the reputation of the AEC. We, the people of Australia, must be concerned that, should this bill pass, we are again being manipulated by the Gillard government. To maintain their tenuous hold on power they removed the Speaker of the House to their backbench and cajoled a member of the Liberal coalition to take up that position. This deceitful manoeuvring
took a voting member away from the opposition, added a voting member to the government, allowing the Prime Minister to renege on her agreement with Mr Andrew Wilkie, the member for Denison, to curtail poker machine activity.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Order! The member for Durack is straying in relevance. This would be about the fourth time that the chair has asked the member for Durack to be relevant to the bill.

Mr HAASE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall continue to be so. There have been suggestions that Fair Work Australia has again been reticent in assisting authorities investigating Craig Thomson, the federal member for Dobell—

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. I would ask that you draw the honourable member's attention to the actual subject matter of this legislation—and to keep him to it, if it is possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair has, on a number of occasions, drawn the honourable member's attention to the relevance of the bill. This will probably be the fifth time that the chair asks the honourable member for Durack to stick to the bill. The member for Durack will wind up, with relevance.

Mr HAASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am talking about this bill and I am proving my point that this bill has no right of passage in this House because the track record of the government introducing it has no credibility whatsoever. I add to the evidence of that lack of credibility in my speech, and I insist on doing so. Without the member for Dobell's position the Gillard government does not have a majority in the House of Representatives and therefore cannot continue—

Mr Dreyfus: The honourable member seems to be having a great deal of difficulty in hearing you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have now drawn his attention to the subject matter of this legislation on several occasions. It would seem to me that this amounts to a dissent from the chair, and I would ask that you again draw the honourable member's attention to the subject matter of the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will draw the honourable member for Durack's attention to relevance on the bill. I would ask the member for Durack to wind up fairly quickly or I will sit him down.

Mr HAASE: I am very happy to do so, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am most impressed, however, by the tenacity of government members in the House tonight—irrelevant, but tenacious nevertheless. The government have a proven track record of being unreliable. They have a track record full of bright ideas, yet when it comes to the implementation of these ideas—such as changing the electoral act to allow enrolment on the basis of address, determined by other government departments—they invariably fail through lack of process. We cannot and should not and must not let this Labor government destroy the integrity of the electoral roll for whatever underlying, perhaps even underhanded, reasoning they espouse. I suggest this bill should never be supported.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (21:22): I welcome the opportunity to speak tonight on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011 and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. And it is also good to follow the two previous coalition speakers—such fine speakers. In particular, the member for
Durack made a number of very relevant and insightful points.

When looking at these bills, I was struck by a sense of deja vu. They are typical of what we have come to expect from this government across a whole range of portfolio areas. Whether it is to do with funding campaigns or allowing people to vote in prisons, it always seems to be the case that this government pursues its view of democracy, which also happens to correspond with its political ambitions and political advantage. Before I go too much further in looking at some of these matters, I want to say that I stand with the coalition against these bills. I stand by the view that the Australian people are intelligent and that the Australian people know their responsibilities. The government tends to think the worst of people. It tends to think that Australians are not very intelligent. Indeed, so many of the policies that this government has brought to bear against the Australian people are typical of the view that the Australian people are not very smart. But I and people on this side know that the Australian people are smart and that they can see through the certain type of dust that this government throws at them.

I also think that the Australian people should have their personal responsibility verified. The Australian people know that they have to play some part in the process, that they need to take active steps to enforce their own franchise and to take up the vote themselves. It does seem rather odd in this instance but, as usual, the government sees its own importance at the centre of so much of the life in this country. The government thinks it knows better than the person on the street. I think such a view of the Australian people will bear on the government at the next election, which I hope will take place as soon as possible. It is a view that will certainly bear on the Queensland government on Saturday.

I do welcome the opportunity to speak on these bills. I would like to start with the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011. This bill will give the AEC the ability to change the address of an elector when it believes the elector has moved address. This raises significant concerns for us because it will allow the AEC to automatically update the details of an elector, based on information obtained from other sources, when an elector changes their residential address. This will simply make it easier for the system to be rorted. Not only can electors unknowingly have their details updated but also it is far beyond the control and concern of the AEC to determine what are reliable and current data sources. As other speakers have spoken about at length, there have been untold problems with the integrity of certain information—tax file numbers and other records. There are going to be these sorts of problems in the future and, whilst these problems might not be of interest to the government, they are certainly of interest to us.

As I said before, this nanny-style legislation is typical of not just this Labor government but all Labor governments. The coalition believes that it is the duty of each Australian citizen to enrol to vote, to accurately maintain the enrolment of their permanent place of residence, to cast a vote and to fully extend preferences to all candidates contesting election for the House of Representatives. However, in typical fashion, Labor is trying to manage the duties of Australian citizens with a 'we know what's best for you' attitude. But, clearly, as shown in so many ways in the last four years, the government does not know what is best for the Australian people.
I find it incomprehensible that this Labor government cannot see that this bill will corrupt the integrity of the electoral roll. Taking away the responsibility for maintaining correct address details from Australian electors will significantly increase the potential for errors on the electoral roll. While the Labor government may argue that the percentage of errors will be minor, a handful of incorrect enrolments could be enough to win or lose a highly marginal seat. Given the hung parliament situation we are currently operating in, I thought Labor would be doing anything it could to reduce the risk of it losing a seat due to administrative errors by the AEC. Although the changes in this bill can be easily viewed as nothing but a ploy by the Labor Party and the Greens to improve their electoral chances at the expense of the integrity of the electoral roll, we all know what lengths these parties already go to in order to gain an extra vote.

I will take this very brief opportunity before the adjournment debate begins to make a comment about a couple of things that took place in the last couple of elections. I will start with the most recent one. At the 2010 election, I had personal experience concerning the integrity of the electoral roll as taken up by my major opponent. There is an address in Cowan, 64 Wanneroo Road, Marangaroo, which is the address of basically the only house in Marangaroo. The house is on the major axial route of Wanneroo Road. I was aware of this house because it had been reported to me as being derelict. It had been trashed by the former tenant probably over a year before the 2010 election. I was made aware of this house due to complaints from local residents and I was of the view—and I had it verified on several occasions between then and the 2010 election—that this house was absolutely derelict and that no-one could live in it. I was surprised to then find that two people were on the electoral roll for that address, which I found very odd because there had never been lights on at night and there had never been any signs of actual presence in the building. However, what did occur was that basically at the time—

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:30): Order! It being 9.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Petition: Queensland Floods

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (21:30): I rise tonight to report to the House about the ongoing flood recovery in my electorate of Groom. While it has now been more than 12 months since those terrible events of 10 January 2011, during which time Toowoomba was brought into the international spotlight for the wrong reasons, the flood has left a permanent impression on our region. I am delighted to say that most of the physical recovery has been completed with the exception of a few roadworks. Homes and businesses that were gutted have been transformed, and in many cases—for example, Murray's Art and Framing and Workwear Discounts, both in the CBD—business has begun a new era, either in a rebuilt store or in a new location. However, given the scale of the January 2011 flood, it is impossible for the memories of that day ever to be erased. Certainly, businesses in the CBD have not forgotten and will not ever forget, which is why so many names appear on the petition which I have brought with me to this House tonight. It calls for a proper investment in flood mitigation in the Toowoomba CBD. More than 7,000 names appear on this petition, making it one of the largest petitions ever given to me as a federal member. I would suspect it is also one of the largest petitions presented in this place.
Some of my colleagues will recall another substantial petition I presented to the House on behalf of the people of my electorate—the petition calling for the Labor government to match the coalition's commitment to build the Toowoomba bypass. On that petition there were some 26,000 names. When the people of Toowoomba recognise a need in their community they get behind it in name and in deed. The sheer weight of numbers makes the case argued in this flood mitigation petition compelling.

I must take this opportunity to recognise the hard work of local businessman Bernie Baz of Workwear Discounts, who has been the driving force behind this petition. The people of Toowoomba are resilient and hardworking and have kept their good humour, even in the wake of this flood. I draw the attention of the House to the Chronicle of Toowoomba which, today, Tuesday 20 March, shows a picture of Bernie Baz and highlights the resilience of the people of Toowoomba. Bernie not only had his business completely flooded out and had a short fight with insurance companies until I sorted that out for him, but his business has actually bounced back. He is now selling more discount work wear than ever before. In fact, sales are up in some months on a year-on-year basis by 50 per cent. Bernie is talking about opening a business in Ipswich, which shows that every cloud has a silver lining. Bernie was not going to lie down and be beaten by the flood. He bounced back up and he has made his business even stronger.

The people of Toowoomba, as I say, are of that stock, and they deserve that their views be heard and acted upon. The Gillard government has imposed a flood tax on all Australians. I know some people in my electorate are paying that tax despite also being affected by the flood. The fact that they did not take time off work, the fact that they fought their way back into their homes and the fact that they do not ever want to rely on the taxpayer meant that they simply got on with it, just as Bernie Baz did. This government must ensure that it distributes the money collected from this tax appropriately. It must not just go into the general coffers of a high-taxing, high-spending, wasteful government.

The people of Toowoomba are calling for an investment into flood mitigation in the CBD in Toowoomba. I remind the House that it is the CBD of Toowoomba where East Creek and West Creek met. You saw those graphic photos of furniture floating down the street and those incredible pictures of the fast-water rescue teams rescuing people who were clinging to light poles and trees. At the end of the event, fortunately, though tragically, we only lost two lives in Toowoomba as a result of the flood. That flood must not happen again in Toowoomba. We need to spend the money to build the retention basins and to clear the creeks so they flow freely and the flooding in the CBD is not repeated. The government must now work to uphold its end of the bargain. I notice that the LNP in Queensland, if elected on Saturday, have committed to flood mitigation works in Toowoomba.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: I do seek to present the petition.

The SPEAKER: Before the honourable member resumes his seat, does he wish to seek to present the petition?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.
Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (21:35): I rise today as a proud member of this Labor government that has delivered the passage of the minerals resource rent tax. This is a very important week, because what this lower house has committed to do is ensure that the proceeds of the mining boom are shared throughout the community. I know that in my local electorate this is certainly welcomed. Just looking at these figures indicates how important it is. Firstly, let us look at small business. Our minerals resource rent tax will help 13,500 small businesses to share the benefits of the mining boom by cutting the tax rate from 30 per cent to 29 per cent. This is important for local businesses, especially in my electorate. A lot of businesses in my electorate are not directly linked to the mining boom, and businesses in my electorate do feel like they are missing out. They are missing out because of a number of things, including the very high dollar that at times is making it difficult to export. We do need to help them be competitive. We do need to give them a helping hand, and reducing the company tax rate does help with that. So I am proud to stand on this side of the House to say yes to a tax cut for small business, unlike the opposition who will say no to a tax cut for small business.

We are also looking at a significant boost to superannuation. I am very proud to be part of a government that has seen superannuation reform as critically important to ensure that people in their older age, in their retirement, have a good quality of life. I am very pleased that the proceeds from the minerals resource rent tax will provide 47,900 workers in my electorate with a boost to their superannuation. With the extra super contribution for low-income earners, we are looking at 27,000 low-income workers who will benefit. This will have a real impact for people in my electorate and shows that we are committed to sharing the proceeds of the mining boom, unlike the opposition, who just say no. They just say no continually—to reform and to improvements that benefit my electorate.

This is not the only thing that the opposition has said no to. This week we have seen the shadow parliamentary secretary for health, the member for Boothby, start to say no to the GP superclinic in my electorate. I say to the member for Boothby: come and spend a bit of time in my electorate and see how important this GP superclinic will be for my local area. The criticism that the member for Boothby had was that there was not a GP in every single consulting room in the GP superclinic. This is a very narrow view of what health care is all about. My electorate needs GPs, but it also needs a number of other things, and they include practice nurses, dieticians, diabetes nurse educators, social workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, podiatrists, exercise physiologists and physiotherapists. These are also in short supply in my electorate. People are not always able to get to see them, but they are very important to their health care. These will all be available from the GP superclinic that is now open in my electorate. So I call on the member for Boothby not to have such a narrow view of what health care is all about, because, in the outer suburbs of Adelaide, people need to see a range of healthcare professionals. There is a shortage not just of GPs but of a whole range of healthcare professionals that people need access to. This GP superclinic is providing access to a range of different services that are needed.

The GP superclinic has also enabled a massive expansion of public dental health care in my electorate. The GP superclinic has allowed for a tripling of public dental chairs.
in my electorate. The member for Boothby again has criticised the GP superclinic, by suggesting that dental care is not part of health care. I call on the member for Boothby to stop singing from the songbook of the AMA and start actually listening to local people in the electorates, because this is really important.

Another thing the GP superclinic will do is provide the opportunity for training and education placements for Adelaide medical and nursing students. This Labor government has increased training to ensure there are enough trained people on the ground, whether they be doctors or nurses, to service the electorate. So I call on the member for Boothby to get on board and support the GP superclinics. (Time expired)

**Queensland State Election**

Mr **CHRISTENSEN** (Dawson) (21:40): The Labor state member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, is a political deathbed convert to delivery for his electorate. In government, a local member of parliament should believe delivery to be a key part of his or her job. A local MP who has been in government for 14 years, a cabinet minister for two of them, should believe that a lot of delivery is expected of them. But sadly Mr Mulherin is a political deathbed convert to delivery for Mackay.

Right now the Bligh Labor government tosses and turns on its political deathbed. Yet, in recent days, Mr Mulherin has made promises for things which he and his government ruled out supporting before—an upgrade to the showgrounds, funding for the Mackay Stadium and the introduction of a 'royalties for the regions' scheme. It is obvious these promises have been made with a Labor loss in mind and to stem the flow of votes to the LNP. It is easy to make promises when you know you will not be in government and you know you will not have to deliver on those promises.

Let us look at his political deathbed conversions. He is a political deathbed convert to supporting the Mackay Showgrounds. The showgrounds needed $20 million to improve their facilities. After years of lobbying, in June 2010 the state government relented but gave only $5 million—enough to fix just the underground piping, drainage and wiring. When they gave it, the state Treasurer, Andrew Fraser, told the show society president that there would be no more money from the state government. Here is what the Mackay show society president had to say on 5 November 2010:

> I spoke with the treasurer last Friday and he said it was the end of State Government funding and that it was time for the society to look at commercial opportunities.

Now, during an election campaign, in the dying days of the Bligh Labor government, Mr Mulherin has promised to deliver $15 million for the showgrounds. It is a deathbed conversion to delivery for the showgrounds, but really it is just a promise that will never happen, because Labor will be removed from government this weekend.

Another political deathbed conversion for Mr Mulherin is the promise of almost $900,000 to the Mackay rugby league stadium. If there is one project Mr Mulherin has tried to frustrate for most of his political career, it is the establishment of a rugby league stadium in Mackay itself. Mr Mulherin actively tried to get the funding for the stadium shifted to the Harrup Park Country Club. When Mackay and District Rugby League dismissed that suggestion, Mr Mulherin refused to talk to them anymore. Letters were sent to him and Labor Minister for Sport Phil Reeves which did not even get the courtesy of a reply. And now, as Bligh Labor fades into the twilight, Mr Mulherin
dares to hold up a football at the stadium for the local press, promising $900,000 for seating. It is a political deathbed conversion to delivery for local rugby league, but really it is just a promise that will never happen, because Labor will be removed from government this weekend.

Yet another political deathbed conversion for Mr Mulherin is his newfound support for 'royalties for the regions'. That is not a new idea in Queensland. Regional Queensland has been crying out for it for some time. In fact, in September 2010 the Local Government Association released a proposal calling on the state government to guarantee $150 million a year in royalties to be earmarked for regional local governments for just five years. Not only did Treasurer Andrew Fraser dismiss the idea, but I sat in a council meeting where Mr Mulherin told all of us Mackay councillors that the state government actually spent more in regional areas than it took out. What a joke, when you consider that, in the greater Mackay region alone, about $2 billion in coal royalties is exported from our ports every year. But now, hallelujah, Mr Mulherin is a political deathbed convert to royalties for the regions. Anna Bligh actually came to Mackay to announce a $300-million-a-year 'royalties for the regions' scheme, with Mr Mulherin nodding furiously for the cameras behind her. It is a political deathbed conversion to delivery through a 'royalties for the regions' scheme, but really it is just a promise that will never happen, because Labor will be removed from government this weekend.

The big question in all of this is why these three promises have not been delivered for Mackay by Mr Mulherin prior to the Bligh Labor government crawling into its political deathbed. After all, he has had 14 years in government to deliver these promises; instead, we get them before he goes into opposition or maybe retirement. Mr Mulherin claims he has delivered some things for Mackay, but what? A new hospital without any extra staff, so no extra bed capacity, paid for by flogging off the Mackay Airport, a successful state asset? Two bridges that should have been built five to 10 years ago, as evidenced by traffic congestion, with one of the bridges running into a flood-prone creek? A convention centre promised in 2001 that took a decade to build and now costs ratepayers $1 million a year to run?

Are these seriously achievements of which Mr Mulherin can be proud? The problem that Mr Mulherin has is the same problem that Queensland Labor has: they have had 14 years to deliver and now, on their political deathbeds, they expect us to believe they are converts to the idea of delivering for Queenslanders and delivering for the Mackay region. Well, forget it. This Saturday, the voters will do them a favour. They will flick the switch off and put the Bligh Labor government out of its political misery.

**Holt Electorate: Neighbour Day**

**Mr BYRNE (Holt) (21:45):** I rise tonight to talk about a great event that will be held on Sunday, 25 March—that is, the 10th annual Neighbour Day. I would also like to talk about two remarkable people, Ruth Murray and Jenny Colvin, who are both champion neighbours in their local community of Doveton, in my electorate of Holt. Neighbour Day is the perfect opportunity for the neighbourhood to come together, for residents of all ages and backgrounds, wherever we choose to call home, to come together as a neighbourhood, I guess for the common good. We all need to work together, I think we would acknowledge in this place, to rebuild our sense of community and to build a safer and a friendlier neighbourhood.
We can all start by inviting the people next door and in our street to come on over on Neighbour Day. Neighbour Day was founded in Melbourne in March 2003 by Andrew Heslop. In May 2008, Andrew spoke at the United Nations in New York about the global development of Neighbour Day, which has grown from a simple idea expressed in a letter to the editor of the Age to become a national community event. Since 2003, there have been five principal aims which have shaped Neighbour Day: (1) to strengthen communities and build better relationships with the people who live around us; (2) to create safer, healthier and more vibrant suburbs and towns; (3) to promote tolerance, respect and understanding; (4) to break down community barriers; and, (5), to protect the elderly, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

Two people who I believe embody the principal aims of Neighbour Day are Ruth and Jenny from Doveton. To promote Neighbour Day 2012, I attended a pre-Neighbour Day barbecue with 22 others at Ruth and Jenny's home last Friday. We held this event because we thought that coming together and firing up a barbecue in Doveton was a good way to celebrate and to promote Neighbour Day. At the barbecue, I was incredibly impressed by how Ruth and Jenny have converted their garage into a communal space, including tables and chairs, a coffee machine, TV, stereo and pool table and an incredible Olympic Games mural, which allows their neighbours to come and enjoy each other's company throughout the year. According to Jenny, the communal garage is used for a variety of events throughout the year, including the Christmas light-up party held on 1 December and for spontaneous events—like when it is a nice day.

Ruth and Jenny have lived in the Doveton community since 1979 and, since then, Ruth has been committed to giving to others. In doing so, she has taught her daughter and her fellow friends and neighbours to do likewise. For over 13 years, Ruth and Jenny have run an annual Christmas barbecue for neighbours, local community members, family and old friends at their home in Doveton. Over 150 people are invited to the local barbecue, which coincides with their amazing Christmas lights display. Ruth started this Christmas lights display by simply putting up an angel on the front of her house. Once kids came to have a look, she started welding new objects in front of the house so that kids could come over and even climb on them if they wished. I have driven past the Christmas lights in Doveton on numerous occasions prior to Christmas and they are an amazing sight. They are an incredible experience where people can actually come in and fully experience Christmas. People come from everywhere to take photographs, to just be part of and sample the Christmas spirit and to look at the way things should be done.

The Christmas lights display also includes a Mr and Mrs Claus, whom I happened to meet at this community barbecue. Mr and Mrs Claus are provided with the assistance of local residents Robert and Cheryl Rawnsley, who are able to distribute thousands of gifts, including books and games to children, which are provided by Pauline Forbes and Rhonda Wagner.

Ruth and her family definitely symbolise the spirit of Neighbour Day. They have huge pride in their neighbourhood and a commitment to bringing people together to build a stronger sense of community. According to Jenny, 'The neighbours are the main reason for our success.' For example, when they asked their neighbours if they should have a pre-Neighbour Day barbecue, all these people turned up. The people who turned up were Autumn Place shopkeepers. For example, the butcher, the manager of...
Jeff's Meats, donated the snags for this event and the baker donated the bread—two local shops from Doveton, there just for this event.

Ruth and Jenny's story is an incredible one. In 2000, Jenny and her husband, who sadly is no longer with us, had a band called Country Pride, which used to go round the community and raise funds for various organisations, including the Dandenong Hospital. Due to the large amount of money that was raised, Jenny became the No. 1 torchbearer for the City of Casey and ran in the name of the famous Australian Olympian and middle distance runner Edwin Flack.

Ruth and Jenny's story in the Doveton area is just one Doveton story. I could keep going all night but I have 15 seconds so I will not. Let me say that they epitomise what it means to be neighbours and how to run a good Neighbour Day. They are to be commended and they really do summarise the spirit of what makes that community a great community.

**Bennelong Electorate: Constituency Matters**

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (21:50): The electorate of Bennelong is one of the most diverse electorates in Australia. Located in the demographic centre of Sydney, Bennelong includes a range of cultures, industries, great history and cutting edge new developments. It is a region synonymous with activism. I have met with thousands of politically engaged residents, some wholeheartedly supportive and others not so but all sharing a passion and commitment to our local community.

Engagement with my community has led to action representing concerns on a broad range of issues. Bennelong has some of the most congested roads in the state, resulting from intense population growth and little transport infrastructure development during 16 years of state Labor government. In response, I have authored a comprehensive policy paper designed to alleviate the pressure on our nation's greatest city.

The new Defence housing development in Ermington will see the suburb's population increase to 10,000 people, with many crowding onto Victoria Road, while the nearby Parramatta River glistens in picturesque tranquillity. So I have written to the state transport minister requesting an assessment of the need for a ferry terminal to help take thousands of cars off Victoria Road. Last week I met with Eastwood LAC Superintendent Peter Marcon to discuss reports of criminal activity. Next week we will be jointly facilitating a Bennelong community crime forum.

Significant lobbying from constituents on the mistreatment of cattle in Indonesia has led me to develop an innovative policy response to promote sustainable and ethical slaughtering practices in that country. I have written to the agriculture minister to promote these ideas, which transcend partisan boundaries.

Aircraft noise plagues thousands of Bennelong residents. I strongly oppose the recommendations in the Gillard government's Sydney aviation capacity report to increase the cap on hourly aircraft movements.

Bennelong has benefited over the years from strong and vibrant democratic institutions. Issues and opinions deserve to be analysed and debated at all levels. I join many constituents in amazement at the actions of six local councillors who have continually refused to attend council meetings, denying a quorum to discuss important local matters and frustrating progress. As the federal MP, I may not always like the government's use of numbers to push through policy I do not agree with or the Speaker using his casting vote to support...
the government's agenda, as he did yesterday, but that is no excuse not to show up when it is your obligation to serve and represent your local community. These six councillors express concern that there has been insufficient public consultation on the development of the Ryde Civic Centre. I have chosen the positive and proactive step of writing to the General Manager of the City of Ryde to request that council consider facilitating a further public briefing to give all members of the community a voice on this important issue.

My constituents know that a healthy dose of political competition is a vital ingredient in pushing our representatives to deliver the best results for our community. Labor's track record of faceless men pulling the strings of power and imposing themselves on local communities has clearly been shown to be a cancer on our nation's democracy. Often a faceless powerbroker spends years in a political back office sniping at those who choose to stand up and lead, then expects a healthy pension to sit on the backbench and achieve very little. Local communities demand preselection processes that ensure the best candidate is chosen by the grassroots membership of the party and that ensure this honour is given to respected leaders, not to faceless political staffers or union comrades. The average voter may not have input in this process, but I have great faith that the wise, active and politically engaged people of Bennelong would not tolerate such an imposition.

I derive great pleasure from the considerable amount of insightful and intelligent correspondence I receive from Bennelong constituents on a wide range of issues. I continue to be humbled by the responsibility given to me to represent the concerns of Bennelong residents in the highest offices of government, and I will keep fighting on all the issues I have highlighted today and on many more.

Centenary of Canberra

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (21:55): One hundred years ago Walter Burley Griffin said that he wanted to design a city for a nation of 'bold democrats'. On 12 March 2013 Canberra will celebrate its centenary, a celebration that all Australians can be proud of. Tonight I want to speak about two exciting aspects of Canberra's centenary. The first is the opportunity to speak in greater depth about what our history means and where it has been going. It was my pleasure this evening to engage in one aspect of this—a forum hosted by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects entitled 'Sex in the city' in which noted architecture writer Elizabeth Farrelly presented her views on gender and urban development. I would like to thank Paul Costigan; Diane Firth; my fellow commentator, Gary Rake, and many others for an important discussion about where a great Australian city is to go. Better understanding your own city is the first step towards improving it.

The second aspect that Canberra's centenary will highlight is the importance of understanding our local communities. When I wrote a book on social capital—the community ties that bind us together—it turned out that Canberra was the place in Australia with the strongest social ties, and I think part of this harks back to our strong urban form. But there are still worrying trends. For example, from 2007 to 2010 the number of informal votes in my electorate rose from 2,679 to 5,171. That is more than 5,000 people whose votes did not affect the outcome of the election.

It is important to re-engage Australians with our polity, and part of that will be through the Portrait of a Nation process. I am pleased to be the patron of Portrait of a...
Nation, which will involve Canberrans coming to better understand their suburbs. Canberra suburb and street naming is unique to the nation's capital. Most of the suburbs and streets are named after famous, sometimes forgotten, Australians. Portrait of a Nation will be a chance for Canberrans to delve deeply into the history of their suburb, whether that be holding a street party on the birthday of the person after whom their suburb is named or simply getting friends and family together for a street party. I have found that street parties are enormously valuable in improving the social bonds that tie us together. My wife, Gweneth, and I have held our street's party in three of the last six years. We have found it is a great way of getting to know our neighbours better and getting to know those who have moved into the street over the previous year.

The Centenary of Canberra also involves many other important events. For the centenary the motto of the ever-energetic Robyn Archer is 'seed now, blossom in 2013, flower for another hundred years'. One of the events will be You Are Here, a 10-day curated festival showcasing the energy, innovation and talent from Canberra's thriving creative and independent scene. Dollars for Dili recognises the sister city relationship between Canberra and Dili and will focus on building the capacity and education of young people. It is based on the principle that it is better to give than to receive. There was an exhibition entitled 'Devotion, Daring and a Sense of Destiny', launched by Mr David Headon, which showcased the key role played by surveyors in the early history of Canberra.

There are many other projects that are being discussed as part of Canberra's centenary. I know that you, Mr Speaker, have ideas as to how the quarter-centenary of this very building could be incorporated as part of the centenary of Canberra. It will be an exciting year for Canberrans and an exciting year for all Australians. I urge all Australians to be part of this tremendously important celebration of our nation's capital.

**Re-Engineering Australia Foundation**

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (22:00): I commend my colleague for his speech about Canberra, as it is my birthplace. He might like to note that I have an interest in the subject matter. I hope he may be equally interested in the matters about which I am going to speak: an organisation with which I have had a long association and which I wish to bring to the attention of members. It is a not-for-profit organisation named Re-engineering Australia Foundation, REA. A group of visionary companies, organisations, some government departments, educators and individuals established the organisation to address what they believe is a key failing in relation to education: the number of students not studying in the engineering and manufacturing sectors. They wanted to come together to encourage more to participate. Companies and government organisations, like the Defence Materiel Organisation, Cisco WebEx, and education and training departments from Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania all belong to REA. The sorts of skills that they are interested in are the backbone of our modern economy and industry. They saw those skills as being in decline and they formed REA to target students at all levels, from primary school right through until university, to encourage them to commence and maintain study in these vital fields.

I was privileged to share an office building in Pennant Hills with REA. I came to know them quite well. They run the Fl in Schools Technology Challenge, the largest student program of its type in the world. It involves something in the order of nine million students in 31 nations and 17,000...
high schools. They hold national finals. They had an event here in Parliament House, in the Great Hall, some years ago. This year the national final, the Grand Prix as it is called, was held in Adelaide. I am sure they were glad to get it back. That was on 7 March. My colleague Senator Bernardi was lucky enough to attend that occasion.

To enter the competition, students form a team like a Formula 1 team. They have a manager, a design engineer, and marketing and procurement activities. They come together as a small group, supported and encouraged by their teachers, to learn for themselves and develop a model Formula 1 car. To do this they apply industry standard techniques and technology, using computer aided design, manufacturing and engineering software, and virtual and real wind tunnels—the sorts of skills normally not taught until second and third years of university. While they are doing this they learn all sorts of skills: aerodynamics, computational fluid dynamics, and drag and finite element analysis. They learn it in an enjoyable environment, spurred on by the challenge of competition, and develop an interest in engineering, technology and manufacturing for years to come. The cars are machined from balsa blocks, but other materials can be used. They are powered by a CO₂ gas canister. The sorts of rules, detailed and technical, that apply in Formula 1 apply here as well. The cars reach speeds of over 80 kilometres per hour.

The finals, held in Adelaide on 7 March, saw 26 teams from schools all over Australia compete. They were lucky enough to tour the Australian Submarine Corporation precinct at Osborne and visited the corporate box of Cummins Australia at the Clipsal 500. I think they get better experiences for technologically inclined young people. But the main event was of course the competition. The winning team was the home team from Brighton Secondary School in Adelaide, the first time a team from South Australia has won. The team, called Cold Fusion, scored most points across the 11 categories upon which the teams were judged, beating 25 other teams from across Australia to qualify for the world finals, which will be held later this year.

The winner for the development class was the Engadine High School team, named Rapid Racing. They picked up four awards, including best innovation, best team marketing and the Cisco Webex Outstanding Industry Collaboration award.

The chief judge was Dr Warren Smith of the Australian Defence Force Academy. Other judges came from engineering companies and institutions. Many organisations were involved. Apart from the outstanding work of all the teams that competed, this program is one that is of enormous value. Re-Engineering Australia Foundation is undertaking an outstanding job for Australia. I congratulate the teams and I congratulate Dr Michael Myers, the founder and CEO of the foundation, for REA’s continuing success. (Time expired)

Animal Welfare

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (22:06): The new supply-chain-assurance conditions imposed on Australia’s live export trade in response to the cruel treatment of Australian animals in overseas markets would be applauded by most Australians. Of course, there is much more to do, but the conditions are an important step in the right direction and, hopefully, will also lead to changes in international animal handling standards. It is notable that the conditions were imposed once the cruelty was exposed on television, yet many within the industry were very likely aware of the cruelty, but chose to ignore it.
Since the film footage aired by the Four Corners program, there have been other revelations of animal cruelty, including in abattoirs in Australia. Within Australia authorities at least can take appropriate action, because standards are prescribed and prosecution is an option under the states' animal welfare legislation.

Abattoir standards are, however, the last step in the process. Breeding and transportation of animals can also cause considerable distress and suffering to them. For some time now concerns have been raised about the intense breeding of chickens and pigs in countries around the world, including in Australia. Those animals are bred in tightly confined spaces and under conditions that would obviously cause immense suffering.

Nor is it limited to pigs and chickens. I understand that some puppy farms are no better. Yet they continue to breed in those conditions because they are out of sight and therefore out of mind, for most people. Confining battery hens to a floor space the size of an A4 piece of paper, preventing them from even stretching their wings, in unclean cages with dead birds around them should be outlawed. I recently spoke with a person who has worked in that industry. He told me that he left the industry appalled at what he had seen and experienced. How any regulatory authority in Australia can condone such practice beggars belief. Interestingly, if you kept a pet in similar conditions you would be prosecuted.

It is likewise for pig sows being confined in steel and concrete pens about two metres long by 60 centimetres wide for most of their breeding lives. It must be incredibly torturous. The furrowing crates where the sows then give birth are even worse. These are intelligent creatures made to suffer just so that growers can minimise their breeding costs. The growers will say of course that the sows are better off in the pens and that they are well cared for. Consumers may also benefit from these practices, because they buy cheaper meat or eggs. But I firmly believe that the food quality is also much inferior to that of animals kept in better conditions.

To change international standards is understandably difficult, but there is no excuse for allowing unacceptable practices to continue in Australia. Furthermore, our efforts to change international standards will not be credible whilst we continue with cruel treatment in our own country. Animal welfare standards are set and meant to be policed by state governments. In reality the standards are set by the industry. The industry sectors inevitably commission and substantially fund the research and reports that underpin the standards and animal welfare policies more broadly. There is very little non-industry research available and, indeed, researchers have limited access to the commercial breeding facilities. To compound matters, the existing cumbersome processes relating to animal welfare regulations can take years to work through before the changes can be made. It is indeed encouraging to see that European standards are changing and that many past practices of animal breeding will no longer be acceptable. It is also encouraging to see some Australian food retailers taking a stand and refusing to market products that originate from unacceptable breeding farms. I note that the Australian pork industry, after years of denying that sow stalls were cruel, has announced a voluntary phasing out of sow stalls by 2017. I welcome the change of direction. However, 2017 is still years away, and in light of the track record of animal industry bodies to date I treat with caution promises of industry self-regulation. It seems that, to date, industry self-regulation has
primarily served to protect bad practice from prosecution.

That is why we need an independent office of animal welfare, an independent office that has no conflict of interest and no self-interest and that can set appropriate animal welfare standards for all animals in relation to breeding, transport and slaughter processes. In the interim, I call on the state governments around the country—who currently, through the Primary Industries Ministerial Council, have the power to set improved animal welfare standards—to do so and thereby end the unnecessary suffering of millions of animals each year in this country.

**Mental Health**

**Mr VASTA** (Bonner) (22:11): I rise this evening to bring to the House's attention a very important issue in the electorate of Bonner and indeed the wider Australian community, and that is the issue of mental health. Talking with my Bonner constituents when I am out and about in the electorate I have observed a very definite trend emerging. Increasingly my constituents are concerned about mental health and the impact it has not only on their own lives but also on the lives of their families and friends.

Almost half the nation's population—45 per cent—will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lives. That is one in every two people. One of the big problems facing mental health treatment in Australia is that so often mental health is categorised too simply as a condition in and of itself. In talking to several interest groups in my electorate it has become clear this oversimplification hides the true complexity surrounding the issue.

Another significant challenge that faces these local mental health oriented community groups in Bonner is that of funding. I have been told again and again about the enormous struggle these smaller groups face in accessing funding that will enable them to grow and continue to operate at a grassroots level, with the help of hardworking volunteers. I have observed that, far from having the large-scale funding grants available to larger established organisations, smaller groups and support networks can have a significant community impact with limited funding. The difference this can make in the lives of those experiencing mental health problems is truly amazing. But without this assistance sufferers can be left frustrated and alone in their struggle. I have frequently witnessed the emotion of those battling mental health issues and their pleas for better infrastructure and resources that would make the ultimate difference in their lives and the lives of others.

Recent studies have found that one in five people will experience some form of mental illness in any given year. Yet only one-third of sufferers receive help from health services. A staggering 65 per cent of sufferers battle their disorder alone or with only family assistance. So what can be done to assist those groups in their operations? What strategies will better assist the smaller organisations at a grassroots level to overcome the increasing challenges facing the community in relation to mental health? Mental health care is at a critical juncture. Genuine reform and real action are needed to provide improved access to care, better long-term outcomes for patients and more efficient use of resources. As health minister in the Howard coalition government, Tony Abbott oversaw the biggest single injection of funding into mental health services.

**The SPEAKER**: The honourable member ought to refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his title.
Mr VASTA: The Leader of the Opposition—yes, Mr Speaker. There was $1.9 billion provided in 2006 for the following five years.

The time to tackle mental illness is when it first occurs. The prevalence of mental health problems declines with age. It is our younger Australians—those between 16 and 24—who bear the brunt of mental illness. Evidence shows that with early and targeted treatment many young people can overcome their problems and lead socially and economically productive lives with a lower incidence of progression or relapse. Delay in accessing appropriate treatment can be damaging for a young person, particularly during adolescence. Maturity can be delayed, social and family relationships can be strained and employment prospects can be derailed. Secondary problems such as substance abuse, unemployment and behavioural problems may develop or intensify and the illness itself may become more deeply entrenched. That is why it is so critical that volunteers on the ground have access to adequate support in order to achieve their local operational goals.

The coalition’s Real Action Plan for Better Mental Health includes those support structures vital to achieving local and nationwide objectives. Twenty early psychosis intervention centres, 800 mental health beds and 60 additional youth headspace sites across the country will assist those already founded networks in accessing quality mental health services.

The coalition’s Direct Action Plan for Better Mental Health is fully funded and builds on existing mental health funding provided in the previous budget. The coalition will also redirect funding away from new bureaucratic structures, proposed by Labor, to provide additional funding directly to front-line mental health services. These are important steps that need to be taken in order to achieve real impacting change to Australia’s mental health system.

Chifley Electorate: Rooty Hill RSL Youth Swimming Club
Women’s Basketball

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (22:16): Tonight I am delighted to acknowledge in this place the kids of the Rooty Hill RSL Youth Swimming Club and their impressive accomplishments recently at the New South Wales RSL State Youth Championships in Ulladulla, New South Wales. The Rooty Hill RSL Youth Club has been part of our community for 45 years and works hard to provide our youth sporting groups with the opportunity to compete.

These local organisations and sporting groups help bring together our communities and teach our kids the important life skills of teamwork, dedication and the value of persistence. This year, the Rooty Hill RSL Youth Swimming Club was able to send a total of 22 swimmers, competing in 26 events, to the New South Wales RSL State Youth Championships. They came away with 28 places, including eight gold medals and eight silver medals. It is an outstanding reward for their hard work and perseverance.

Many of these kids competed in multiple events over the course of the day and were watched by over 2,000 competitors and spectators. I want to personally congratulate Stephanie Batchelor, Tully Fletcher, Samuel Fletcher, Elizabeth Fletcher, Nicole Portelli, Monique Portelli, Alana Kerri Broomham, Taylah Lee, Caitlin Thick, Sharray Brown, Jeremy D’Souza, Brendan D’Souza, Emma Harvey, Justin Munzer and Georgia Lee for tremendous performances. These swimmers put in countless hours practising and training, but I would also like to congratulate and commend their parents and coaches for
the continuous support and dedication they show these kids each and every day.

It is also worth paying special tribute to President Anthony Portelli and all the members of the club executive for their leadership and commitment to this special organisation. I am very proud of these kids who make up the Rooty Hill RSL Youth Swimming Club and I am happy we were able to help support them in their efforts to attend titles. Congratulations on a job well done.

While on the subject of young people excelling and doing our community proud, I want to make mention of another group of athletes deserving of special mention in this place. Last month, at the invitation of the Australian Institute of Sport and of Basketball Australia, I had the great pleasure of attending the AIS women's basketball 2011 graduation ceremony. The work of the AIS in developing fantastic basketballers is recognised internationally. The AIS takes the view that its program transforms promising junior players into mature senior athletes with the mental, physical and tactical skills needed to perform with distinction—and humility—on the world stage. The program also promotes their academic progress, employment opportunities, welfare and personal growth.

For years, AIS women's basketball teams have been internationally competitive, securing multiple titles worldwide. For example, the Australian women's youth division, the Gems, finished in the top four at the 2011 FIBA Under 19 World Championships. The graduating athletes are Rebecca Cole, guard, from Mt Waverley, Victoria; Rebecca Allen, guard/forward, from Wangaratta, Victoria; Madeleine Garrick, another guard/forward, from Shepparton, Victoria; Sarah Blicavs, guard/forward, from Sunbury, Victoria; Olivia Thompson, forward, from Balaklava, South Australia; Rosie Fadljevic, forward, from Melbourne, Victoria; Alex Bunton, centre, originally from the UK and now from the ACT; and Tessa Lavey, guard, from Swan Hill, Victoria. I will be posting more details about these talented players on my website, with this speech.

The Australian government contributes close to $6 million in annual funding to support the development of the sport from the grassroots to the elite level. This includes an extra $1 million per year in high-performance funding. It is money well invested in developing the potential of young talent. The demands and pressures placed on these young players performing at this level cannot be underestimated. They are shining examples of what can be achieved and they follow in the footsteps of those who have stood out in years past: players such as Lauren Jackson and Penny Taylor. A lot of us look forward to seeing the 2011 graduates progress and make our country proud. They do so under the care, guidance and occasional tough love of head coach Phil Brown and assistant coach Kristy Flores. It is important to recognise that these players get there because of the sacrifice and support they receive, particularly from their family. I think that special ingredient also needs to receive special attention tonight. Congratulations to all of them.

Aston Electorate: Public Transport

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (22:21): Whenever I do surveys of my electorate, transport issues of one form or another inevitably come out as one of the top issues of concern to local residents. Only around six per cent of local residents travel to work using the heavy rail network or other public transport. The vast majority of the rest are sole-occupant drivers. I would like to update the House on three
matters that local residents have expressed as concerns.

The first concern is the Rowville rail proposal. I have been fighting for this proposal for some time, and it has been on the agenda for many years. The Baillieu government commissioned a full $2 million feasibility study into this proposal. This study was promised by the former Bracks government but never delivered. The Baillieu government has finally delivered on this. We are halfway through this study, the first report of which was released earlier this month. The report finds that a Rowville rail link would connect Rowville to Huntingdale station, then connect to the Dandenong line and then into the city. Indeed, there is already some land set aside for that along Wellington Road. This first report outlines a number of challenges, which include the current congestion of the Dandenong line, to which the Rowville line would connect. The report also outlines some of the challenges associated with congestion on the inner-city loop and elsewhere that needs to be addressed. Despite these challenges the report recommends that the study and the analysis continue. We look forward to the final report of this feasibility study being brought down early next year, at which time there will be a full assessment of the economic benefits as well as the full costs associated with it.

We envisage that the link will cost at least $1 billion, if not more, to build. Should the cost-benefit analysis prove it to be a beneficial project I will be pushing very hard to ensure that state and federal governments contribute to the project, because it has three immense benefits. Of course, it would have a benefit for my local residents, who would finally have a rail link into the city. The second benefit would be that it would remove traffic from the heavily congested Monash Freeway. Some of the early scoping studies suggest it would remove the equivalent of a lane of traffic from the freeway. Thirdly, it would connect Australia’s largest university campus to the rail network. These are three very important benefits that will be quantified in the second stage of this feasibility study.

The second issue I would like to raise is the Stud Road bus lane. One section of that has already been removed, which is something I had been advocating for. The second section of Stud Road that is dangerous and needs to be looked at is the section between Burwood Highway and Boronia Road. It is particularly dangerous because there are a very short sections, which sometimes are only a couple of hundred metres long. That means that cars are going in and out. This needs to be examined; I encourage VicRoads to do that and provide a safe solution.

Finally, in relation to the road network, there are a number of hot spots around my electorate that local residents would like improved. One particular one that was raised with me by residents of the Waverley Country Club Retirement Village just last Friday is along Bergins Road. There is no right-hand-turn lane for these residents to turn from. They are concerned that when they try to turn right into their retirement village traffic banks up behind them and there could be accidents. I would like to see that right-hand-turn lane installed. I have requested that the council have a look at that with a view to then prioritising it in future budgets, because I think it would remove the dangers and make it easier for people to access the Waverley Country Club retirement village. Those are three important projects. I am glad to have been able to update the House on them this evening.
Bowel Cancer

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (22:26): Today I would like to support the Cancer Council’s campaign which advocates for the expansion of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program to include mandatory testing every two years for those aged 50 and over and for this to be made available in the 2012-13 budget. Bowel cancer imposes the greatest economic burden on our health system of any cancer, with estimates that bowel cancer treatment expenditure is around $1 billion a year, most of it in hospital and pharmaceutical costs. Bowel cancer also kills around 4,000 Australians every year. That is more than any other cancer apart from lung cancer. It is a cancer that is prevalent throughout the community and one whose early detection is critical for survival. It is one of those cancers that can be treated if diagnosed in the very early stages.

In my time here I have supported efforts to raise awareness and, indeed, to secure funding from government for screening and preventative programs for a number of cancers. I have been particularly active on breast cancer and ovarian cancer. In fact, my very first private member's motion in this place, in 2002, was to call for breast prostheses for women who have had mastectomies following breast cancer to be rebated under Medicare. At the time I was shocked to learn that women were resorting to padding filled with birdseed as an alternative because they could not afford the expense of a breast prosthesis. To illustrate my point, I brought a breast prosthesis into the chamber. The member for Scullin was in the chair, and I well recall his reaction to this prop, but he allowed me the opportunity to make my point. The public reaction to the news that women used birdseed in their bras—which later became the basis of the campaign they waged to secure a rebate from Medicare—or were even given re-used breast prostheses from women who had passed away was such that the then shadow minister for health, the honourable Stephen Smith, promised to fund a nationally dedicated program for breast prostheses. Labor implemented that program when we came into government in 2007.

I stand here again this evening to raise awareness about bowel cancer and the need for early detection. Despite all efforts to broaden awareness, it remains one of the least talked about cancers, especially amongst non-English-speaking communities. The test to detect this type of cancer is very simple. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program involves the provision of a kit known as the faecal occult blood kit, which allows individuals to test for early signs of cancer in their stools in the privacy of their own homes.

At the moment the kit, which all Australians receive upon turning 50—I myself have received one of these—receives only a 38 per cent return. And yet it has the capacity to prevent up to a third of bowel cancer deaths in the screening population—the over-50s. It is a very easy-to-use kit. I will not pull it totally apart but, for the benefit of the House, I will say that it has a number of little instruments in it and directions which allow people to self-test and then to send the kit away for examination. When I turned 50 I used that year to speak to my electorate and inform them that upon turning 50 the Australian government sends you a birthday present. That birthday present is this bowel cancer screening kit. Everyone who receives it should take the opportunity to complete it because it could save their lives.

The introduction of a national screening program to detect bowel cancer in people without symptoms was a 2004 election commitment from both Labor and the
coalition. Seven-and-a-half years later, the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program remains restricted to a one-off test for people turning 50, 55 and 65 rather than a test every two years for everyone aged 50 and over as recommended by the government's own National Health and Medical Research Council. This evening I want to encourage the government to pick up this very important issue and to make funding available for screening for bowel cancer for all Australians over the age of 50.

The SPEAKER: Order! It being past 10.30 pm the debate is interrupted. At this stage I will just give notice to all honourable members that in future I will strictly enforce the adjournment of debate at the time provided for in the standing orders. I have endeavoured to be benevolent by giving all honourable members their five minutes. In future, however, I will strictly enforce the standing orders with respect to the time for adjournment.

House adjourned at 22:32

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Sidebottom: To present a bill for an act to amend various acts relating to agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and for related purposes.

Mr Sidebottom: To present a bill for an act to amend the Wheat Export Marketing Act 2008, and for other purposes.

Mr Clare: To present a bill for an act to amend the Customs Act 1901, and for related purposes.

Mr Gray: To move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament:

Construction of projects two and three of the Christmas Island New Housing Program.

Mr Ruddock: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) the band of the Royal New South Wales Lancers, based in Parramatta, makes a significant contribution to the local community;

(b) similar Army Reserve Bands across Australia make significant contributions to their local communities;

(c) these bands provide a key link between communities and the Australian Defence Force in this time of high operational tempo;

(d) the recent Government decision, as part of the Strategic Reform Program, to remove financial support for these bands places the onus for support on regimental associations; and

(e) such associations consist largely of retired veterans without the financial resources to provide such support; and

(2) calls upon the Government to continue support for Army Reserve Bands, thus ensuring these key links with the local community are not lost.

Mr Truss: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) international civil aviation has been included in the European Union Emissions Trading System (ETS) with effect from 1 January 2012;

(b) in September 2011, 23 countries signed a declaration opposing the European Union's plan to include all flights by non-European Union carriers to and from the European Union in its ETS;

(c) in November 2011, 26 countries supported an International Civil Aviation Organisation Working Paper which is critical of the European Union ETS and urges the European Union to refrain from including flights by non-European Union members in its scheme;

(d) in February 2012, 23 countries concluded a 2 day meeting in Russia on the inclusion of
aviation in the European Union ETS by signing a declaration which states that they have a 'unanimous position that the EU and its Member States must cease application of the Directive 2008/101/EC [the European Union ETS] to airlines/aircraft operators registered in third States';

(e) the United States Congress has called on the United States Government to take all possible action to ensure that the European Union ETS is not applied to aircraft registered by the United States or the operators of those aircraft; and

(f) China has banned its airlines from participating in the European Union ETS; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) use all political, diplomatic, and legal tools at its disposal to ensure that the European Union's ETS is not applied to aircraft registered by Australia or the operators of those aircraft;

(b) should the European Union maintain the application of the European Union ETS to flight sectors outside Europe, immediately assess whether the European Union ETS is consistent with the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and join any WTO challenge; and

(c) join any international action to prevent the application of the European Union ETS to non European Union airspace.

Mr Robert: To present a bill for an act to amend the Australian Citizenship Act 2007, and for related purposes

Mr Georganas: To present a bill for an act to establish a Do Not Knock Register, and for other purposes.
Tuesday, 20 March 2012

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Georganas) took the chair at 16:04.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Woolgoolga and District Retirement Village

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (16:04): I rise today to recognise those associated with the Woolgoolga and District Retirement Village. On 10 March I had the opportunity to join people from the community at an open day at the village. The day not only honoured the 20th anniversary of residential care services at the facility but also acknowledged the pioneering foresight of such people as the Reverend Barry Harris, who, 35 years ago, identified the need for aged-care services in the Woolgoolga area. The Woolgoolga and District Retirement Village is proudly a community owned facility. Indeed, it has been the support of individuals, religious dioceses, local businesses and community groups which has underpinned the growth of this not-for-profit aged-care service at Woolgoolga. Back in the early 1980s the priority was to build two two-bedroom self-care units. Today the facility has nine one-bedroom and 21 two-bedroom living units in the village, plus a 64-bed aged-care facility. It is built in a relaxed seaside setting and enjoys ocean views. The village employs more than 60 local people.

During my visit on 10 March the board of directors kindly presented me with a book which details the history of the retirement village. The book was researched and written by John and Robyn Rooth, who are two of the hardest working community volunteers on the Coffs Coast. The book is an important record of the history of the Woolgoolga retirement village and details the journey up until this year. As I noted before, the Reverend Barry Harris is recognised, but so too are: former chairman Dr John Kramer, who had the vision to create a multipurpose aged-care facility; employees Merle Hoyle, John Martin and Vicki Dover; and Betty Wright and Stephen Povey, who provided great leadership during their terms as chairs of the board of directors. There are countless other volunteers, staff and community groups who have given so much over such a long period of time. Everything from raffles, street markets and art exhibitions to dances were held. There was even a charity queen quest, with all funds raised going to the village.

The retirement village took the opportunity on 10 March to make a number of special presentations to employees who have given years of long-term service. I would like to recognise those who were acknowledged at that function. There were five employees acknowledged for 20 years of service. They were Vicki Dover, Bev McComb, Carrol Ford, Cathy Flynn and Stephen Johnson. Three people were recognised for 15 years of service—Sharme Johnson, Vanessa Groot and Louise Featherstone—whilst Gail Northcote's contribution over the past 10 years was also acknowledged.

I would like to congratulate all those associated with the Woolgoolga and District Retirement Village. It is a tremendous facility and a tribute to all those who have been involved in its development over so many years. It truly shows what can be achieved when a community works together.
Blair Electorate: Election Commitments

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:07): After the coalition failed to send a shadow minister to my electorate during the last federal campaign and made no funding commitments for my electorate at the last federal campaign and opposed the upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway for three elections in a row and failed to fund the Blacksoil Interchange—which we have with $54 million under the Regional Infrastructure Fund matched by the Bligh Labor government's $16 million for the Blacksoil Interchange—the coalition has once again neglected my electorate and the city of Ipswich in this state campaign. Whether it is the Blacksoil Interchange, which they have not agreed to fund, or the upgrade of the Ipswich hospital—which is underway—or the Ipswich police station and courthouse or the new Springfield Lakes police station or upgrades to Goodna station or police beats in the suburbs of Ipswich or the Springfield rail line and extra trains on the Ipswich line, the coalition have refused to actually support any of these. They are silent on these issues.

Then, of course, we have State Schools of Tomorrow and the new Bremer high school, which my children have both attended and is the biggest school in my constituency. It was relocated and a new one built at a cost of $73 million, a wonderful facility in Ipswich, in my electorate. The coalition opposed it at a state level fiercely and ferociously at every campaign in the past. Take the three new primary schools and a recent new high school in the Bundamba electorate—again the coalition are silent and are not supporting those, or even the BER in my electorate. The coalition have done this time and time again.

I am a political junkie and, as an old campaign director, I collect material from both sides of politics. As a constituent in the state electorate of Ipswich, I received a letter from the LNP candidate, a Mr Ian Berry, a lawyer who has shown the same degree of lethargy in politics that he showed in the many cases I had against him as a lawyer. He actually sent a letter to me telling me about the fact that I should not be supporting my local MP and he did not mention Rachel Nolan, the member for Ipswich, but actually Margaret Keech, who happens to be the member for Albert. He actually refers to the fact that he is running in the seat of Albert in fact instead of the seat of Ipswich. He tells me in my letter from him:

Every vote will count and if you want Campbell Newman as Premier we need you to support Mark Boothman—
in Albert, when Mr Berry is actually the LNP candidate in Ipswich. That is the only bit of correspondence that I know of that he has sent to the people of Ipswich in the state seat. He refers to the seat of Albert and he gets it wrong. He is a great LNP candidate, isn't he! It goes to show the degree of contempt the LNP has for the people of Ipswich, across all the Labor-held electorates, and the electorate of Blair. I urge the people of Ipswich to vote Labor next Saturday.

Military Pensions

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (16:10): I rise today to support the opposition leader's commitment to change the indexation for our veterans and provide fair indexation for the recipients of the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Scheme and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits military superannuation pensions. After effective lobbying from the Castle Hill RSL sub-branch, the Parramatta RSL sub-branch and the Riverstone RSL sub-branch over some years, this commitment and pledge by the opposition leader and the
shadow minister for veterans' affairs, Michael Ronaldson, is an important commitment that
veterans know they can hang on to in the lead-up to the next election. Unlike the current
government, who in 2007 committed to do something about this, the coalition will deliver this
important indexation reform. This is so important to restore trust in government today and to
send a signal to our veterans and our service personnel that we do take the standard of living
very seriously and that we do not treat them differently from other Commonwealth pensioners
and superannuants.

As we know, military pensions were originally indexed by the CPI to maintain their value
relative to national wages. However, the CPI has not kept pace with increases in the cost of
living and, indeed, we treat the other pensions and payments of the federal government, such
as the aged pension and other pensions, differently, from CPI to a combination of CPI and
Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, MTAWE. This, of course, has not been adequate for
our veteran community.

This affords me the opportunity to congratulate Mr Don Tait and the RSL sub-
branch in my electorate for doing such a fantastic job on behalf of their community. It also affords me
the opportunity to seek that the same community standard of indexation as adopted for aged
and service pensions is applied to the MSBS military superannuation pensions. The issue of
maximum benefit limits in the MSBS has been raised by Warrant Officer Dave Cronan, from
the Air Force, who has served many tours of Iraq. The maximum benefit limits are limits on
the maximum amount that the military superannuation fund will pay out. He has now reached
this at the age of 40, after serving just some 15 or 20 years in the Air Force. Maximum benefit
limits are the point where a member must stop contributing because the total payout has
peaked or the member may stop contributing because they are getting close to the lower lump
sum and are urged to seek further advice.

In the current modern environment, given the challenges of our veteran community, the
number of tours and the stresses that are placed on families and service personnel in so many
difficult and hostile environments, maximum benefit limits have reached their usefulness in
many ways and could be better provided with an extension. Further policy in this area should
be developed and explored on behalf of our veteran communities.

Aviation

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (16:13): I again want to refer to the report from the Joint study on
aviation capacity for the Sydney region, which was released by the Minister for Infrastructure
and Transport, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, on 2 March 2012. I again want to bring to the
attention of the parliament some of the key findings and directions of that report. I quote:

- Under current constraints, Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport will become unable to meet demand
  for new services.
- By 2020, all slots on weekday mornings between 6.00am and 12noon and between 4.00pm and
  7.00pm will be fully allocated, so growth of passenger capacity at these times will be dependent on
  aircraft upgauging.
- By around 2027, all slots will be allocated, so no new entrants can be accommodated, unless another
  service is cancelled.
- By around 2035, there will be practically no scope for further growth of RPT services at the airport.
- The growth in demand and increasing capacity pressures will result in:
increasing delays and costs for all operations as the airport cannot sustain a peak hour handling rate of 80 movements per hour for more than a limited number of consecutive hours owing to taxiway and apron congestion. Delays will be especially felt when the airport experiences reductions in capacity owing to weather events as the capacity of the airport to recover is limited if all slots are fully allocated;

—reduced capacity to ‘noise share’ and provide respite for those communities affected by parallel runway operations. By around 2020, the noise sharing modes will only normally be available in early mornings and late evenings …

Deputy Speaker Georganas, you are someone who lives under a flight path and who represents his electorate in Adelaide very vigorously. So too have I represented my constituents since I arrived in this place in 1998. This report spells the most horrendous consequences for people living in the inner west of Sydney, particularly in my electorate of Reid. It begs the question of the need for a second airport to provide relief from noise for the residents of Sydney. This report says, inter alia:

… governments will need within the next five years to have determined the location and commenced investment in another airport site capable of handling large RPT aircraft.

The time for the politics of Sydney airport has to stop. We need bipartisan support from both the federal government and the state government to address this issue. (Time expired)

**Carbon Pricing**

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:16): A breath of fresh air came through with the *Age* newspaper this morning when the Baillieu government announced it will be looking to allocate further areas of brown coal for use in the brown coal electricity production industry in Victoria. For the first time a government has been brave enough to say that about this magnificent resource of brown coal that has allowed lesser priced electricity to our manufacturing industries in Victoria and made us more competitive nationally and internationally. This brown coal resource is terribly important to our economy and mostly it is an advantage that is spread all the way through the community.

The detriment to this, though, is the government’s carbon tax. I do not want a carbon tax, because it affects my electorate directly, not only in the area of electricity production but in increasing the price of electricity for every business, for every small business, for every farmer, for every manufacturer, for every grower, for every agency of any sort that contributes to our national health and wellbeing. For me this carbon tax is becoming personal. Do I want to reduce our emissions? Yes, of course I do. But do I want to reduce our emissions to give us a disadvantage at this stage in the full knowledge that it will make my country less competitive internationally, it will make my state less competitive and it will make my growers and farmers and dairy producers less competitive? We struggle with comparing ourselves competitively with New Zealand now. We have this fantastic future in food production through dairy as we sell into Asia and we sell into our near neighbouring countries. But importantly, if this carbon tax is not knocked off before July through some change of heart by the government, we are going to have this imposed on us and it will be of great detriment to every family that works in my community.

The supposed benefits that are going to be traded to them are of no benefit in the long run because that tax is there forever and therefore affects our power stations, our productive capacity, the things that the Victorian state government wants to do that are positive for
Australians and Victorians and their jobs, especially for people in my electorate. Imagine you are pushing the costs on a dairy farm as hard as you can possibly go and then you have a massive hike in electricity prices. That is what is going to happen in every seat right across Australia, but my particular electorate will be affected more than any of them because we have the distances, we have the farmers, we have the coal, we have the coal production workers. That is how we are affected. We are going to receive the full brunt of this ubiquitous carbon tax produced by the Labor government.

Anzac Day

Ms SMYTH (La Trobe) (16:19): I am very pleased to be able to speak this afternoon to reflect on matters in the lead-up to Anzac Day next month. This is a day when we reflect on the commitment and the sacrifices made by ordinary Australians in a variety of conflicts. Most importantly for me on this occasion speaking to the House, I would like to reflect on those who enlisted in Australia's force in the First World War and particularly on some of the experiences of those from my own electorate of La Trobe, where nearly 300 volunteered. My electorate remains on the urban-rural borders of Melbourne. At that time, a commitment of 300 people from a certainly more sparsely populated region was a significant commitment. They ranged from the northern hills of my electorate through to Ferntree Gully and down to the south of electorate, in Berwick and Narre Warren and to suburbs such as Clyde. Men enlisted to form part of the Australian Imperial Force at that time. Seventy-nine men born in Berwick enlisted, with a further nine enlisting living in Berwick itself; and 77 men born in Ferntree Gully enlisted, with a further five who were living in Ferntree Gully at the time of enlistment signing up. Some 26 came from Narre Warren, some 20 from Beaconsfield and 25 from Clyde at the southern end of my electorate.

They came from a cross-section of Australia's community. They included 24-year-old postal mechanic Rowland Henry Jack Head from upper Ferntree Gully. He joined up on 16 October 1916, sailing for France aboard the RMS Omrah. He served through the war with the 4th Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps, being discharged in 1919. We had Timothy James Madigan of Macclesfield, a very beautiful part of my electorate. He needed the written permission of his mother to enlist, as he was only 18 years old. He was a farm labourer whose family lived in nearby Gembrook. He served as a private in the 4th Light Horse Regiment and subsequently as a gunner of the 105th Howitzer Battery. He also served until the end of the war. Thirdly, the 24-year-old John Alexander Cameron, a labourer who was born in Clyde at the southern end of my electorate. Married to Eva, he joined up in October 1915. He enrolled as a private in the 21st Battalion AIF. He was discharged due to ill health in mid-1916, only to reenlist in 1917. He was wounded in October 1918 in France, only a month before the end of the war.

These are just three stories from ordinary Australians who signed up to serve on behalf of their country. They are three ordinary lives that form part of Australia's Anzac legend, hundreds of thousands of ordinary Australians called on to serve their country in war. On Anzac Day, it will both a privilege and an honour to reflect on these men and their journeys and those who followed them in subsequent conflicts.

Cowan Electorate: Constituency Matters

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (16:22): I would like to raise four areas of concern for my constituents within the electorate of Cowan. I am very pleased that I have had the opportunity
and I continue to have the opportunity to work with the excellent mayor of the city of Swan, Charlie Zannino, to help with these matters in the east of the electorate of Cowan.

Firstly, I speak of the Reid Highway and Malaga Drive interchange. Well, it is not an interchange yet, but it certainly should be. I have written to the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Troy Buswell, for his support. An interchange in this area would be very effective. It is a high-volume intersection at the moment with lots of business traffic and lots of private traffic as well. It would be good for local people and local businesses in Malaga and in the suburb of Ballajura. It is also good for safety and the productivity of business in the area.

I would also like to raise the issue of the duplication of Gnangara Road. Back in 2007, the Howard government funded majority funding for the continuation and duplication of Ocean Reef Road, which now connects to Gnangara Road. Unfortunately, the duplication and the dual carriageway comes to pretty much an abrupt halt when the road is reduced to a lane each way. It would again be good for safety and productivity for Gnangara Road itself to be duplicated as it heads out into the Swan Valley. Again, I will be meeting with Minister Buswell to speak about the interchange and Gnangara Road.

I have also written to the Minister for Water regarding the relocation of the chlorine facility at the Mirrabooka waste water facility on Alexander Drive in Koondoola. By a fairly small movement of the chlorine facility, it would result in the reduction in the chlorine buffer zone that will then free up land adjacent to Paradise Quays across the road in Ballajura. That would allow an aged care facility to be constructed, which would result in a much improved quality of life and a local facility for older Australians within the suburb of Ballajura, again on the east of my electorate of Cowan. I will be meeting with Minister Marmion shortly about that matter.

Finally, I would also like to raise the need for a new primary school in the suburb of Lansdale. Lansdale is an area that continues to grow and will double in size within the next few years. Already the current Lansdale Primary School has reached capacity, and shortly I will be meeting with the Minister for Education, the Hon. Dr Elizabeth Constable, to talk about the great need for local people within the electorate of Cowan and particularly in the suburb of Lansdale. I look forward to the Minister considering carefully, my and the Lansdale Residents' Association's submission to improve the educational outcomes for local children and local families within Lansdale.

Barry, Mr Phil

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (16:25): I rise to remember Phil Barry who, sadly, passed away on 28 December 2011. Phil was a very well-known and very well-regarded local in the town of Balaklava and, of course, was CEO of Wakefield Regional Council. I knew Phil mainly as a candidate when I first went out there to see him about matters related to the council and to get to know the area and also through the Wakefield Group, which is a forum of councils in my area who get together and meet with me monthly to talk about local issues. I always found Phil to be a really diligent and sensible contributor to those meetings, and indeed to local government, and a really passionate advocate for the Wakefield Regional Council. It did not matter whether we were talking about Wakefield Waters or the Port Wakefield bypass or the potential for poultry farms all through the Wakefield Regional Council area, which were going to help food production and, obviously, create jobs and
wealth for that area. He was a really passionate advocate for Balaklava, Blyth, and Port Wakefield, and for all of those other little towns in his area.

That was because he lived there. I think his achievements in the town were significant. I think James Maitland's quotation that he was 'dedicated, diligent, committed, community-minded, highly motivated, a visionary, passionate about community, professional, trustworthy, a leader in the community, supportive, enthusiastic, respected, and a mentor and a friend,' tells you everything you need to know about Phil Barry. He really was a great citizen of a great town and my condolences go to his wife, Helen, and his daughter, Vanessa. He will be missed first and foremost by them; he was a very dedicated family man. He will also be missed by his community. He will be missed by all of his friends in that community. He will certainly be missed by his friends in local and state government and also in the federal government, and I include myself in that. I think he was a good citizen and he will be sorely missed.

Mrs GRIGGS: (Solomon) (16:28): I rise to speak about a great health-in-community initiative that took place in my electorate of Solomon over the weekend, the World's Greatest Shave. Many Territorians braved the clippers at public shave events across the Territory, including at The Deck Bar in Darwin city where I was joined by a team of volunteers, aptly called 'Team Wigsy Griggsy'. We had our work cut out for us, shaving, waxing, and clipping all forms of hair in the name of charity.

Ms Hall: Did you cut yours?

Mrs GRIGGS: Yes, I will take that interjection; I did not cut mine but I did have a very colourful wig on all weekend.

I had the pleasure of supporting Shelly Ryan of the Leukaemia Foundation at the AFLNT at the Northern Territory Football League grand final at Marrara on Saturday evening. Not only did the Tiwi Bombers make history by winning their first NTFL by beating Nightcliff, but during the half-time, we continued to shave heads. To shave heads and raise much-needed funds for the foundation I was joined by Northern Territory Police Commissioner John McRoberts; Territory football great Michael Long; Irish AFL player Tadgh Kennelly; NT Thunder mascot Cracker, who, I might add, was not a very good shaver; and NT Thunder CEO Jarred Ilett. AFL NT on that night donated 50c for each ticket bought and raised a whopping $15,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation, so a good job done by them.

Those who lost their locks included AFL NT CEO, Tony Frawley, and his wife, Tracey, who had beautiful long blonde hair. She had a No. 4. She thought she was going to cry, but she actually looked stunning. She has beautiful eyes and it highlighted that fact. Casuarina Police Superintendent James O'Brien and NT Thunder Commercial Operations Manager, Matt Argus, also lost their locks. An amount of $125,000 has been raised across the Northern Territory and $9 million nationally. That is a great effort.

In the time left available to me, I would like to share with you the fact that yesterday I met here at Parliament House both the Northern Territory winner and runner-up of the Simpson Prize. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, this prize is a national competition, conducted by the History Teachers Association of Australia, together with state and territory affiliates, for years 9 and 10 students on behalf of the Australian government. The competition celebrates

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the Anzac tradition. Students are asked to write an essay or give a statement on their thinking of the Anzacs. Tamara West of Kormilda College was the Northern Territory runner-up, while Emily Stewart, formerly of Palmerston Senior College, was the Northern Territory winner. It was wonderful that they were here yesterday. *(Time expired)*

**Belmont Wetlands State Park**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) *(16:31)*: Today I rise to talk about the Belmont Wetlands State Park. It is an area that has been subject to mining over a long period. It has been mined above the ground and under the ground. It has been denuded by generations of mining and, when BHP finally withdrew from the area, the park was taken over by the New South Wales department of land and water conservation. A very dedicated and highly skilled group are involved in the trust. They are working to restore this park to its former beauty. It is a very environmentally sensitive area. It is a wetland and it not only benefits the people of the area but has the potential to become one of the best parks within not only New South Wales but Australia.

It is appropriate that we talk about this park at a time when the minerals resource rent tax has passed through the parliament. Rather than looking at what happened in the past when land was mined we are now looking at the future where mining companies will be giving something back to communities.

Today I am calling for all levels of government to work together to progress this wonderful state wetlands park. In the last few years, over $500,000 by way of grants has been given to the park by federal, state and local governments. If this park is to reach its full potential, it needs representatives at the federal, state and local government levels to work together, to work with the trust to ensure that the dumping and the vandalism stops, that the land is regenerated and that this very significant environmental area is restored to its former beauty.

I call on my state and local government colleagues to join with me to work towards ensuring that the funds that are needed can be acquired to ensure that this wonderful park is there for the benefit of future generations in Lake Macquarie and throughout New South Wales and Australia. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER *(Mr S Georganas)*: Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

**CONDOLENCES**

Whitlam, Mrs Margaret Elaine, AO

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House expresses its deep regret at the death on Saturday 17 March 2012, of Margaret Elaine Whitlam AO, places on record its appreciation of her long and meritorious public service, and tenders its profound sympathy to her family in their bereavement.

Mr RUDDOCK (Browne) *(16:35)*: I rise to speak on this indulgence. I have written to Gough Whitlam to express the commiserations of the Ruddock family on the loss of his dear wife, Margaret. I entered this parliament in September 1973. Gough at that time had already been a member of the House for some 11 years and Margaret was what is known as, in some of the publications I have seen, a political wife.
I have to say that in my judgment the task of being a political wife is quite daunting and Margaret Whitlam fulfilled that role admirably. My own wife, Heather, from time to time has been known to comment that this is one of the professional fields in which you get two for the price of one. I think many of us can understand that in fulfilling one's representative obligations those commitments are often quite demanding and can lead to a spouse having very considerable obligations.

Margaret Whitlam was born in Bondi, as we heard yesterday from the member for Wentworth, married in 1942 and first lived in Cronulla. In 1952, when Gough was elected the member for Werriwa, Cronulla was probably included in it, but as the vagaries of redistributions go, he was in a seat that—I have seen this happen with my own—contracted further and further west. This meant that in 1957 he and Margaret moved to Cabramatta. When you think about it, Cabramatta is a very special place. It has been known as the home of many who came and settled in Australia through migrant centres that were established in its environs and Cabramatta has been the home of so many people of Vietnamese origin who settled in Australia. This was a very special community, one that had a higher level of immigrants. It lacked many of the facilities that other areas had—sewerage, paving, guttering, transport—and there was a need, and Gough Whitlam demonstrated that himself, to take up the demands for expanding basic services in those communities.

Margaret, as is the wont of so many wives of members of parliament, was engaged in the community. She took up a post working in the social area of Parramatta District Hospital. She said that: 'When we went to Cabramatta we were determined to carry on as before—it was a withdrawn form of life that we had been leading—it was no problem. At Cronulla I had been doing WEA courses, discussion groups and things and I started them in Cabramatta. There are always like-minded people wherever you live.' It is a great tribute to Gough and Margaret that they were prepared to relocate so that they truly represented the people of Western Sydney.

I had the pleasure of reading the material that Margaret wrote, as a social worker and journalist, about her own experience as the wife of a member of parliament. I found particularly interesting some of the secrets you do not often hear about. I so often hear members on the other side claiming of Liberals that they sometimes flirted with the Labor Party, or at least may have been asked to join it. But I note Margaret let the cat out of the bag when she said Gough was told by Liberals, when there was talk of him standing as a Labor candidate, that he should have been one of them. She went on to say there was no way he could have joined the Liberals, he was stunned to think that they would not join with them and that there were rumours spread about that. In my own experience as a colleague—and it was a great privilege to serve with him while he was not only Prime Minister but also Leader of the Opposition at a later point in time—Gough and Margaret were generous hosts and hospitable to all of us. My wife, Heather, reminded me of the many occasions in which Margaret was able to host the wives of members of parliament at the Lodge.

Their four children are Antony, Nicholas, Stephen, and Catherine. I have to say that I know them by their shortened names, Tony and Nick. It was a great privilege to also serve in the parliament with Margaret's son Tony Whitlam, who was, I believe, the Member for Grayndler for a short term. But this condolence motion is about Margaret. She was an extraordinarily accomplished woman. After 1977, when Gough left the parliament, Margaret was still involved and I have seen a list of her many achievements. She joined the migrant education
service as a volunteer English teacher. She was the director of the Sydney Dance Company between 1977 and 1982 when Gough was overseas as UNESCO. She was the director of the Sydney Teachers College from 1978 to 1981. She was president of the ACT Council of Social Service from 1978 to 1980. She was chair of the national Opera Conference from 1979 to 1981 and president of the council of the Sydney College of Advanced Education in 1982 and 1983. She joined the board of governors of the law foundation in New South Wales in 1982. She was a woman of very considerable public achievements in the many roles that she took on. After Gough went to Paris, she was later herself, in 1989, a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, and a council member of the college of seniors. She was recognised for her service to the community by the Order of Australia that was bestowed upon her in 1983.

I am pleased to say that even in their latter years I have had the pleasure of seeing Gough and Margaret at community functions, probably in a colleague's electorate or nearby, particularly with the Serbian community, with which he holds a very special place. It seemed to me, as Gough looked more fragile, that Margaret was often the person who was there to help him. It is, I note, a tragedy that she has passed away, but she had a very considerable life and it is one that I have been pleased to be able to catalogue and pay tribute to.

Mr Bowen (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (16:43): I did want to associate myself with the remarks in recognition and remembrance of Margaret Whitlam. Much has been said about Mrs Whitlam's role as a national treasure and a national figure. All of those points are true. I particularly wanted to talk tonight about Margaret Whitlam's connection to and friendship with Western Sydney and in particular with south-western Sydney.

Of course Margaret was not a child of Western Sydney. As the Member for Wentworth said in the House yesterday, she was a Bondi girl. But she was an adopted favourite daughter of Western Sydney and she never lost that connection. Gough was the Member for Werriwa. Werriwa is now focused on the suburbs of Liverpool, but that was not always thus, as the Member for Berowra, I am sure, would recall. Werriwa. When Mr Whitlam became the member for Werriwa, well before the member for Berowra joined the parliament, Werriwa covered the area from Cronulla to Merrylands, an area now covered by many, many seats in between. He represented a big swathe of southern and south-western Sydney. Gough would often tell me that he was proud to represent four out of the five former wards of Fairfield City Council. There have been several successors as the member for Werriwa since Gough's retirement but, in another sense, there are many of us who regard ourselves as one of Gough's successors in representing south-western Sydney. The seat of Prospect was carved away from Werriwa in 1969 and was represented by the late Dick Klugman, then by the Hon. Janice Crosio and then by me before its abolition and replacement with the seat of McMahon.

The Whitlams lived in Arthur Street, Cabramatta from 1957 to 1973. The house is still there. It comes on the market every so often and is marketed as a prime ministerial residence. I am told that the switchboard is still in existence—the Whitlams had many phone lines in the years when Gough was Leader of the Opposition—and can be reconnected. I am sure it is not up to modern standards but, nevertheless, it is a matter of some historical reference. As an aside, generally speaking, governments should look to preserve some of that prime ministerial heritage. It would be incumbent on all governments to examine those sorts of houses when
they come on the market. We have preserved the Curtin and Chifley houses, but we need to have a good process for looking at this sort of heritage to ensure it is never lost.

The connection that the Whitlams made with Western Sydney was never lost, particularly with Fairfield. Gough, in particular, refers to Fairfield as Campobello—obviously Italian for 'beautiful fields'. A few years ago he was honoured with one of Fairfield's monuments, Faces of Fairfield, which I attended, as I recall in my capacity as a backbench MP and, as I recall, both Gough and Margaret came to that particular honorary. The importance of Western Sydney in the Whitlam agenda cannot be underestimated and the importance of the experience of Gough and Margaret living in Cabramatta from 1957 to 1973 cannot be underestimated. His program of urban reform was very much formed by his and Margaret's experiences in south-western Sydney. There were the challenges of urban growth. For example, there was no sewerage when they moved to Western Sydney. Gough, despite all his achievements, claimed that one of his greatest achievements as Prime Minister was bringing sewerage to the western suburbs of Sydney. Some members may scoff at that, but the residents of Western Sydney will always be grateful for that.

Margaret, in her role as the spouse of the MP representing Western Sydney—who, of course, in those days travelled to Canberra by train; he has told me about these experiences—would make his lunch for the train trip, and his dinner, and she would then represent him while he was away, which were longer periods of time than we, with modern travel, have away from our electorates. That stayed with her for a very long time. She worked as a social worker at Parramatta District Hospital between 1964 and 1967. That experience also played a role in her understanding of Western Sydney.

My experience of the Whitlams was post their active political life, post Mr Whitlam's period as a member of parliament. It always struck me that, although they moved away from Western Sydney in terms of their residence, they never lost their connection with Western Sydney. I am sure other Western Sydney MPs have had the experience of going to functions and finding Gough and Margaret there. Sometimes it was a Serbian function. They were patrons of Fairfield Hospital's Whitlam Joint Replacement Centre. It was particularly fitting that the University of Western Sydney, of which the honourable member for Chifley is an alumnus, named the Margaret Whitlam Chair of Social Work in her honour. Margaret was a guardian and benefactor to the Whitlam Institute since 2000—the Whitlam Institute being very much associated with the University of Western Sydney. The stories we hear, and the stories we have heard in this debate, of Mrs Whitlam trying to ground Gough and telling him when he was speaking too much at a function are very true. If you were sitting next to Margaret and Gough was speaking, it would start as a dull roar. She would ruminate and start to moan and grumble. She might whisper to you: 'I wish he'd shut up! I've heard this before,' until, if he did not get the message, she would bang her walking-stick very loudly and say, 'Time to sit down, old man.' We all enjoy Gough's speeches; they are always filled with amazing facts and with an amazing and visionary approach to life. But Margaret was always very keen to ensure that he did not overstay his welcome at the lectern and to remind him that it might be time to sit down and give somebody else a go. The reason I mention that is because it is a testament, having seen that occur so many times.

A former prime minister and a former first lady, having been posted overseas, could well retire from public life and never return to Western Sydney and never show any interest in the
institutions, but that formative time, their time representing Western Sydney, was one that stayed with them. I know that my predecessor as member for Prospect, the Hon. Janice Crosio, particularly paid tribute to the Whitlam's leadership in south-western Sydney. She was a former Mayor of Fairfield before entering this place, as I was before I entered this place. Her predecessor, the late Dr Dick Klugman, had similar views, although it is interesting to note that he did defeat a Whitlam in preselection for the seat of Prospect. He defeated Tony Whitlam for preselection for the seat of Prospect. Tony Whitlam went on to win preselection for the seat of Grayndler but, in 1969, when the seat of Prospect was created, the son of the leader of the Labor Party, Tony Whitlam, put his name forward but was defeated. The branch members have a particular way of making their views known, and that was to put somebody else into that seat. Nevertheless, Dr Klugman had a particularly good and close relationship with Gough.

I do send my condolences to Gough's family, some of whom I know and some of whom I do not. I know Nick, in particular, well—I regard him as a friend—and I send him my condolences. As to the other members, I know Tony, though not as well as Nick, but I also send him my condolences. The other children, who I have not had the honour of meeting, of course I know would also need to know that the condolences of the House are with them for a fine Australian, a great woman and a wonderful, firm and lifelong friend of Western Sydney.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:52): I rise to speak on the condolence motion moved by the Prime Minister in honour of Margaret Whitlam AO, one of Australia's most remarkable women, who was a catalyst for the progress of women's rights, a devoted wife, a loving mother and a life member of the Australian Labor Party. I want to briefly note her contribution to women's rights and liberties.

The Australia that Margaret Whitlam was born into in 1919 was, for women, a vastly different Australia from the nation that we know today. Margaret was born in an era when the public service would require a woman to resign from her position when she married, an era when women had held the right to vote for less than two decades and an era when there were no women members of parliament and no women serving as judges. Far fewer women were in the workforce and those who did work earned a fraction of the pay enjoyed by their male contemporaries.

Her parents' progressive ideas and support set her on her path. Her mother, Mary, was independently minded and encouraged Margaret in the 1940s to become a social worker. Working for the Family Welfare Bureau, she would advise women and their families on how to survive without their husbands and on how to care for their children when their husbands were away—a role she would come to understand all too well as the wife of a federal politician. Her father, Justice Wilfred Dovey, who Margaret referred to as her confidant, pushed her to give university a go and challenge herself. She studied while raising her small children. This balancing act is familiar to Australians today but was very uncommon at that time. As Margaret's life—in partnership with Gough—became increasingly public so did her advocacy for women's rights at a time when the moral, legal and social obstacles confronting women seemed insurmountable. The opportunities available to women today, unthinkable decades ago, are now part of the furniture and are a legacy of her fierce advocacy. Margaret did not hesitate to use her voice and her profile, calling for equal pay, the acknowledgement
of de facto relationships and childcare reforms at a time when these ideas were considered not mainstream but rather radical.

Margaret understood the political scene and the difficulty of effecting change, but her ability for straight talking reached a wide and appreciative audience. During the Whitlam government era Margaret held a variety of influential public roles, including as a member of the International Women's Year Advisory Committee, as a television presenter on the program *Beauty and the Beast* and as a columnist. When reflecting on whether she should be considered a feminist, Margaret fired back: 'I am a feminist in so far as I don't want to be trodden on and I don't want to be used as somebody's handbag. I am not an accessory.' Her spirited and honest contribution was significant in ensuring that Australian women today largely enjoy the same rights and equality of opportunity as Australian men. As the Prime Minister said yesterday, many accomplished women owe a bit of their success to the courage and inspiration they drew from Margaret Whitlam.

Margaret also brought a fresh approach to the role of Prime Minister's wife. She was a confident and outgoing woman with a quick wit, speaking her mind, considering herself an equal and never taking a backward step. Her charismatic and forthright personality were on display on her first trip to London as the Prime Minister's wife. Margaret held her own press conference: 'Ask me an outrageous question,' she said to the media, 'and you will get an outrageous answer.' When asked what she would have done if she had been with Gough on the night of his government dismissal, she plainly stated: 'I say I would have torn up the document of dismissal. I really would have. Also, a mini-revolution would have helped.'

In her capacity as the wife of the Prime Minister, Margaret Whitlam felt a duty to step forward and actively bring about good in the community. She once wrote in her diary; 'What am I to do? Stay in a cage, wide open to view, of course, and say nothing? That's not on, but if I can do some good I will certainly try.'

Margaret was a champion of Labor values, and she and Gough were a formidable team. They were awarded the first life memberships of the Australian Labor Party in recognition of the outstanding contribution they made, as individuals and in partnership, in shaping modern Australia. Gough reportedly said to Margaret, about reconciling personal political aspirations: 'If you want to have anything to do with politics you choose the party that has the most things with which you agree, with which you are in accord. There is no way you are ever going to be in accord with everything that the political parties put up.' But there is little doubt that from early on Margaret Whitlam belonged on the progressive side of the debate. Gough described Margaret as his best appointment; a fitting description of a woman who had such a profound influence on him and contributed so much to our nation.

Margaret will be remembered by Australians as honest, warm, welcoming to all and, above all, courageous in her ideas and her influence. She was a central figure in creating momentum for the women's movement and giving heart to millions of Australians working hard to dismantle the barriers of gender equality. We still have some way to go in this area, but Margaret Whitlam should be remembered, among her many qualities, for the mighty contribution she made to remove those barriers.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (16:59): It is with mixed emotions that I speak on this debate of condolence to Margaret Whitlam. Obviously, there is sadness because of the loss of
a great woman and a great Australian, but there is also pride in what she achieved in her long life, her public life and her devoted life. She was a great Australian, a loving mother and a devoted and supportive wife, but she was really her own person. She redefined the role of a ‘first lady’ as a Prime Minister's wife because she saw in it the opportunity it gave not to grandstand but to be effective, to pursue issues, to cut through. She was, indeed, an extremely powerful advocate and, significantly, she made a difference. All of it was done professionally and all of it was done nobly.

I had the privilege of knowing Margaret Whitlam and the Whitlam family over six decades, from the early fifties when I came here with my family as a young boy. We spent a lot of time around the house and at the Kurrajong hotel, which is where we all stayed in the fifties. I remember Margaret Whitlam from an early age because she was very friendly with my mum, who is still alive and who also wanted me to pass on her condolences to the family, which I have done. Margaret took an interest in us as young boys. When we saw her in subsequent times, and they were many, she would remember the conversations that she had had with us previously and she would always ask us about our progress. This was important because she made an impression on young people. Imagine what she was like when she engaged this way with older people, as she did so much in her later life.

Of course, in the sixties there was a lot of excitement. The Whitlams were often at our family home with the development of the campaign that took the Whitlam government to power in 1972. In fact, my very first experience working in an election campaign was the one that saw the bandwagon of Gough to Canberra. It was the Corio by-election in 1967. I was at university at the time and the campaign for free university fees, the opening up of the education system and the enabling capacity of that government, the big issues, were exciting. That which gave me political motivation was more fundamentally about opposition to the Vietnam War, and one of the great first acts of the Whitlam government when it won office in 1972 was to bring the troops home. That was the excitement in the sixties. We spent a lot of time with various members of the family, but Margaret in particular was always around, always interested, always active and always embracing the causes.

The period of the seventies was the big opportunity. There was the excitement of winning government for a Labor government after so many years, which Gough had taken us to. In many ways it was the era that made Australia proud and confident on the international stage. It was the leadership, obviously, of the Prime Minister and the government's pride and confidence, but the two of them together gave presence to the substance. Indeed, my mother and father were on the first visit to China in 1973 where Gough led a delegation. It was a recognition which China has never forgotten, because we were there when it mattered. It was a boldness because it was opposed by Gough's political opponents of the day. It was a boldness that really has stamped us as a country that is prepared to stand on its own feet and be proud in doing it. I know that there were many attempts to reflect the anniversaries of that momentous time. They were important, significant and defining for us as a nation. Whilst Gough was there, with Margaret by his side, it gave, as I said, presence, professionalism, stature and a family dimension to the issue itself.

I had the opportunity to meet with them in Paris a number of times when they were there on the UNESCO post. I was President of the ACTU and had meetings from time to time with the OECD. That too was an exciting time, because there was Gough—in semi-retirement but
still representing the big issues of the nation—and Margaret, pursuing all of her interests by his side. When we won government in the eighties we saw them at many different functions, and when I came to this place in the nineties I also had the opportunity. At the turn of the century, when we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the election of the Whitlam government—and that was a big occasion, a big opportunity for memories—Margaret was there, a reminder of her contribution and her commitment.

And that contribution and commitment was significant. As I said before, she did pursue the important issues—issues around the environment and issues of social justice, such as equal pay, which the Whitlam government was instrumental in spearheading in 1972. Significantly, she pursued the arts. To me, as Minister for the Arts, Margaret continued to be a fantastic patron right up until the end. She had been a director of the Sydney Dance Company and very closely associated with and encouraged Graeme Murphy, who now himself is sought after internationally for his creative design and creative prowess. She was the inaugural chair of the national opera conference and was involved with Australian opera, Musica Viva and the State Library of New South Wales.

In summary, the thing about Margaret is that her causes were our causes. She fought the causes because she believed in them. She was a person of passion, a person of dedication and a person of conviction. We look for conviction in our politicians, but to have the partnership of the two of them with that conviction—and a conviction that carried on throughout their life—is the lasting testimony we can acknowledge. She was totally committed. She was dedicated and creative in everything she did, and she very much believed in empowering and energising the individual. She never misspoke, but when she spoke she resonated. You always listened when Margaret had something to say.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, Margaret was a national treasure and was recognised as that. Two national treasures together is a unique double—but they were a unique double. Her family and those who knew her will miss her. My family will miss her. But she made an extraordinary contribution and commitment to the nation, and it is one that will never be forgotten. Margaret once wrote: ‘if I can do some good I’ll certainly try’. Well, she did more than try; she succeeded, and she succeeded in so many ways. I offer my sincerest condolences to Gough, who I know is incredibly distraught at the loss of Margaret, and to the family—to Tony, Nick, Stephen and Cathy. We will have the opportunity to remember her still on Friday, at the funeral service. She has made a great contribution to this nation and I am delighted to be associated with the words and the motion of the parliament moved by the Prime Minister.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (17:08): I rise to join my many colleagues who have paid tribute to Margaret Whitlam AO. I was not fortunate enough to know Margaret, yet, because of her public profile, like many Australians I feel that I did indeed know her. Clearly she was a strong and determined woman, attributes we in this place truly admire. From all accounts she was a woman of strong beliefs and a razor sharp wit. She was caring, considered, intelligent and a fierce campaigner for equality, as we have just heard from Minister Crean. There is no denying that Margaret lived a full life, engaging in many interests. She was a political activist and a community worker. She loved sports, politics and the arts. She was a visitor to the Northern Territory a number of times over the course of her life, including in 1975, when she went to Wattle Creek with her husband, Gough, who was the Prime Minister...
at the time. More recently, in February 2004, they travelled on the Ghan on its inaugural trip from Adelaide to Darwin.

From all accounts she and Gough were proud of their 69-year marriage, and why shouldn't they be, especially in this day and age when longevity of marriage is more the exception? I think it is beautiful that Gough referred to Margaret as the love of his life. This statement and sentiment says it all. I join my colleagues in this place in offering my sympathies to the Whitlam family on the passing of Margaret.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (17:10): I wanted to start with a quote direct from Margaret Whitlam:
Sneaked in a game of golf this morning and in the afternoon carried on like a suburban housewife in old surroundings. It is a joy to put a load of washing out on a familiar clothesline, to note the growth of the mulberry tree, and to listen to all the talkback radio programs while doing it.

That is a quote taken from a trip back to Cabramatta, in May 1973. I rely upon that quote because probably more than anything else the reason people have such fond memories of Margaret Whitlam is that they recognised her sense of humanity. Despite all the things she would have seen in the sweep of her life, and being involved in some of the most tumultuous events of our time, she still celebrated her own humanity and kept in touch with those around her. As a Western Sydney MP, I know it is why the Whitlams are held in such high regard across our region.

The member for McMahon, the minister for immigration, reflected on some of the things that had been achieved by the Whitlam government, particularly, for example, bringing sewerage to the homes of Western Sydney. This was a big issue for people who were concerned about sanitation and the quality of life and wanted to see things that had been taken for granted elsewhere brought out into Western Sydney.

Margaret Whitlam continued working, even leading up to Gough Whitlam's election as Prime Minister, as a social worker at Parramatta District Hospital between 1964 and 1967. She then said:
I like the work. It was a very good course then because it made you know your community, know what was lacking in the community and know where to find aid.

This was said during an interview with Susan Mitchell, contained in the work The Matriarchs, back in 1987. Again, she dedicated her time to helping the people of Western Sydney and patiently tending to the needs of people who were in need of support. The work they did was reflective of a commitment to Western Sydney. The Whitlams had moved out west and stayed out west for many years. That is something that should be recognised. It has rightly been celebrated in this place.

A number of members of parliament have spoken at great length about her achievements. Many things have been said about a remarkable woman and many reflections have been made about her role as the wife of a Prime Minister and a person steeped in the experience of those times.

My final reflection is one that had a much more powerful impact on me. It was the fact that a couple met in an embrace of a dance or two in the late 1930s and through golden days and days that had less gleam to them they maintained a deep bond, a bond of love. While that physical bond has been released, I and many others, especially at a time where relationships
seem a lot more fleeting, feel the break of that connection very deeply. The dance-floor embrace may be a thing of memory now but the warmth of that relationship is what I honour in this place today. To the Whitlam family I pass on the deepest condolences of the people I represent in Western Sydney. I wish them all the best and I celebrate the life of a truly remarkable Australian.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (17:14): I rise this afternoon to pay my respects to Margaret Elaine Whitlam, a significant figure in the political history of Australia and whose passing aged 92 will be mourned by many. Born on 19 November 1919 in Bondi, Margaret was the daughter of NSW Supreme Court Justice Wilfred Dovey and his wife, Mary. Margaret was a talented swimmer, having finished sixth in the 220 yards breaststroke at the 1938 Empire Games in Sydney and was studying social work when she first met Gough in 1939.

It was at a Sydney University Dramatic Society Christmas Party where the relationship kicked off.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:15 to 17:28

Mr FRYDENBERG: Of that night spent dancing, she was to say, 'That was it for the both of us.' There began what became an adventure and a romance of a lifetime, including nearly 70 years of marriage.

As an outsider looking in, Margaret Whitlam appeared to be so much more than the wife of a Prime Minister, indeed, the first Labor wife to be in the Lodge for 23 years. She was a constant for the community, actively engaged in the arts, with the environment and with broader social service. This included as a director of the Sydney Dance Company, the boards of Australian Opera and the New South Wales State Library, chair of the National Council for International Literacy Year, a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO, the board of the ACT Council of Social Service and I am sure many, many more roles too numerous to mention.

On top of this Margaret Whitlam wrote for Woman's Day and was a regular on television talk shows. As the Prime Minister's wife, she would also travel the world with Gough and I have read reports of her being feted abroad. She conducted her own press conference, which she opened with the words, 'Ask me an outrageous question and I'll give you an outrageous answer.' This irreverence and frankness is one of the endearing traits that made the Whitlams not only successful but also admired. All political parties regardless of their persuasion need to have their own heroes. The Whitlams are Labor's.

Today I respect one of Labor's truly endearing, and esteemed, national figures. It is true my politics is at a different end of the spectrum to theirs, but this does not diminish the respect I have for their long and significant contribution to Australian public life. Margaret Whitlam's support for women and women's causes, including equal pay and abortion law reform, is also to be admired. So too her deep and abiding affection and support for her husband, and the role he sought to play, is something to behold. Margaret Whitlam once said she wanted to be remembered as a 'fair, tolerant and reasonably patient person.' No doubt she will be remembered for all of this, and much, much more. Margaret Whitlam left an indelible mark on Australian society and will be greatly missed.
My condolences go out to Gough and the entire Whitlam family, including children Antony, Nick, Stephen and Catherine. I wish you all only good health and you can be assured your mother's memory and contribution will forever live on.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (17:33): I rise to support the condolence motion to recognise the passing of an extraordinary Australian woman, Margaret Whitlam AO. Procedurally that is what I seek to do, but at this moment in time in this place, what I am actually doing is celebrating a life of amazing achievement, of family, community, political activism, sporting prowess, culture and arts, a life that creates not only respect among all of those who reflect on it but affection too. It is not often that on the national stage one person encompasses both enormous respect and enormous affection together.

Many fine sentiments have been expressed about Margaret Whitlam in this place and more of course added as we have just been hearing from members opposite. The Australian yesterday had a headline in the Plus section which, in my view, summed up Margaret best. It said she was ‘a towering figure in her own right’, and I think that very well encompasses Margaret. She is a part of Australian history. I was reflecting yesterday on just how long she had been a part of our history. She was born before there was a Sydney Harbour Bridge. Her lifetime spanned the making of modern Australia. She was a champion swimmer. She was the mother of four fine children, a grandmother and a great-grandmother to many in the family. She was a community activist in southern Sydney and Western Sydney, especially during the time Gough Whitlam represented the division of Werriwa in this place. She was the only social worker at the time in a Western Sydney hospital, as her son Nicholas mentioned in one of the weekend's newspapers. She was a patron of arts and culture. Margaret campaigned in her own right during the 1969 and 1972 federal elections. She was a columnist and commentator. She was Australia's first lady and, in doing that job, forever changed the role of the Prime Minister's partner. Margaret was an Australian national treasure. And above all she was, as Gough said in a beautiful and gracious tribute upon her passing, the love of his life.

As is well known the Whitlam partnership lasted almost 70 years. Margaret was, as Gough as has said, his best appointment. I admired Margaret from afar for all of my adult life. I did have the privilege of meeting her and Gough on many occasions, and indeed the last time I saw her was at the Mount Kembla hotel in my electorate which was, for a time, owned by Nick and Judy Whitlam. Just as the member for Wentworth has had the pleasure of representing the patriarch and matriarch of the Whitlam family in his electorate, I have had the pleasure of representing the Whitlam's second son and daughter-in-law, Nick and Judy Whitlam, in this place. I would like to put on the record that Nick has indicated to me that, as his local member, he would be very pleased if I acknowledged his comments. He said to me: 'Please simply say that I am the proud son of a wonderful mother to four children.' As a mum, I think that is a tribute from a son that would bring joy to any mother.

I loved Margaret's wit, graciousness, wisdom, and outspokenness. Margaret was one of those people who always brought a smile to your face from the sheer pleasure of talking to her, of seeing her interviewed or even just thinking about her contribution, and many of the comments and contributions by people in this condolence motion have brought smiles to the faces of those of us sitting around the table listening to them, for the very simple fact that she was one of those people in life who always brought a smile to your face. It is reported that in
1973 she started a press conference, as the member for Kooyong said, with the statement to the press, 'Ask me an outrageous questions and I will give you an outrageous answer.' I think she lived an outrageous life in the very best sense of the word.

Margaret made amazing achievements in whatever she turned her mind to. She was a woman prepared to speak her mind. It has been remarked that Margaret kept Gough in check when his speeches wandered off into their second hour. I indeed saw this at a function a couple of years ago at the Sutherland workers club. I was seated at a table next to Gough and Margaret. Gough was into one of his speeches that, I must say, was crammed with details and memories which were very interesting. However, on this occasion, the speech was into about its fortieth minute—too much for Margaret, who loudly interjected, 'You've been going on too long now; people want to eat their dessert,' and we promptly managed to eat our dessert.

It was an honour and a privilege to know Margaret. She was a pioneer in so many ways for so many Australians. The grief of her family is one we all share for someone special and irreplaceable, and our heart goes out to them at this time in their lives. I also want to say that she will remain a person in my life, until the day I pass, who I will remember with fondness, respect and great admiration.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (17:39): I join all members in speaking on this condolence motion for the late Margaret Whitlam and commend the parliamentary secretary, the previous speaker, for her remarks. I think they captured what all of us who have spoken have tried to capture, and that is the dedication of Margaret Whitlam to her party but also to her country. We celebrate a wonderful life well lived, of 92 years, and, as the parliamentary secretary said, that captured all of that period of time from 1919, before the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built. As the parliamentary secretary was speaking, I was thinking back to 1919, a year after World War I, and all the change that Margaret Whitlam saw and obviously saw very closely not just as an Australian citizen but as someone who was very much a part of the change as the wife of a former Prime Minister but critically as someone who worked very hard to make a difference for what she believed in as well. As all the speakers have also captured, she was a lady of forthright views and great wit. Many people have spoken of many anecdotes. The parliamentary secretary just had another which illustrated once again that this wit was always on display.

Another former member of this place from the other side, Barry Cohen, who most of us have got to know, who himself has a great wit, wrote a wonderful piece in the Australian just a few days ago where he spoke of his first encounter with the Whitlams after being preselected for the marginal seat of Robertson in 1968. I think he won that election in 1969, just a few years ahead of the election of the Whitlam government. He spoke in the Australian of going to the Whitlam's house, which he called 'the lodge in waiting', at Cabramatta and listening to the leader very much in the vein of which the parliamentary secretary spoke. He said:

As a new candidate I listened attentively and grunted agreement at the appropriate time. The meal was progressing nicely.

We listened while "He" spoke. Suddenly Margaret found a way to include the guests in the discussion: "Excuse me Leader, would you pass the butter?"

It is a great anecdote, but what is really special in this condolence motion as we remember a wonderful life is just how many of them there are. On this motion we honour her contribution.
We remember her very full life and we pay our condolences to the Whitlam family, to Gough in particular and to that very large extended family that is so much a feature of Australian political life.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (17:42): Can I start off by saying what truly moving and heartfelt speeches we have heard from both sides of the House since the passing of this very inspirational Australian woman, Margaret Whitlam. And it is highly evident that her wit, charm and kind nature touched many people in the political sphere and I am sure many more outside of it.

Margaret was of course the wife of one of Australia's great political powerhouses, Gough Whitlam. He is a Labor icon, a Labor legend. But a place by his side was never in his shadow. I remember growing up as a young girl in the 1970s in suburban Melbourne and being very aware at a very young age of the role Margaret Whitlam was playing. She had a huge influence on my mother and my sisters during that time and she was one of the first role models for me not only of a woman in a position of power but of what a marriage should be as well. She showed that marriage should be an equal, respectful relationship and partnership where two people are joined in love and mutual admiration. I know Gough's commitment to Margaret—as many have said today and over recent days, he said it was his greatest appointment—showed that a man can actually be married to a woman who is strong and who expresses her view. He in a way was a role model of what a husband can be being married to a woman of that nature.

The 1970s were a time when women were starting to discover their own voices. Germaine Greer was becoming a household name and the women's liberation movement was changing the way society functioned. Margaret's place in this world was, I believe, to help women redefine themselves and in turn redefine their role in society. She was a role model through and through but most importantly she had influence and she knew how to use it, particularly at a time when throughout the world women were becoming more empowered in so many ways. She threw out the rule book on how to be a Prime Minister's wife and used her position to help others and to instigate social change. Margaret spoke out on issues she felt very strongly about, particularly when it came to women's rights. She spoke out on issues such as abortion law and contraceptive advice. She was able to connect with Australian women as only a woman can do. And Australian women loved her for it. In fact, I was speaking about Margaret Whitlam with my mother on the weekend. My mother really did love her and apparently she had been in tears since hearing the news. Margaret had a huge impact on women, particularly those women, as I said, who were becoming empowered and gaining their own voice in the seventies. She was at the forefront of that and she was very much loved by women particularly of that generation.

She had a way with the media pack, who I bet she enjoyed working up into a lather until they were eating out of the palm of her hand. We have heard some stories today and also in recent days about how they were eating out of the palm of her hand. Lucky her.

Margaret had a way about her. She had a self-confidence and a talent not only for political life but also for public life. She had ambition and she inspired many women. She made it clear that being a wife was about more than cooking, cleaning and raising kids—that was very important, but that women had a range of choices and that being a wife included more dimensions to life than that. She absolutely redefined the role of the 'first lady' and showed the

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world that women with high-profile husbands can achieve success in their own right and should not be ashamed to seek it out. I am sure Gough was much better off because of Margaret's personal ambitions and achievements.

The member before me really underscored for me the fact that she actually lived through a great deal of social change in this country and throughout the world, particularly for women. She would have seen the end of the marriage vans and she would have seen women emerging into society, as I mentioned before, gaining voices, gaining empowerment, gaining greater control over their fertility and gaining greater access to education—thanks to the reforms her husband introduced in the seventies. She saw so much. The beauty of Margaret Whitlam was that she was at the vanguard of that.

In closing, I would like to pass on my deepest condolences to the Whitlam family. Although I never met Margaret Whitlam, I feel as if I have known her for a very long time. I am sure many other Australian women feel the same way. I know my mum does. She will be missed. She was a true inspiration for generations of women and her legacy will live on.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (17:47): Margaret Whitlam was the wife of a prime minister who, to me as a teenager, was right there with her husband all the time. She was actually in the game. Lots of prime ministers' wives were there as the 'first lady', but Margaret was there in the game. I think that was the first thing that really set her aside. Let us not cast aside anything; the early seventies were a fantastic time for Labor and they would not have been so without the Whitlams or without Margaret Whitlam at the front. We will always remember the 'It's Time' ad with Margaret and Gough singing at the front. I have heard Gough sing at certain functions and I bet you they muted his microphone.

There were a lot of similarities for me. Although I grew up in a very small country town in south-west Queensland right in the heart of Country Party territory—and my father would no sooner have voted Labor than fly to the moon—the similarities were that Margaret Whitlam was a lot like my mum. In the days when women did not work once they had children, my mum worked. My mum was there with her husband, with her partner, in the family business. And that is what Margaret did. Yes, it was on a bigger stage, but she was there with her husband, with her partner, in the family business.

That was the big difference with the Whitlams. While there could never be any doubt as to which one was the Prime Minister, they were a dead-set partnership. They set the template for the Hawkes and the Howards who followed so well in their wake. I never met either Whitlam. In fact, the closest I got to that was drinking a bottle of Nick Whitlam's wines—actually quite a few bottles of Nick Whitlam's wines. They were very good. The thing about Margaret Whitlam was that you felt you knew her. Even for someone like me who never got anywhere near her, you felt like that if you met her you would like her and that she would like you. You felt that she would be a person with whom conversation would flow easily. You felt that she was a person who would have an absolutely fabulous sense of humour—and the speeches so far in both the main chamber and here reflect that genuineness of nature. I am extremely jealous and envious of the member for Wentworth, who showed yesterday he had such a genuine love for this woman and will obviously miss her.

Both my grandmothers lived well into their nineties. Both were incredible women who, while nowhere near as famous as Margaret Whitlam, had a lot in common with her in that
they truly loved their husbands; they were true partners in every success and failure of their partnership. They were always incredibly independent women.

The world is the poorer for Margaret Whitlam's passing. When I heard of her death my feelings were exactly the same as when Don Bradman died: you just wish that you had met them; your life would have been a little bit richer for having done so. But all our lives are richer for having lived during the time of Margaret Whitlam. There is one final thing: 70 years of marriage and they were still talking to each other! I have barely got to 10 and we barely speak a word! Probably that should not go in Hansard! But I do love my wife very, very dearly. All the way to the end of Margaret's life the one thing that never left them was the obvious love these two people had for each other. They were inseparable and I think that is the most wonderful thing given every day after day that they spent together. My condolences go to the entire Whitlam family, to all three surviving generations, and I ask sincerely that she rest in peace.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (17:51): I too feel very privileged to be taking part in this condolence motion for a remarkable Australian. The contributions we have heard surely show the warmth that people share and hold for Margaret Whitlam. I think many of us have reflected in the last couple of days on the numerous conversations we have had since she passed away and what she meant to us and to our lives. That really is quite remarkable. I think we have all had so many conversations with so many different people about what she means to all of us. Along with all Australians, I wish to express my very deep regret on the passing of Margaret Whitlam, a truly remarkable Australian for so many of the reasons we have heard in this condolence motion debate.

She was born Margaret Elaine Dovey in Bondi, New South Wales, on 19 November 1919—many years ago. She was indeed a national treasure and icon, lost to us on 17 March this year. She was, in fact, a trailblazing First Lady, an absolutely remarkable woman who did not live in the shadow of her husband. Instead she revolutionised what it meant to be a Prime Minister's spouse—an extraordinary woman who inspired generations and still continues to inspire so many generations of Australian women. As we have heard from many speakers, she was, thankfully, outspoken on many issues and was a regular on the guest-speaking circuit as well as a columnist and a broadcaster. In fact, she really tore up the rule book and did things her own way, hosting her own show, called With Margaret Whitlam, and also writing a regular column in Woman's Day and making such great contributions.

We have heard too from many speakers of her strong commitment to community, her strong commitment to equality and social equity and the deep compassion that she had. Of course, she pursued a great career as a social worker. She was committed to so many of the issues we have heard people speak of and she had such a strong passion and commitment to that huge variety of issues—from local issues to do with her local library through to so many really important issues in relation to women's rights and international affairs. That truly is remarkable when you look at the history of her life and the different causes she was involved in; there was such a wide variety of them. I was very interested to read that it is because of Margaret Whitlam that childminding centres became known as childcare centres. That is because she said that 'after all, minding a child was hardly the same as caring for one'—yet another wonderful comment by Margaret that shows the depth of her commitment. As has been commented on by many people, Margaret Whitlam would have made a very formidable
politician herself, and she was out campaigning on many occasions. She did have very strong political instincts and indeed was a natural leader. Of course, she was a perfect match for the very fiercely driven Gough and matched him not only in wit and intellect and ideas but in their towering height as well. What a remarkable couple they were.

She had so many talents and so many skills. She was able to play the piano, to sing, dance, act and of course swim. It is remarkable that at age 18 she became the Australian breaststroke champion. And throughout her life she had so many different roles. She chaired many different boards, committees and councils across a variety of different fields, in her beloved field of social services but also in law, opera, dance and international literacy. What a remarkable life. From all of the accounts we have heard from many different people, she was incredibly warm, light-hearted, sharp-witted, proud and modest, refusing to let go her grip on life. Apparently, recently she commented, 'Well, I'm on to my third pace-maker. Ridiculous, isn't it? While I keep going, I will keep going.' That comment is very much like her.

Sadly for Australia and for all of those who loved her dearly, a fall led to her declining health and ultimately her death on 17 March. Her beloved husband, and former Prime Minister, Gough, describes her as the love of his life. Their marriage has been a great Australian romance, a partnership of equals, and in Gough's words, his best appointment. Her life has been so full, and she contributed greatly to Australia. While we mourn so deeply along with her family, we can rest assured that her place in history, and our affections, is absolutely assured. Our thoughts are at this time with the Whitlam family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this very difficult time. They should know that she was a woman who was loved by so many Australians, and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (17:56): I would like to add my voice to this condolence motion and congratulate the speakers who have spoken before me for their very moving words, and particularly the Prime Minister and the opposition leader. I never had the pleasure of meeting Margaret Whitlam. I was not old enough at the time to really see the full flight of Margaret Whitlam and Gough Whitlam. I was just a few years old when he was Prime Minister and she the first lady. My remarks are very much based on the accounts of what other people have told me about her and what I have read about her, and what I have seen about her in her later years.

From all accounts she was indeed a very much loved person, particularly as the first lady, but also in the latter parts of her life, where she continued to make an extraordinary contribution after exiting the Lodge with her husband. Being a spouse of a politician is not an easy job and it is very much at times a thankless job. By reflecting on Margaret Whitlam and her life, in some respects we are also reflecting on the spouses of all of us, those of us in this chamber who have spouses and the spouses who have been beforehand, and reflecting on the remarkable contribution that each one of them makes. None of us here in this chamber could do our job without their support, particularly those of us who have children, as I do. I know that I simply could not do this job without the support of my wife, Teri. Others I know are in a similar situation. So in reflecting on Margaret, we also reflect upon those people.

Of course, being the spouse of a Prime Minister must be one of the most difficult jobs, and from all accounts Margaret Whitlam carried out this job with great poise and with great dignity, and made an incredible contribution in and of herself. She herself pointed out how difficult that job was. She said, 'On the one hand, if you say nothing you're just dumb. If you
talk a lot, you're told you are talkative.' Somehow they must navigate that and strike the right balance. Margaret, from what I have been told, was known as an incredibly sunny, optimistic and confident person who, as many people before me have said, redefined the role of a spouse of the Prime Minister. She championed many very good causes in her own right, and particularly equality of women and some of the issues which affect women. She represented many people who did not always feel that they were part of the inner circle of Australian society. I was taken by a comment she made—she being a very tall woman herself, being all of 188 centimetres tall—that, 'I came to represent all the ungainly people, the too tall ones, the too fat ones, and the housebound, as I had been, who would never go to China or Buckingham Palace and went through me.' I think that was a very nice thing to say, and I think that many people across our community could associate with those comments and, through Margaret Whitlam, indeed feel as if they were going to Buckingham Palace or going to China and having some of those experiences.

In her later years she branched out further and involved herself in numerous activities and continued with her writing. I know that, for members opposite, her advice was always sought after, that her views were always listened to and that her friendship was very much valued right up until the last days of her life. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her service to our nation. It was indeed an incredible service and we should all stop and reflect on that service and thank her for it. My thoughts and prayers are with her husband, Gough Whitlam—her husband of 70 years, as the member for Herbert colourfully pointed out—and the rest of the Whitlam family.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:02): I join colleagues in paying tribute to Margaret Whitlam AO, a truly extraordinary Australian. Other speakers have talked about Margaret Whitlam's life, her achievements and her personal qualities which clearly endeared her to all Australians. From my observations, like many other women of her generation, Margaret Whitlam portrayed herself as a very supportive and loyal partner. But I suspect that in truth she was much more than that. She was clearly a confidante, a wise adviser, a tower of strength and an obvious influence on the life of Gough Whitlam. Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister of this country between 1972 and 1975, and he became Prime Minister after many, many years of government by the Liberal Party of Australia. So he led the Labor Party back into government. I can clearly recall those three years, and they were indeed very tumultuous years. It would not have been easy for either the Prime Minister of the country or, indeed, for Margaret, his wife. And I have no doubt that, during those very difficult years in which we had a double dissolution in 1974, her strength and her support of Gough would have been invaluable to him in carrying on in the role of Prime Minister.

Other speakers have made the point, and made it very well, that, as Australia's first lady between 1972 and 1975, Margaret Whitlam did all Australians proud. I share that view because I can clearly recall her role as first lady of Australia. I did have the pleasure of meeting Margaret Whitlam when she came to South Australia in the late seventies and came out to a community event in the electorate of Bonython, as it was then called; today it is the electorate of Wakefield. At that community event her presence was as noticeable and as significant as that of Gough himself, and I recall yesterday the minister for health speaking about Margaret Whitlam going to a community event in her electorate and saying that, when Margaret made comments to the effect that, 'Wouldn't you rather Gough as opposed to me?"
the minister for health quite properly said, 'No, we want you there.' That was also clearly the case when she came out to Bonython in the late seventies. Her presence was noticed, because she made everyone feel special and she made a point of meeting everyone in that room on the day. It is those kinds of qualities and characteristics that are rare, but that make people unique. She was indeed a unique person.

I will comment on another matter with respect to her and Gough's characteristics. The Whitlams were good friends of the Italian community, as they were good friends of all newcomers to this land. It was in fact during that era that Al Grassby became minister for immigration. I think few would disagree that it was Al Grassby who put multiculturalism on the political landscape and in the political vocabulary. It was Al Grassby who made it absolutely clear for the first time in a long time that this is a land that has people from across the world and they should all be respected and treated equally. That all happened during the era of Gough Whitlam. I suspect that Margaret Whitlam was as much supportive as anyone else.

Australia is a better place for the life of Margaret Whitlam. I take this opportunity to extend my condolences and deepest sympathy to Gough and to their four children.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (18:06): 'Margaret Whitlam was a great human being and she and Gough were a formidable couple.' That is how the president of the Wagga Wagga branch of country Labor, Glenn Eliott-Rudder, described the late Mrs Whitlam, who died in a Sydney hospital on Saturday morning aged 92 years. 'She made such an impression on so many and she will be sadly missed,' he said. 'Certainly, she will not be forgotten by those who lived during the 1970s—such an era of change for Australia and Australians.' Griffith country Labor branch vice-president, Peter Knox, has a recording of It's Time, Labor's 1972 campaign jingle, personally signed by both Margaret and Gough. The recording is one of the most treasured mementos of Mr Knox, who is Labor through and through and a former candidate for the seat of Riverina. 'Our members are very sad and sorry about this wonderful woman's passing,' Mr Knox told me this afternoon. 'I joined Labor around the time Gough became Prime Minister, and I remember the period well. Margaret was a tremendous asset to Gough as Prime Minister and she leaves a wonderful legacy of service to our nation.'

As the member for Riverina I offer my condolences on behalf of all Labor supporters in the electorate, as well as for all of those people I represent in this parliament who mourn the loss of an Australian who contributed mightily to the nation as the wife or one of our larger-than-life prime ministers and also very much in her own right. We celebrate her life, we remember the mark she made and we acknowledge with respect and thanks that she did her best to make our country a better place in which to live.

Ms Hall (Shortland—Government Whip) (18:08): I feel very privileged to be able to speak to this condolence motion. Margaret Whitlam was a role model to me; she was somebody I looked up to. She was unique. I congratulate everybody on the speeches they have made to this motion. The member for Wentworth demonstrated in his speech in the House that he really knew Margaret Whitlam. His speech captured the essence of the woman, as did the speeches of the member for Griffith, the Prime Minister and other speakers in the debate. She was a woman who was in herself an enigma. She changed the face of the role of Prime Minister's wife. She was a leader in the area of women's rights, changing the face of what a woman's expectations in life could be. She studied and became a social worker, and...
she worked as a social worker after she was married. Even that was unique at the time. She balanced study, work and family, and she did all of it really well. She showed other women that it is possible to do all those things, that it is possible to have a life outside of being a mother and a wife. I think she gave people, like myself, the inspiration to reach for that other life. She was a real person, and that has been demonstrated by the speeches that have been made here in the House, both in this chamber and downstairs. She was not a person who was concerned about appearances or about presenting in a certain way. She was an athlete, she was intelligent and she was witty. She represented Australia at the Empire Games and, as previous speakers have highlighted, she probably would have won a medal if she had not been sick.

I mentioned the fact that Margaret gave a new definition to the role of Prime Minister's wife, and how she always raised women's issues. She used to attend the Labor Women's Conference, and she was an active member of the Labor Party. I first met Margaret Whitlam when I was a young woman with a very young child. I was the secretary of the Double Bay branch of the Labor Party at that time—and I see that my friend the member for Hunter is really surprised to learn that! One of the highlights of my life at that particular time was issuing Margaret and Gough Whitlam with their Labor Party tickets. They had just moved to the area, and I was overwhelmed by the occasion. From where I lived I would walk down to the corner shop, child in tow, and would see Margaret Whitlam walking down to the shop; she was just like any everyday person. I hate to disappoint my friend the member for Hunter, but at the time I may have been in the electorate of Wentworth.

Margaret always had time to talk to people. As I said, at that time I was just a really ordinary person, nothing special—a mother with a young child. I certainly was not in a strong financial position. And she talked to me. She would acknowledge me as a person. And just as she would acknowledge somebody like me at that particular time, she could then move on and socialise with people from the highest echelons of society and converse with diplomats and other representatives from overseas. She spent time in Paris with Gough. And I think that is really unique: to be able to converse with and relate to people from different levels of society, and every one of those people feels that you are communicating with them and care about what they have to say. She certainly was able to do that.

Margaret Whitlam's life was a life of service to every community in which she lived. My condolences to the family. It is a life that will live on. She will continue to be a role model for women into the future. People will look at society back when she studied at university, raised children and was the Prime Minister's wife and see that you can achieve much and change the community's expectations of that position and individual expectations of perceived roles and even the stereotypes of what a woman can achieve. I think that is something Margaret Whitlam did so well. She was able to take her place on boards within Australia. She was awarded the Order of Australia. She was a positive woman who always looked forward. She achieved things and she encouraged other women to reach their potential. She and Gough were married for nearly 70 years. If she had lived in Shortland electorate she would have got a bunch of flowers as well as a congratulatory message and a card from me because I think being married for 70 years is a real achievement. And there was still that spark in their relationship; they still enjoyed each other's company. They were always 'Gough and Margaret'—each an individual but together as a couple. They were members of the ALP for
60 years and were given national life membership. And their marriage was the longest marriage of any Prime Minister in Australia's history. That is another achievement.

Everyone Margaret Whitlam touched is richer for having known her. They knew her either personally or through her public life. I thank her family for sharing her with us and I once again offer them my condolences.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (18:17): It is a great pleasure to join with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Griffith, the member for Wentworth and all members who are making a contribution to this very important condolence motion in honour of Margaret Elaine Whitlam AO. There are many ways to describe Margaret Whitlam—intelligent, compassionate, talented, sincere, generous, benevolent, witty and honest—but, based on my dealings with her, I believe the best description of all is 'tough'. She was a tough woman. It was a brave person who challenged her in any way—and I am sure former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam learnt that on many occasions.

Being the wife to any PM is of course a tough gig. It takes great strength to both stand by your Prime Minister—in this case your husband—and to deal with public criticisms of him, his government and the broader family. More and more, including in Gough's time, the media intrude greatly into the family behind the scenes of office. Gough was a great reformer and, as a result, picked plenty of fights; being a great reformer is, by definition, also about picking fights. It is well known that the greatest fight of all was that which occurred in 1975. Throughout that turbulent period Margaret was Gough's rock and held herself in a most dignified way.

Margaret Whitlam lived a very long life and had been around for a very long time. I am one of those in this place—there are quite a few of us, of course—who had the pleasure of knowing her, not very well but sufficiently well, I think, to appreciate her and to understand her. My maternal grandparents lived in Bellingen, just inland near Coffs Harbour. I remember she and Gough visited to open a nursing home when I was only a child. I still vividly remember that day, not meeting them but seeing them and watching the very significant fuss that surrounded them on the visit to that very small town. Even though I was a child, I remember how tall they both were and therefore how big they were in stature as well as in reputation. They were certainly very warmly received on that occasion. That is my first memory of the couple.

I also have this vague memory of accompanying Margaret to the Cessnock Town Hall, which no longer exists. I have been trying to remember all afternoon when that was and why she was in Cessnock. She was alone. Gough was not with her. She was there to make a speech of some sort. After the speech I was very busily making sure that I took the opportunity to introduce her to as many people as I could. She had a real crack at me, in a very grumpy way, about working her too hard in that respect. The point I make is how upfront and determined she was about letting me know she was not too happy about all this hard work I was giving her. Beneath that, however, there was also an appreciation of having had the opportunity to meet with so many of the local people. They certainly appreciated her.

Gough is, of course, still with us. He is almost 96. I spoke with his son Nick on Saturday. Obviously Gough is far frailer now than the Gough we have all known so well. We all think of him this week. It was a very long partnership. He must be feeling this loss very sadly and
deeply. I extend again my best wishes to him. Nick, who I have come to know well I am proud to say, is a great guy. I have not had the opportunity to get to know other members of the family but you only need to know Nick to know that Margaret and Gough gave him a very fine upbringing and that they are very decent people. They will be feeling this loss very deeply.

Margaret Whitlam walked tall—literally and figuratively. She was a great Australian, not just famous for being Gough Whitlam's wife but famous in her own right. She was an individual, someone who had her own causes, who argued her own cases and criticised when she thought criticism was deserved. She was a sporting hero. She was learned. I end where I began: she was intelligent, smart and witty. She was all of that. I join with others in mourning her loss and thanking her for her very significant contribution to this country and again in extending my deepest sympathy to Gough and the rest of the family.

Mr Stephen Jones (Throsby) (18:23): Margaret Elaine Whitlam was a giant amongst Australian women, a colossus amongst Australian Labor women, a political leader and a trailblazer in her own right. I can think of no better words to open this contribution than those spoken by another trailblazer, another colossus, for Australian Labor women: Jessie Street. In an ABC radio program, in April 1944, she said:

To put this in a nutshell, I believe that in a democratic, free society women should be at liberty to choose whether they will take up home life or work outside the home; that men and women should receive equal pay and equal opportunity; that home life should be made less of a tie and the burden of raising a family be lightened. If we can face these peacetime problems with the spirit of determination and conciliation with which we’re facing our war problems, we may hope to solve them.

Jessie Street and Margaret Whitlam were contemporaries for many years. By any fair analysis Margaret Elaine Whitlam did not make the choice between taking up an effective home life and having an effective life outside the home.

When she died this Saturday 17 March at St Vincent's Hospital she was surrounded by her family. She was aged 92 and she had an extraordinary life. She was born Margaret Elaine Dovey, the daughter of Wilfred Robert 'Bill' Dovey, a New South Wales Supreme Court judge. She attended the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School in Darlinghurst, where she excelled in sport. A number of speakers have already commented on the fact that she competed for Australia in the 200-yards backstroke in the 1938 British Empire Games. Photographs from the games show the rangy 188-centimetre-tall Margaret, who described herself as a great long streak, with her hair in long black plaits.

Margaret met Gough Whitlam four years later at a science party while she was waiting to be called up to the RAAF. They married soon after, in April of 1942. She was two years into her diploma of social studies at the University of Sydney.

Margaret never made any apologies for the relative privileges that her background gave to her. Instead she chose to dedicate her career to helping those who were less fortunate than her. She saw what was wrong in the community and worked to fix it, as part of the Family Welfare Bureau. She and Gough had four children, Nicholas, Anthony, Stephen and Catherine.

Gough was first elected to federal parliament in 1952 and became a federal opposition leader. He became parliamentary leader of the Australian Labor Party in 1967. During this time Margaret was working as a medical social worker at the Parramatta District Hospital.
Upon Gough's election as Prime Minister, Margaret quickly became known as an outspoken advocate for issues, including women's rights and, particularly, abortion law reform and conservation. She was influenced by many leading feminists at the time, including Germaine Greer. She was known for breaking the mould. When it came to parliamentary spouses and prime ministerial spouses she refused to submerge herself into the role of a political handbag, as was often expected of women in those days. She quickly saw that her position gave her a great platform upon which to engage with the social issues of the day and to effect real change.

She once wrote that you must not get too great a sense of yourself or your own importance. Her sense of humour was famous and infectious. It was that sense of humour, that wit and that grasp of many of the important social issues of the day—a great sense of political history—that made her a regular and popular guest on radio and television and a columnist for the Australian Women's Weekly.

Margaret was very outspoken against the dismissal of her husband by Governor-General Sir John Kerr, in 1975. I interrupt to say that there is not an Australian of my generation or older who cannot tell you exactly where they were on that day in November 1975. I was too young to remember it at the time, but if I had I am sure I would have laughed when I learnt that Margaret's response to the dismissal was to tell Gough: 'How ridiculous. Why didn't you just tear it up?' The dismissal did not tarnish her reputation as political royalty and nor did it halt her supreme philanthropic efforts. She did not retreat from public service. In fact, the citations and the community and national organisations that she was involved in from the time Gough left public service, in 1978, until her passing on the weekend would exhaust a person half her age.

She was truly loved by all within the Labor movement. The member for Cunningham earlier today passed on the words of Margaret's son Nick, who is now a resident of the Illawarra and well known to me and the member for Cunningham. I can think of no better tribute to any woman than to pass on the words of Margaret's son Nick, when he said, 'Just please say that I am the proud son of a wonderful woman.'

The Whitlams are the nearest thing that we have to royalty in the Labor Party, and we are not that fond of royalty, it must be said. But it was not just because of the achievements of her husband. If she were not such a wonderful woman she would not be eliciting the great tributes from members of all sides of House that she has received in this debate and the outpouring of affection that she has seen from the Australian community since the events of last Saturday. I am very proud, as a Labor person, to be speaking on this motion. I pass on my condolences to Nick and Judy, residents of the Illawarra, and to the entire Whitlam family.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (18:30): Tonight I rise to offer my condolences to the Whitlam family. Many words have been spoken by many different people about Margaret Elaine Whitlam in the past few days. Some have been spoken publicly and some privately. I have just received an email from one of my branches offering their condolences to the family. What this tells me is that Margaret Whitlam touched so many people throughout her life. People in every walk of life, from every background and, dare I say it, from every political persuasion, have recognised her massive contribution to Australia's public life.

When I first considered the words I would use tonight, my immediate thought was to focus on Margaret as an individual. I wanted to speak of her contribution in her own right, not as the
wife of, in her words, 'the old boy'. It seems to me that she represented all that was good about her generation of women and that her contribution was Margaret's unique contribution, not as an accessory to a prime minister. On further consideration, I decided that such an approach would be doing Margaret a disservice, because theirs was from the start a partnership of mind and spirit, and it is impossible to speak of one without the other. Gough and Margaret Whitlam were a formidable combination.

There are some pointers about how Margaret became the person she was in Susan Mitchell's book The Matriarchs, all the more illuminating because the words are Margaret's. Ms Mitchell explains how the interview with Margaret came about. It seems to have been a long process. When they finally met, Ms Mitchell said, 'I found it hard to believe that I hadn't known her all my life.' That, in essence, is who Margaret was. It was difficult to believe after a brief meeting that you had not known her forever.

In speaking of her childhood, Margaret acknowledged the various influences from her family. She described her reaction to attending SCEGGS as different from some of the other girls, who were sooky. Margaret explained, 'I always feel when something ends something new is going to begin, and it's all going to be so exciting.' In her life Margaret experienced many new beginnings and dealt with each with commitment, passion and enthusiasm. I was particularly struck with her description of her time as a social worker. After her marriage she was completing the second year of a social work diploma and doing the practicals on her holidays. She was later employed by the family welfare bureau. She recalled from that time going out as a field officer on home visits to provide advice to members of the community. On one occasion Margaret was visiting a woman in hospital to reassure her about the care of her children and how they were going to be received at a particular home during the mother's illness. The woman asked Margaret whether she would send her children to that particular home. Margaret stated that the question would become her gauge in future decisions. In considering placements, particularly for children, she would ask herself whether she would send her own relatives there.

The esteem in which Margaret was held was expressed well by my sister, Myrna, who met Margaret and Gough on several occasions. In fact, Myrna's thoughts strongly reflect the thoughts of all my family in their recollections of Margaret. In 2010 I celebrated my twentieth anniversary as the member for Banks with a function in the electorate. The Whitlams were not able to attend. However, I asked them to be my guests for lunch on the date of the actual anniversary at a venue of their choice. On 24 March 2010 we four lunched at the Australian 18 Footers League in Double Bay where Margaret was a member. My sister, Myrna, recalls that Margaret presented her with a gift of a beautiful, miniature, purple orchid called 'Little Lady'. Her card read, 'For the woman behind the man. Congratulations and admiration, with fond wishes, from Margaret and Gough, 24 March 2010.' Much to Myrna's delight, that orchid is still thriving today. My sister also kept the visitor's slip, which Margaret signed, to allow us into the club.

That was typical of the impact that Margaret had when she met people. Myrna says that Margaret's generosity of spirit, sense of humour and candour on that day overwhelmed her. She remembers feeling sad when the afternoon came to an end. Myrna also recollects Margaret being very amused by my choice of desert—plain ice-cream. She asked me where my sense of adventure was, and of course I replied that I had none. My sister best remembers
Margaret through her comments made this afternoon, 'A very inspirational, down-to-earth woman, who left me with a lasting impression of the type of person I could only ever aspire to be. God rest her soul.'

I offer my personal condolences and those of my family to Gough, Tony, Nick, Stephen and Catherine and their families.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (18:37): I came to personally know the Whitlams sometime after winning the Werriwa by-election in 2005. As Gough was supporting another candidate for pre-selections, our beginnings were a little frosty. You might anticipate there was, somewhat, fear and trepidation knowing that the Whitlams were against me. At least that is the way I viewed it at the time.

Like most Australians of my generation, the Whitlams were revered and much loved. People of my generation have much to be thankful for, particularly in respect to education. My wife, Bernadette, struck up a special relationship with Margaret. Bernadette describes her as having a razor-sharp mind but with a genuine sense of compassion and an interest in everybody around her. She was a person admired not only for her achievements and experience but for her outlook to a modern and inclusive Australia. She was a highly intelligent woman who dared to have a view.

Coming from an era when wives were largely stay-at-home mums and were dedicated to supporting their family while the husband was the bread-winner and had the day-to-day contact with the outside world, Margaret Whitlam largely redefined many of those stereotypes. Without compromise to her unconditional love and support for her family, she was confident and comfortable enough in promoting her own views, particularly on social justice as well as reshaping the community's relationship in furthering the interest of Australians generally. She was a feminist, yes, but one who did much to advance the cause for equality of women, while remaining a wife, a mother and a person who was much loved and respected by a nation. Margaret Whitlam showed a genuine concern for her community, particularly for those who were less well off. As a former social worker she had a real understanding of those issues that go to make up a modern community and the problems that sometimes beset various sectors of a community. As I say, she had genuine compassion. She was a person who possessed the drive, the courage and the determination to be an elite athlete. She represented Australia at the Empire Games in swimming, and she showed those qualities throughout her life—a strength of character that remained evident to all of us throughout her public life. Along with Gough, and certainly not because of Gough, Margaret was awarded the first life membership of the Australian Labor Party. One half of one of our nation's most respected couples, and a marriage just short of 70 years, and an inspiration to a nation. We are deeply saddened by Margaret's passing but marvel in her achievements and celebrate the legacy that she did so much to create in this nation.

On behalf of Bernadette and me, and the community I have the honour to represent, particularly the people of Cabramatta where the Whitlams raised their family, to Gough, their children Tony, Nick, Stephen and Catherine and their families, I offer my deepest sympathy.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:41): I wish to acknowledge the remarkable life of Margaret Whitlam, who died surrounded by her family on Saturday at Sydney's St Vincent's Private Hospital. Margaret Whitlam has been praised for blazing a new trail for first ladies, however, my impression was that she never saw herself in that way. As Margaret told biographer Susan
Mitchell during a 1987 interview, 'I just saw the role of the Prime Minister's wife as being human towards other humans and not treating them badly.'

I first met Gough and Margaret when I was the new federal member for Fremantle when they came to Perth for the annual John Curtin Memorial Lecture, and we had a lovely dinner afterwards organised by another great Labor personality the Hon. John Cowdell. Margaret was an incredible presence that evening. Comfortable in her own skin and listening to Gough talk in his usual expansive way about the Australian political universe, but also happy to let him know when she thought he had said enough and of course to offer her own opinions. Margaret Whitlam was not content to play the compliant, silent wife. As she put it, 'What am I to do? Stay in a cage wide open to view and say nothing? That's not on, but if I can do some good, I will certainly try.' It is telling to me that her response to being asked her view of the first lady's role was often to say, 'I'm still finding it.'

Even today, Margaret Whitlam's outspoken frankness, much like the prime ministerial legacy of her beloved husband, Gough, resonates with the Australian community. Margaret came from a relatively privileged background but from a young age she assumed a responsibility to help those less fortunate than herself and would become, in the Whitlam family's words, an outspoken advocate for women's rights, social issues and the arts. It was as Sydney University, where she studied for a degree in social work, that Margaret Dovey first met 'dreamy' Gough whom she recalled falling in love with in an instant. She represented Australian swimming at the 1938 Empire Games and practised social work at Parramatta District Hospital in Sydney's west.

She and Gough married in 1942 and their relationship remained one that was based on mutual love and deep respect. Gough Whitlam admired her wit and intellect, and she ensured that he remained grounded. Their relationship was described by the Whitlam family as a true political and personal partnership. The couple would have celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary on 22 April this year. The political partnership of Gough and Margaret was an extraordinary time in Australian political history. Just as Australia as a whole has benefited from the massive legal, social and cultural reforms brought in by the Whitlam government, so have Australian women been fortunate to have had such a feisty role model in Margaret Whitlam at the dawn of the modern women's liberation movement with the many important changes that have improved the lives of women. Margaret stood alongside the Whitlam Labor government when it made the broad, sweeping, modernising impacts that have changed our country in many ways, and for the better: the Family Law Act; the Racial Discrimination Act; the Sex Discrimination Act; the first federal legislation on human rights, environment and heritage; the Trade Practices Act; the Legal Aid Commission; Medibank; free university education; the Australian Film, Television and Radio School; the National Gallery of Australia; the Law Reform Commission; the Australia Council; the consumer affairs commission; and the Heritage Commission, among many, many other measures. I know that Margaret Whitlam, as a passionate advocate for social justice, equality for women and the arts, would have wholeheartedly approved of these changes and quite likely had an influence on at least some of them.

Later in life Margaret's contributions to the arts ranged from acting as the chair of the inaugural Australian opera conference to serving on boards of the Sydney Dance Company. Graeme Murphy, a leading Australian choreographer, referred to her as 'a beautiful lady'. In
1983 Margaret was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for her extraordinary contribution and service and in 1997 she was made a National Living Treasure. Margaret Whitlam was a gutsy, passionate and warm-hearted woman who has been an inspiration to many Australians. She will be missed. Our thoughts are with Gough Whitlam and the rest of the Whitlam family at this time.

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (18:46): I join with the many eloquent contributions that have been made to this motion of condolence for Margaret Whitlam AO. I am by self-admission an unreconstructed Whitlamite. The fact that Gough Whitlam led us out of a long 27 years of political wilderness is something that was of great importance in the way in which it has assisted modern Labor to look at itself as a true party of government. But it has been obvious from the contributions that have been made to this debate that Margaret Whitlam was very much part of a partnership that made that possible. Although I met Margaret, I have not had the opportunity that others have conveyed in this debate: to have been able to engage in discussions of issues with such an intelligent and bright person. But I am motivated in making this contribution because, as from time to time I am reminded, I am second generation, and my parents would want me to make a contribution that expressed, in the case of my late father and my mother, their high regard and esteem for Margaret, which I know came through because of the friendships that were of that period.

I know that for many people that I represent, especially migrants and families who came here in the postwar period and who developed the outer suburbs of the north of Melbourne and are the same people that have been represented here by a number of contributions—for instance, from those that have represented the western suburbs of Sydney—Margaret Whitlam was somebody of great merit and moment, somebody that they looked to. On their behalf as much as on behalf of my family, I express my deepest condolences to Gough and to the Whitlam family. In the passing of Margaret Whitlam we have lost a great Australian.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the Federation Chamber.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (18:49): I move:

That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House notes the death on 17 March 2012 of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, expresses its profound regret at his passing and records its deep admiration for the magnificent leadership he provided to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria during the period of his pontificate.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (18:49): It is rare that one has the privilege of being able to speak on two condolence motions, and I do so in the context of knowing both of the parties about whom these resolutions were proposed. I cannot say that I was as familiar with Pope Shenouda, but I had the opportunity on several occasions of meeting with him on his visits here to Australia. I am told I have an item that he gave me, which I was not to boast about—
an icon painted by some of the ladies of the Coptic Orthodox church, which I still have in my home.

The patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church died at 88 years. He led Egypt's Christians for some 40 years. I believe tens of thousands of mourners packed into the cathedral in Cairo. He had been unwell, battling liver and lung problems for several years. It is appropriate that we acknowledge his contribution because the Copts trace their faith in Christ to Saint Mark, who is said to have brought Christianity to Egypt in the first century.

Pope Shenouda was born as Nazir Gayed on 3 August 1923 in Egypt. He graduated in history with a degree from Cairo University. He began attending the Coptic theological classes at night. He entered the priesthood and became a monk, aged 31, in 1954, taking the name of Antonyos El-Suryaani. He spent six years living in solitude in the desert as a hermit in a cave that he carved himself, taking the example of Saint Anthony the Great.

He was enthroned as Pope Shenouda III, the 117th pope of Alexandria and the patriarch of the see of Saint Mark, in November 1971. He was the first enthroned in the Coptic cathedral of Saint Mark in Cairo. He had been dean of the Coptic Orthodox Theological Seminary. He had a major test as pope in 1976 when the patriarch of Ethiopia was arrested and executed by the Marxist regime. Pope Shenouda refused to acknowledge any replacement in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He was banished by President Anwar Sadat to a desert monastery in 1981 for refusing to hold public celebrations to mark Easter. He was returned in 1985 after Sadat's assassination.

He was the author of 101 books, and his ability to expound the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was recognised in 1978 when he received the Browning award of the United States of America as the best preacher of the year. He had been awarded eight honorary degrees. He had specific regard to women and the ministry of women in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Thousands of female servants teach catechism each Sunday, there are women who teach in the Coptic institute and there are many women who serve in the field of social work. He established the order of deaconesses and significantly enhanced the role of women in the Coptic community. Many educated women have consecrated their lives and serve. He had this to say:

We felt a great need of the work of women and we wanted women to have a certain order and service in the Church, not only to have girls as Sunday School teachers who give a part of their time whenever they can, but we want girls and women to give their whole life to God and serve the church. Internationally he was the first Coptic Orthodox pope to visit the Vatican in over 1,500 years. From August to December 1989 he made an historic 112-day visit to all Coptic churches in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. During his trip he laid the foundation stones of many new churches, consecrated many altars, baptised hundreds of children, consecrated hundreds of deacons and delivered many lectures.

In Australia he consecrated the Church of Saint Bishoy and Saint Shenouda, which was purchased in Bulleen, Melbourne, in 1996. He established the secretariat of pastoral affairs for the church abroad. At the commencement of his papacy there were only seven Coptic churches outside of Egypt, two in each of Canada, the United States of America and Australia, and one in England. At the commencement of his papacy there were 23 dioceses in Egypt. In 2008 there were 50 and there were three dioceses outside of Egypt, then, and now there are 25.
Under his leadership the Coptic Church witnessed a growth in Australia and there are currently 28 churches. In 1999 we witnessed the enthronement of the first bishop in Australia and New Zealand with His Grace Bishop Suriel. In Australia now there are 42 churches, two theological colleges, five primary and secondary schools, three monasteries, and an elderly persons’ hostel. We now have four churches in New Zealand, two in Fiji, and one each in Japan, Thailand and Singapore.

As you can see, I have taken a great deal of interest in the role of the Coptic Church here in Australia. Pope Shenouda has given great leadership. I met him first when he visited Australia in 1995 when I was the shadow minister for immigration. I had the privilege of meeting him subsequently in his visits in 1996 and 2002. He was very conscious of the importance of Christians being able to live in the areas which were their homes. While he worked with me in relation to assisting with the plight of many who may be refugees because of conversions that occur from time to time, his role was to keep the Coptic community active and engaged in Egypt, which was their homeland, and where St Mark first preached to them. I do very much regret his passing and I wanted to be associated with this condolence, believing that I am possibly the only serving member of the parliament to have met with Pope Shenouda.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (18:57): I also rise to support condolences for His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Pope Shenouda was by any test a very significant figure in the religious life of the 20th century. He was the leader of his church for just over 40 years. There would be very few leaders of any congregation in any religion who could say that they led their church for 40 years. He led it with distinction and was much loved among the Coptic community.

He was not a one-dimensional figure. He studied at Cairo University and completed a Bachelor of Arts in English and History in 1947. After graduating as dux and completing his military service he began to work as a teacher of English, History and Social Sciences at a high school in Cairo. One thing I have noticed about the Coptic Church is that their clergy are often called to the church after a career in other fields, and they often come with a very strong and clear understanding of some secular fields. His Holiness was no exception to that.

I have come to know the Coptic community well. I did not have the opportunity to meet with Pope Shenouda, but I have come to know the Coptic community very well in my capacity as Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I have met with them in the electorate of the honourable member for Holt at the very impressive new church being built. I have met with them at various churches in Sydney and met with them, of course, in my office. I have discussed the various challenges of the Coptic community in Egypt as we speak, which I will not go through on this occasion as this is a condolence motion. I raise that to make the point that I have been struck in my interactions with the Coptic community by the love and respect for His Holiness.

It was quite clear for some time that His Holiness was not in the best of health. I know that Bishop Suriel visited His Holiness to celebrate the 40th anniversary of him becoming pope just last year. I had discussed that visit with him and how much he was looking forward to seeing His Holiness. In my interactions with the Coptic community the esteem that His Holiness was held in has been made very clear to me. He was held in esteem because of his office but also because of his approach and very clear commitment to religious understanding and interfaith dialogue. I note that many leaders of the Islamic faith, for example in Egypt,
have expressed very strong condolences at his loss. He was responsible for the expansion of the Coptic Church. As Copts moved throughout the world, His Holiness oversaw expansion of his church. There were seven Coptic Orthodox churches outside of Egypt when he became pope. There are now well over 100 and there are now many in Australia, 42. There is one here in Canberra and several in Sydney and Melbourne and in other cities, so he has overseen a very substantial expansion in the Coptic diaspora.

I do want to pay my condolences. His Holiness did visit Australia seven times during his papacy, his last being in 2002. He was deeply loved and respected, and I think we have seen an outpouring of emotion not only in the streets of Cairo and the services at St Mark's over the last 48 hours but also in Australia. I do not think His Holiness would have foreseen social media when he became pope, but social media has been very active since the news on Saturday that he had passed with members of the Coptic community expressing their grief at his passing. I am very glad that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition initiated this motion yesterday. It is very appropriate that the parliament pay those respects as a parliament to His Holiness for his leadership and gratitude for his service. I note that there is a funeral service tonight in Cairo, and we will all be watching closely in the hope that it proceeds peacefully. It will be a very substantial gathering of the Coptic people. We all will be holding our breath that it proceeds as it should, with the outpouring of grief on behalf of the community, in peace. His Holiness will be missed. I extend, as I have done personally, my condolences to His Grace Bishop Suriel, the leaders and the entire Coptic community of Australia.

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (19:02): I rise to join the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship current and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship previous, who spoke before me on this motion. I join him particularly in the sentiments he just expressed about our hope and indeed our prayers for peace tonight as that service proceeds. I rise to express my deep condolence to the Coptic Christian community of Australia and the Coptic faith all around the world as they mourn the loss of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I am greatly saddened by his death.

His Holiness served as the patriarch to the Coptic Orthodox Church for 41 years, shepherding his people through a time of great upheaval and persecution in Egypt with grace and unwavering faith. The Coptic faithful are the oldest and largest Christian community in the Middle East. His Holiness was the 117th in the line of leaders tracing back to St Mark himself. We extend our deepest condolences to that community and to His Holiness's entire flock from all of our fellow Australians here and to all the faithful over in Egypt and around the world. Tens of thousands of mourners filled St Mark’s Cathedral in Cairo to farewell His Holiness. The line stretched for almost a mile, I am told, with people wishing to pay tribute to a great man and a man of God.

When he became Pope in 1971 there were only seven churches outside of Egypt. Three decades on, there are more than 150, including in my electorate, in the Sutherland Shire, at Kirrawee. It is led by Father Tadros, who, together with Bishop Suriel, has been a tremendous advocate for the people of Coptic faith in Australia and those from Egypt in particular. In Australia and New Zealand there are now 28 Coptic churches. I had the great privilege, just the Sunday before his passing, to attend and participate in the worship of the congregation at St Mark’s Coptic Church in Arncliffe. This was a wonderful time to be with them and it is so...
sad that so soon after this same community would have been struck by the grief of the passing of this great man of God. It was a tremendous community at Arncliffe. There were around 1,000 people there between the two services. While the services themselves were very moving, what was even more moving was the tremendous sense of community amongst those of the Coptic faith in Australia. To see small children, old men and women, mothers and father, aunties and uncles and others gathering round a Sunday lunch in the grounds of their church was, by any definition, the true meaning of community. This is the type of faith community that His Holiness has inspired not just in Arncliffe but all around the world and at the many congregations and parishes.

There is much to be thankful for but there is also much to grieve over and, today, as we remember his life and legacy, we remember too in this place the Copts of Egypt and what they currently face. To the faithful in Egypt, as they grieve the loss of their beloved leader, we send our condolences and now more than ever they need our thoughts and our prayers, but most importantly they need our voices to continue to plead their case for justice.

We had all hoped, as the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others have expressed, that the events of the fall of Mubarak would have led to a new period for the Copts in Egypt and that there would have been a new hope. But, sadly, what they have known is quite different. It is a matter of extraordinary grief and concern to Copts living in Australia as they hear, on a daily basis, stories about their friends and their families.

I want to thank the minister for his efforts in reaching out to the Coptic community in Australia. We have attended many events and on one occasion last spring we were together in Sydney. We know only too deeply the level of pain, emotionally and spiritually, that they are going through as they think of those who are in that place.

Egypt has eight million Copts. The Coptic faithful in Australia number about 100,000. So, as we go into this evening and as they go through the process of mourning and grief, my prayers are with them. I know that they will be sustained in this terrible moment by a great faith that is possessed by them individually and as a community, and a great faith that was demonstrated by their beloved leader Pope Shenouda III over his life and leadership of their great church.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (19:07): I too rise, as others have here today, to speak on this condolence motion and to extend my deepest condolences to my friends in the Coptic community including the Mayor of the City of Casey Councillor Sam Aziz, Father Abanoub Attalla, and His Grace Bishop Suriel the Bishop of the Coptic communities of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT, and many of my friends in the Coptic community on their grief that they are sharing on the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

In any way Pope Shenouda III was an incredibly powerful voice for unity, for tolerance and for reconciliation. He was also a much loved leader of Coptic Christians around the world and a great leader of his church who had a strong commitment to Egypt's national unity. Pope Shenouda III reigned for over 40 years and for many Copts, which make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's population of about 80 million people, and Australia's 80,000-strong Coptic community, he was the only pope that they had ever known.

For Bishop Suriel the death was particularly poignant. He had been secretary to Pope Shenouda III for over five years. Bishop Suriel said the pope, 'has left his mark on his church.
and his people. He got on well with Muslims, was a great ascetic and scholar and wrote more than 120 books and some very beautiful poetry in Arabic.’ Bishop Suriel also reminded the Coptic faithful in Australia of the six visits that Pope Shenouda III had made to Australia, and of his love of the country and pride in the work being carried out by the Coptic Church and Coptic schools in Melbourne and Sydney. During Pope Shenouda's reign he remained committed to his country of Egypt and was seen as a protector of Egypt's Coptic Christians during recent attacks on Copts by Islamist militants in recent years. Accordingly to Councillor Sam Aziz, Pope Shenouda was also committed during his reign to spending at least three days a week in the monastery in order to write sermons and to continue to educate the Coptic community about the Christian faith. According to Councillor Aziz, who is a member of the Coptic community in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Pope Shenouda III was an amazing pope. When he became Pope in 1971 there were only a handful of Coptic churches around the world but now there are hundreds. This is Pope Shenouda's main legacy, which saw a huge expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church beyond its traditional Egyptian base to countries like the US, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, as well as parts of South America and Europe.

Another important legacy was his commitment to the concept of unity of Christian churches that took him to the Vatican in 1973 to meet Pope Paul VI—the first Coptic Pope for over fifteen-hundred years to go to Rome. He believed that Christian unity was a matter of faith rather than of jurisdiction. As he told a forum in 1974, 'Christian people, being fed up with divisions, are pushing their church leaders to do something about church unity and I am sure that the Holy Spirit is inspiring us.' Importantly, Councillor Aziz said that Pope Shenouda always had an amazingly happy disposition and, when you fell down, he was always someone you could listen to in order to cheer you up.

Councillor Aziz has also told me an amazing story of when Pope Shenouda went to a Melbourne field in Hallam in my electorate of Holt in the early 1990s and explained his vision for a church to spring out from the field with a cattle shed on it. Soon after making this announcement, Councillor Aziz said that Copts throughout Melbourne started to make donations in order to make this vision a reality. Fortunately, prior to Pope Shenouda's passing this year, this vision became a reality with the opening of a beautiful new $6 million St Mina and St Marina church, the sixth church in Melbourne, which now sits on the former field and serves 800 Coptic families in the local community. It is a magnificent church, and the minister for immigration has attended that church. It is an adornment to the Coptic community. You can see it from the Princes Highway at night. It is a sparkling symbol of the hope and faith of a vibrant community that lives in my area. The story about the Hallam field, otherwise known as the 'cattle-shed story' to the Melbourne Copts, is a reminder of Pope Shenouda's greatness and his vision to strengthen the Coptic community's presence around the world even in periods of adversity. This should be remembered.

According to Councillor Aziz, Pope Shenouda felt like a father to him. When he had lost his own father six years ago, Pope Shenouda provided him with the inspiration and the fatherly advice through his sermons. Pope Shenouda was, in many ways, a father-figure for so many Copts and now that he has passed away, Councillor Aziz has said that many Copts like himself feel that they are orphans due to the passing of this great father-figure.
Pope Shenouda's funeral will take place later tonight, as has been discussed, in St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. A very large crowd of about 100,000 mourners are expected to gather. We pray for them, that they can mourn the passing of this great figure in peace and pay their respects, as is their entitlement.

The Coptic church was established in the city of Alexandria around 43AD. I have no doubt that Pope Shenouda's reign will long be remembered for many years to come by Coptic Christians as a time when a modest pope with a positive disposition led an unprecedented expansion in the Coptic faith to all parts of the world, including, thankfully, to my federal electorate of Holt.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (19:13): It is not my intention to take much of the chamber's time or to go over a lot of the ground that others have already covered. There is no doubt that it is a tragedy for the Coptic Church around the world and particularly for those in Australia and within the electorate of Cowan that Pope Shenouda III has passed.

I would say, as has been said, Pope Shenouda has certainly helped and encouraged the proliferation of churches across the world. The increase from 1971 in North America of four churches to more than 200 was certainly a massive increase. As I have said before, even in the last few years there has been a church within Cowan, so that has been a great step forward for the Coptic community within the electorate. That church, the St Mark and St George Coptic Orthodox Church, has provided a great spiritual home for the Coptic people within the northern suburbs of Perth.

I come to the balance of what I would like to talk about. Unfortunately, the Coptic Church remains persecuted within the main homeland of Egypt, being the main centre of the church. As we know, 10 per cent of Egyptians are of the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith. Since the Mubarak regime fell and the alleged great step forward of the so-called Arab Spring, 100,000 Copts have left Egypt in fear for their safety. The reality is that the current government of Egypt is not a moderate government. It is strongly influenced by extremists such as the Muslim Brotherhood and, since the fall of Mubarak, it has not been good for the Coptic Church. The reality is that the Coptic Church has borne the brunt of growing religious intolerance in Egypt, which has no doubt been manifested in sectarian violence. There is also no doubt that there is a connection between the increasing Islamification or extremism in Egypt and the attacks on the Coptic Church. The increasing levels of hostility towards the Copts in Egypt has been matched by an unwillingness of the government to execute the laws to provide the protection that a government is responsible for. The rising number of bombings and attacks on the church and on the followers of the Coptic faith has been terrible and there has been no decline in recent times. So it really is a test and a challenge to the Egyptian government—as the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott, said—to provide freedom of religion and to provide protection of faiths in their country.

They have been found wanting so far and I can only hope and pray that there will be an improvement in the future. The loss of Pope Shenouda III has been a great tragedy for the Coptic community but they are a people of great resilience and faith and they will rise together as one with the new pope when the new pope is selected.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (19:17): On 17 March the Coptic community in Egypt and the world lost a beacon of religious tolerance. Pope Shenouda III passed away, aged 88. He
had been the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria for 40 years. Prime Minister Gillard said yesterday:

There is a funeral prayer, *Life is changed, not ended*, which expresses well the trust and expectation of the faith in which His Holiness died. On behalf of all Australians I offer my condolences to the Coptic community at this very sad hour.

In the most recent troubled times His Holiness remained a light to the Coptic community and to Egypt, promoting peace and unity over division despite unwarranted and violent attacks on his ancient community. The tributes that have flowed for this man have included that from the President of the United States, Barack Obama, who said:

We will remember Pope Shenouda III as a man of deep faith, a leader of a great faith, and an advocate for unity and reconciliation. His commitment to Egypt's national unity is also a testament to what can be accomplished when people of all religions and creeds work together.

The Coptic community represents 10 to 15 per cent of the 80 million people of Egypt. It is the largest Christian community in the Middle East—some people would say 'left in the Middle East' after what has been unfortunately happening to the Christians of Iraq. The Copts are a link to ancient Egypt. The Coptic language is the last remnant of the language of Pharaonic hieroglyphs. Their culture and traditions predate Islam.

Let us remember the internal conflict that has consumed Egypt over the past decade. The attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt have caused enormous tension between Christians and Muslims in Egypt. Pope Shenouda III could have gone down the path of division. He could have chose the path of retribution and revenge. But, as a man of great faith and peace, he preferred peace and accord. He chose to believe and to encourage the better of his fellow citizens. He believed that he was the keeper of his brothers and sisters. We remember last New Year's Eve in Egypt, when the Coptic community came together at al-Qiddissin or Saints Church in Alexandria, one of the most famous Coptic churches in Egypt, to celebrate the coming of the new year. We remember how that celebrating church community was ripped apart by a terrible explosion, set off by a jihadist suicide bomber, killing 22 men, women and children and injuring 98 people. It is particularly shocking to attack people in the middle of religious services. I think those people who were killed on that occasion, just like the poor Iraqi Christians who were blown up at mass along with their priest while they were at prayer, show that these jihadists have no religious beliefs and no faith. In fact, I agree with the many Islamic scholars who say that these people are the antithesis of faith and indeed of Islam. We remember the consequences of this violence in Egypt that stretched beyond the borders of Egypt, even to here in Australia. Four Coptic churches in Australia were listed among 64 worldwide as al-Qaeda targets.

Despite Egypt having seen the worst—the slaughter and merciless killing of men, women and children at prayer—Pope Shenouda III choose to see and bring forth the best in his people. In his desire to unify his Egypt, his nation and his Coptic community, Shenouda III made an unprecedented move, joining with the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and the generals of the ruling military, amongst others, for the Orthodox Christmas services in January at the cathedral that had been so savagely attacked by the forces of hatred. His words at the service were indicative of the way that His Holiness lived his life. This is what he said:
For the first time in the history of the cathedral, it is packed with all types of Islamist leaders in Egypt," Shenouda told the gathering. They all agree … on the stability of this country and on loving it, working for it and working with the Copts as one hand for Egypt's sake.

He believed that the path ahead was not division and more bloodshed. He believed that the future of the nation should be sown with Egyptians facing internal struggles together. Our Prime Minister said yesterday:

The Australian government has reminded the Egyptian government of Egypt's own traditions of religious tolerance and we welcome the Egyptian government's stated commitment to maintaining their history of religious tolerance and inclusion.

This parliament has many times, not just in this condolence motion, shown its affirmation of those principles. We, like other Western countries, will be keeping a very keen eye on events in Egypt. So while Egypt negotiates around the precipice of division, which has been opened by these terrible acts of the jihadists, and is faced with the rising elements there—even while Egypt tries to emerge towards democracy—one can hope and pray that Pope Shenouda III's legacy of peace and accord remains at the forefront of Egypt's national psyche and its future. I particularly pay my condolences to His Grace Bishop Suriel, the Coptic Bishop of Melbourne, and to the various Coptic ministers who I have worked with very strongly over the last year and a half to show the wider Australian community's support for the Copts in Egypt. I particularly also mention my friends Peter and Lydia Khalil and their families, who are members of the Coptic community and who are in need of condolence over the death of Pope Shenouda III at 88, after 40 years of service to the Coptic Church.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (19:23): I rise with great sorrow to express my deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the Coptic people in this time of sadness, for the loss of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of the See of St Mark and the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. I rise on this day of His Holiness's funeral and I do so with the most heavy of hearts. 17 March 2012 will mark a date when the world lost an inspirational figure and those of the Coptic faith lost their internationally respected and long-serving spiritual leader, Pope Shenouda III. Over his four-decade reign, Pope Shenouda faced challenges of ongoing persecutions against the followers of his faith, particularly in the latter half of his time leading the Coptic Church of Alexandria, when violence against his people escalated, particularly since the recent Egyptian revolution. Against the backdrop of violence toward his people, the pope had been a bulwark of strength and determination. He provided an inspirational symbol of hope and tolerance at a time when it was most needed.

His elevation in 1971 made Pope Shenouda III the 117th Coptic pope in a continuous line since St Mark the Apostle. He was a widely respected figure who dedicated himself to all his people. In a part of the globe routinely marked by division and hostility his leadership stood above others in the region and he is respected for leading a dialogue based on the promotion of harmony and peace across religious divides in a country often ravaged by the same divisions as its neighbours. Indeed, President Barack Obama has put it this way:

His commitment to Egypt's national unity is also a testament to what can be accomplished when people of all religions and creeds work together.

Pope Shenouda was widely respected on all sides for his strident efforts to maintain peace and to make peace where necessary. His values of harmony through negotiation and cooperation...
meant his standing was widespread, both among the Egyptian military and the Islamic majority.

Here are just a few examples of his leadership in peace. During his reign Pope Shenouda had quarrelled bitterly at times with the previous Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat. He complained about growing Islamic radicalisation and how he saw Anwar Sadat's insufficient action on those issues. Sadat took the step of actually deposing the pope and forcing him into internal exile in a remote Coptic monastery, St Bishoy, in the desert between Cairo and Alexandria. On 2 January 1995 the new President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, reversed his predecessor's decree and Pope Shenouda came back to Cairo to celebrate the Orthodox Christmas on 7 January of that year. When he went to the pulpit to give his much awaited sermon after the exile imposed upon him he spoke how the Copts were one part of the Egyptian nation. He was explicit about maintaining good relations with the Muslims. He said: All Copts open their hearts to their brothers, the Muslims. We feel they are our flesh and our blood in this beloved nation.

In another example, following the recent bombing of 1 January when 21 Coptic Christians were killed in Alexandria and the Coptic community took to the streets of Cairo protesting, again it was Pope Shenouda who was the symbol of peace and stability. He said: I plead with our sons to calm down. There are many demands, but this is not the way to ask for them.

In the year 2000 he was a well-deserving recipient of the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for the promotion of tolerance and non-violence. But among his people he was so much more. For the Coptic people Pope Shenouda was a father to all. Many struggle to remember a time when he was not a comforting figure looking out for them in the recent hostile times. Under the reign of Pope Shenouda the Coptic Church has expanded its reach, providing support for the Coptic Diaspora in all corners of the world, including the USA, the UK, Canada, France and other European nations, as well as here in Australia. In Australia Pope Shenouda ordained the first Coptic bishops for Australia, His Grace Bishop Suriel of the Diocese of Melbourne and affiliated regions in 1999 and His Grace Bishop Daniel of the Diocese of Sydney and affiliated regions in 2002.

Also during this time three Coptic schools were established in Australia. The electorate of Hughes, which I represent, is blessed to have St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College firmly rooted as an important part of our community. It is located in Wattle Grove. His Holiness Pope Shenouda last visited our shores in 2002, and he visited St Mark's in my seat of Hughes. Many in my electorates still remember his visit with such fond memories. They recall the care and interest His Holiness showed to each and every one of those who came before him. They recall the wisdom that he spoke and the love he had for everyone, both within and outside of his faith.

It has been said that Pope Shenouda was a man of great humour. Monika Mikhail from the Australian Coptic Movement put it eloquently when she described His Holiness as 'a beautiful soul, a man who loved to laugh; there will never be another Pope Shenouda III.' Pope Shenouda was truly a man of peace. No one who came into his presence could claim not to be moved by his words and deeds. But these personal experiences are not unique. Pope Shenouda was a guiding force for his people—a respected and wise leader who served as Shepherd, in all senses of the word. He was a protector, he was a carer, he was a senior role model with no equal; he was a great man of the modern age.
He delivered the strongest leadership in a time where his people have faced the toughest challenges in their history. His passing has been marked by extreme sorrow among his followers. Tens of thousands of mourners converged on St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo last Sunday our time, lining up for the opportunity to bid farewell to the man they have revered, as their Pope and spiritual guide, for more than 40 years. The world has lost a man of immense wisdom, character and spirit. As the people who inhabit the globe, we are less for him no longer being with us.

Within the hour, the funeral for the Pope will be held at St Bishoy monastery in the Nile Delta, where he spent his years in exile under the then reign of President Sadat. When eight o'clock comes around, I along with my friends in the Australian Coptic community will stop to reflect on this great man's life and feel at once both saddened and joyful for what His Holiness achieved and for what he has given the world in his extraordinary life. Thrice blessed His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (19:31): I rise to extend my condolences to Egyptian Coptics the world over and, in particular, in my electorate of Grayndler for the passing of their spiritual leader and the 117th Pope of Alexandria, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Born in 1923, and the youngest of eight children, Pope Shenouda graduated from Cairo University with a degree in history and taught high school English and social studies before graduating from the Coptic Theological Seminary in 1949. Pope Shenouda was appointed to the bishopric of Christian education and as Dean of the Coptic Orthodox Theological Summary in 1962 and, after seven years of his leadership, the number of students at the seminary had increased tenfold.

His Holiness was suspended from the church between 1966 and 1969 for his radical 'campaigns for change', which among other things called for the popular election of bishops and priests. In 1973, His Holiness was the first Coptic Orthodox pope to sit down with the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church in 1,500 years. Both men agreed they would encourage greater Christian unity between their faiths.

Pope Shenouda was passionate about social justice and equality, especially the need for peace in the Middle East and justice for the Palestinian people. After the cessation for several centuries, Pope Shenouda also reinstated the ordination of deaconesses and brought women into theological colleges and communal church councils. His Holiness devoted himself to bringing the people of Egypt together, no matter what their faith. In 2001, he said:

*Love generates love, and separation generates separation.*

His Holiness inspired the growth of churches outside Egypt, from seven in 1971 to more than 150 today. Indeed, the first Coptic church in Australia was established in my electorate of Grayndler—St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church in Railway Road, Sydenham. He also empowered Coptic youth around the world and drew them into the church, declaring that 'a Church without youth is a Church without a future'. Indeed, His Holiness was vital in setting up three Coptic Orthodox schools in Sydney. He was a scholar and a philosopher, authoring more than 100 books in his time as Pope of Alexandria on spirituality and theology. I like the words of Father Antonios Kaldas of the Archangel Michael and St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney. Let me quote:

*The real Church is not made up of buildings and institutions. Those things are just tools we use to build the real Church, which is made up of the hearts and lives of every member of the Church. Where there*
is love, where there is truth, where there is wisdom, and nobility, integrity and honour, kindness and compassion—that is the real church. These are not things that you can put numbers to get yet they are the things that really matter. They are the things that Pope Shenouda has a very special way of nurturing and inspiring in others.

I certainly had the great honour of meeting Pope Shenouda on his sixth papal visit to Australia in November 2002. Prior to that I had travelled to Egypt. Included on that delegation were two Marrickville councillors, Morris Hanna, now the Mayor of Marrickville, and Morris Tadros, as part of the delegation from my local community to Egypt. There we met many Coptic Orthodox leaders and engaged in a dialogue that was extremely positive.

Pope Shenouda was indeed a special man, a man who led from the heart, promoting peace and understanding between Egyptians the world over. I offer my sincere condolences to the Coptic Orthodox community in this time of mourning and sadness.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (19:36): I rise also to extend my condolences to the Coptic community and to add my comments to this condolence motion noting the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I wish to pay my respects on the passing of this spiritual leader, a man who was admired and respected by many. This long-time leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church sadly passed away on Saturday, 17 March at the age of 88. According to the records, he was the 117th patriarch of Alexandria. He ruled for over 41 years, presiding over a worldwide expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

He was born Nazeer Gayed on 3 August 1923 in Egypt, the youngest of eight children. Commentators say that by the age of 16 he was extremely active in his church, serving as a Sunday school teacher and attending classes at the Coptic theological seminary. By 1954 Gayed became a monk, taking the name Father el-Syriani, Anthony the Syrian, and dedicating his life to meditation and prayer. In 1971 he was elected to the papacy and took the name Shenouda. There are many reports indicating that during his leadership Pope Shenouda III was well known for his deep commitment to Christian community. Indeed, this was demonstrated in 1973 when he became the first Coptic Orthodox pope of Alexandria to meet the pope of Rome in over 1,500 years. Many news reports over the weekend claimed that he was known to his followers as 'Baba Shenouda' and they admired him for his charismatic leadership and sense of humour, so much so that many Copts apparently paid special tribute to him by hanging his portrait in their homes and businesses. According to many, they saw him as a protector of their community.

Accompanied by an entourage of 10 bishops, Pope Shenouda first visited Australia in late 1989. His Holiness met with the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, the premiers of New South Wales and Victoria and senior government and civic leaders. In June 2002 Pope Shenouda ordained his grace Bishop Daniel for the diocese of Sydney, which included New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory is home to a large multicultural community and, according to census information, includes a large number of Copts.

Since his passing there are a number of media outlets reporting that many describe Pope Shenouda as a national figure and a symbol of Egyptian nationalism, who earned great respect from the Egyptian people. His passing is a great loss to the worldwide Coptic community and in particular those who have lost their patriarch in the Northern Territory. I extend my condolences to the Copts around the world mourning his loss.
Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (19:39): I join other colleagues in paying my respects to Pope Shenouda III, who died on 17 March 2012. I did not personally know Pope Shenouda, but I knew of him. He was a person befitting the tributes that have flowed from around the world in acknowledgement of his passing and, more importantly, in acknowledgement of his life of fostering goodwill, understanding and harmony between people of all nations. From the time that he became the 117th Pope of Alexandria on 14 November 1971, he presided over a worldwide expansion of the Coptic church, with hundreds of new parishes being established in over 70 countries.

His death, however, comes at a critical time for Coptic Christians in Egypt, who in recent times have been the target of attacks resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. This House debated a motion about the persecution of Coptic Christians last October and in my contribution to that debate I spoke about some of the ongoing violence that has been occurring in Egypt. Subsequently I attended a church service with Adelaide's Coptic Christians at St Mary and Anba Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church in Adelaide, in the federal electorate of Hindmarsh, where I heard further accounts of the violence and persecution being committed against Coptic Christians in Egypt.

Persecution of Christians continues in many parts of the world today, as has been the case since the birth of Jesus Christ. Wherever Christianity poses a threat to religious extremism, injustice, discrimination or political tyranny, Christians have been persecuted and killed. Over the centuries, many Christians have died because of their beliefs. It is my view that the greatest world leaders have been men and women who have endured their own struggles in life, because from struggles come wisdom and strength of mind. Great leaders are also men and women of peace. Pope Shenouda III was clearly such a person, living as a hermit from 1956 to 1962 and later being arrested and sent into exile in the Nitrian Desert by President Anwar Sadat. He was released some three years after President Sadat's death by President Hosni Mubarak. He led his church for 41 years, standing up against injustice wherever he saw it and taking a political stand that was driven by his Christian faith.

The Coptic church in Egypt has indeed a long history, but Coptic Christians are today a minority group representing about 10 per cent of the population. Coptic Christians continue to be victimised by Islamic extremists, yet Pope Shenouda was a strong believer in coexistence. He promoted understanding between Christianity and Islam, but he also forged strong links between Coptic Christians and other Christians in the world, meeting with Pope Paul VI in Rome in 1973 and signing a Joint Declaration of Faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Coptic Christians around the world have lost a great leader. The world has lost a great statesman. His life will be remembered with affection and respect by all who knew him. The many tributes to his life and the tens of thousands of people around the world who today mourn his death are testimony to the esteem in which he was held. To Coptic Christians around the world I extend my respects and my sympathy at the loss of Pope Shenouda III.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (19:43): I also rise tonight to pay tribute to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and obviously to express my sincere regret at his passing and convey my condolences to the Coptic community—in particular here in Australia but all over the world. His Holiness passed away on 17 March. He was the patriarch of one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. He was the spiritual leader of the Coptic Orthodox
Church of Alexandria for four decades and he served in religious life for 60 years. He was much loved as a leader and as the head of his church. He was highly regarded for his work in re-energising the Coptic community across the world, and he was a strong advocate for peace. That strong commitment to peace saw him advocate never giving into sectarianism and he sought peace even in the most difficult of circumstances. He advocated unification in Egypt.

I had the privilege of meeting Pope Shenouda in 1993 on one of his many visits here to Australia. The Coptic church in Oakley was then in my electorate and together we opened the Coptic Village Hostel in Hallam. It was a partnership between the Commonwealth and the Coptic community and it was a recognition of that reaching out and that service delivery and that social dimension that he so strongly advocated. It was a joyous day and he was a wonderful person, a very friendly person, a very warm person, and clearly his flock followed him and loved him.

What struck me also about the Pope was his commitment to leading diaspora communities including Copts in Australia. He travelled widely and he in fact grew that diaspora significantly. I think under his reign from a handful of Coptic churches outside of Egypt, he grew it to over 150 and, as the previous speaker has indicated, in over 70 countries around the world. The Coptic community here in Australia has a rich cultural heritage which they have proudly carried forward.

I also recall his commitment to driving reform of the education system, both secular and religious. Under his leadership a number of Coptic educational institutions including schools and theological colleges were opened here in Australia. We have heard here in the chamber today that the Coptic community has lost a great leader and the Prime Minister in her words yesterday said, 'Like his flock, Pope Shenouda was an Egyptian patriot as well as a devout Christian. In his life, his claim for equal treatment of his flock was no more than the assertion of the rights that all Egyptians should experience.'

Here in Australia the Coptic leader, His Grace Bishop Suriel, said, 'He left his mark on the church and people. He got on well with Muslims, he was a great ascetic and a scholar. He wrote more than 120 books and some very beautiful poetry in Arabic.' His was a difficult life prior to taking up the leadership of church. He was as an ascetic a hermit, then he was imprisoned and then he led the church.

Here in Australia today Coptic Christians look to events in Egypt with anxiety. I think it is incumbent on all of us, in memory of his values and to his legacy, that the Australian community as friends of the Copts work with Egypt for peace. In the way in which he sought it, we too must seek it. We encourage a peaceful mourning process and hope that Pope Shenouda's legacy of peace continues. Again I offer my condolences to the Coptic community in Australia at this very sad time.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (19:48): I rise to offer my condolences to the Coptic community on the death of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on 17 March 2012. The 2006 census revealed that almost 20,000 people identify as members of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia: 12,864 are in NSW and of those at that time 1,061 were living in my electorate in the seat of Banks. The adjoining electorate of Barton had the second largest number with the largest being in that electorate of Chifley. The numbers were very much concentrated in those three electorates. I particularly offer my condolences to the Coptic community in the seat of Banks.
and especially to Reverend Father Moussa Soliman, the Pastor of St Abraams Church in Peakhurst, and his congregation.

The late Pope Shenouda visited Australia on six occasions. The first visit was in 1989 when he met with the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke. He is credited with the growth of the Coptic Church in Australia and New Zealand. In 1999 the church saw the enthronement of the first bishop in Melbourne, His Grace Bishop Suriel.

In Australia there are 42 churches, two theological colleges, five primary and secondary schools, three monasteries and a hostel for the elderly. They will all be grieving. Religious organisations in migrant communities are very different from those in other communities. My background is that of a Maronite. There is a very, very strong emotional attachment in those communities to their religious leaders. The sorrow and the grieving within the Coptic community would be enormous at this point in time. Just as people look to their politicians to provide worldly support, it is their religious leaders they look to for spiritual support. In terms of a lot of the suffering that people have on this earth, they are strengthened by the spiritual reward in heaven as they know it.

The bond that I have witnessed in the Coptic community is very strong. At times such as the uprising in Egypt, where the Copts see themselves—and they are—being singled out unfairly because the practice of their religion, religious leaders play a very important role in their attempts to soothe and console the communities. That is why the death of His Holiness would be felt very heavily within the Coptic community. We need, in some respects, to walk in their shoes because the burden in their shoes is much greater than the burden that we sometimes feel.

I want to associate myself with the remarks of all who have spoken on this condolence motion, on both sides of the House. This is a time when we all come together, when there are no politics being played, particularly in recognition of the religious contribution to the stability of these communities and the healing that occasionally needs to happen. All sides recognise that; all sides have experienced it.

To be honest with you, those of us with a bit of migrant blood in us, a migrant background, have a level of empathy—no disrespect to others. You need to have been there and experienced it in that particular way. I have seen the grieving in the Maronite community when a death occurs. I have had the grieving in my own family. Those outside the particular communities sometimes do not quite get how much a death can affect you, even if it is not a relative's death. A spiritual leader is something even more than a relative in those communities because of the spiritual link and what is given to those communities by their spiritual leader in terms of leadership and, indeed, when a death occurs within those communities, how the spiritual leader sensitively deals with the families. So they are regarded in each and every household in those communities as part and parcel of the family itself. They are a valued component of the individual family. I do grieve with them. I recognise that I can never grieve in this instance at the depth of their grief. I commend my colleagues for their thoughts and associate myself with everything that has been said to today.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (19:55): On behalf of the people of Fremantle, I too would like to offer my condolences to the Coptic community in Australia, in Egypt and elsewhere around the world on the death of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I want to thank all of my
colleagues on all sides who have spoken on this condolence motion and to echo the words of the Prime Minister, who said:

We know the eight million Coptic Christians in Egypt—and millions more worldwide—have lost their patriarch in a most difficult time in their history.

I also know the Australian Coptic community looks to events in Egypt with great anxiety for their fellow faithful and the holy places.

I want them to know today that the Copts of Egypt are not without friends in the world, or in Australia.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (19:56): Tonight I rise on this condolence motion in honour of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to express my deepest sympathy on the untimely death of this great spiritual man, who sadly passed away on Saturday, 17 March 2012. I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences to all Coptic people here in Australia and abroad, to Christians and Muslims alike, and to those who knew and admired His Holiness. My sympathies and condolences also go out to the local Coptic parish community in my electorate and Father Philippos Boghdadi, who is the local parish Coptic Orthodox priest at St Mary and Anba Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church in Goldfinch Avenue, Cowandilla, in my electorate. Similarly, my sincere condolences extend to His Grace Bishop Suriel, who is the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand.

Pope Shenouda certainly achieved many great things during his lifetime. Throughout his term as the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church he was a widely respected spiritual leader and he will be sadly missed. His Holiness was born Nazeer Gayed on 3 August 1923 to a very pious Coptic Christian family in Egypt. By the age of 15 he was actively engaged in his church community and his Sunday school movement. Thereafter he sought to enrich the Christian teachings in the Coptic Orthodox Church. His Holiness was named Coptic Pope of Alexandria on 14 November 1971 and was subsequently consecrated as His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the 117th pope of Alexandria and patriarch of the See of St Mark.

As many of you would be aware, Coptic Orthodox churches across the world have close associations with communities here in Australia and abroad, and Orthodox Christians the world over equally share meaningful, special bonds with their Coptic fellow brethren. Although the Copts make up an estimated 10 per cent of Egypt's current population of 85 million, Coptic Christians have existed in Egypt since the early Byzantine period. In fact, St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, one of the most famous and oldest Christian landmarks in the world, dates back to the 6th century. This monastery has been a prolific source and centre of Christian teachings since the Byzantine era and empire.

I not only trust the memory of the dearly departed Pope Shenouda III will be held in the highest esteem amongst all his followers but also hope that his legacy, his former presence in Egypt and his many peaceful works in the Middle East will collectively serve to remind us of peaceful aspirations towards renewed bonds between the varying faiths and vast religious denominations that exist in the world today. Pope Shenouda III was many things to many people but mostly known as a distinguished, prominent religious leader, a profound theologian and a talented author who wrote many, many books. His Holiness was indeed a man of God his entire life and will be sadly missed by a great multitude of people throughout the world, including the Coptic community here in Australia and in my electorate. I have no doubt that that is the case. Our heartfelt sympathies go to all the Egyptian Coptic communities here in Australia and across the world.
Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:59): I join with my colleagues in the Federation Chamber in offering my condolences on the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the much loved spiritual leader of the world's Coptic Christians and a fierce defender and brave advocate of the rights of Christians in his homeland of Egypt and in the wider Middle East. Pope Shenouda was a holy man, a man who stood tall in adversity. He was courageous and loving but above all a humble man, much loved by Copts around the world and especially here in Australia.

I extend my sincere condolences to His Grace Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne. My condolences also go to the broader Coptic community, especially to my friends and constituents in my electorate of Calwell, whom I have come to know and respect very much through my work in the electorate. Calwell is home to St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College. On my many visits to the school I have come to appreciate the Coptic community's dedication to education. This is a highly educated community that places a high value on learning and self-betterment. It is also a deeply devout community, whose Coptic Christian faith lies at the heart of its identity. I know how important the spiritual nurturing of the students at St Mary's is. It is a nurturing that is guided by the commitment and love of Father Tadros and the staff at St Mary's Coptic school. I extend my condolences to them. I know that the students of St Mary's will be mourning their beloved Pope, because His Holiness had a deep affection for children and as a learned man himself invested very strongly in education.

Deep faith is a significant part of the Coptic identity, and nowhere is this more evident than in the surrounds of the Melbourne Coptic Orthodox monastery in Donvale, purchased for the Coptic Diocese by the community under the leadership of Bishop Suriel. It is a very beautiful building and is a wonderful place for parishioners and visitors alike. I speak about the monastery because it has indeed become a symbol of Coptic faith and a safe refuge for Coptic Australians, who well appreciate the freedoms they enjoy in this country—their new home Australia. They enjoy the freedom to express their identity and pursue their faith without fear or persecution.

The same, however, cannot be said about their Coptic brothers and sisters living in Egypt, whom they have never forgotten or abandoned, especially in their hour of need—and there have been many hours of need in the history of Egypt's Copts, most recently the persecution that occurred in the lead-up to and aftermath of the Egyptian uprising that began about a year ago. The House has heard on a number of occasions about the indiscriminate killings of innocent Copts, the burning of churches and the slaying of Coptic priests. In fact, it was just last year that I attended a prayer vigil in Federation Square to protest against the killings that had taken place during the Egyptian uprising. The vigil was attended by dozens of community leaders and hundreds of people, including a broad coalition of Christian churches, who stood together with Bishop Suriel in support of Coptic Christians. This unity of Christian churches was something Pope Shenouda championed and affirmed and was recognised by Roman Catholic Pope Benedict, who recalled with gratitude Pope Shenouda's commitment to Christian unity.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda was never far from his flock, and the Coptic community in faraway Australia drew strength and inspiration from his leadership, especially his leadership on the defence of human rights. He himself spent a period of time in jail in the course of
advocating and defending the human rights of his people. Pope Shenouda first visited Australia in November 1989. His Holiness met with the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke, with premiers of New South Wales and Victoria and with senior government and civic leaders.

It was during one of his subsequent visits to Australia that I had the privilege of meeting him. In fact, I had just become the member for Calwell and was invited to attend one of the welcoming events put on for him by the Coptic community in Melbourne. I had never seen such a devout and dedicated community. The affection they had for Pope Shenouda was indeed palpable, such was his charisma and, at the same time, his humility. Pope Shenouda's spiritual contribution to his flock was highly regarded and respected. His life's achievements are a reflection of the enormous contribution the Coptic community has made to Australia.

The Coptics are an established and educated community, who never cease to give back to the country they now call home. Pope Shenouda was a man larger than life with deeply held convictions. He died on 17 March 2012 of lung and liver complications, at the age of 88. During the night of his death an estimated 10,000 mourners were said to have visited his body at St Mark's Cathedral. The international reaction to the Pope's passing came from all parts of the globe.

I would like to finish by quoting President Barack Obama, who, immediately after the announcement of the death of Pope Shenouda said:

We will remember Pope Shenouda III as a man of deep faith, a leader of a great faith, and an advocate for unity and reconciliation.

He further said that Pope Shenouda was:

… a beloved leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for tolerance and religious dialogue.

My sympathies to the Coptic community and in particular to the Coptic community of Australia.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (20:06): I join with many other members in recognising the death of Pope Shenouda III, the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, and also the daughter churches in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the estimated two to four million Copts around the world, including the 100,000 in Australia. My own electorate and the nearby Macarthur electorate have the parishes of Long Point, Campbelltown and Liverpool.

My father had a saying that people who never make any decisions never make any mistakes. That was perhaps applicable of Pope Shenouda. He has been criticised at various stages for perhaps being too close to the Egyptian authorities, in the case of Mubarak particularly—and welcoming his son as a possible presidential candidate—and for trying to make sure that the Copts were not involved in the early demonstrations in Tahrir Square et cetera. He has also been criticised by diasporas of Copts around the world because he did not support foreign intervention in the affairs of Egypt in support of the Christian minority. I always think on these matters that it is very easy for various ethnic diasporas in Australia to be very radical about events in their homeland when the people who get the bullets in the head are actually there rather than here in Australia.

He has been criticised on occasion for his role but one must say that it is a very difficult situation when Christians are discriminated against by Article II, which says that there is pre-
eminence for Islamic law; where there have been restrictions on the construction of their churches; and where there have on occasions been state connected attacks on them and the police and other authorities have not been protective of them. He had to tread a very difficult road. We are talking about a minority of approximately 10 per cent—estimates vary from eight to 12 million. He also very strongly supported the rights of the Palestinian people, refusing to accompany Sadat to Jerusalem.

I met him on one occasion, during his visit to Australia. The point made about him by previous speakers is that he was a very practical person who could be persuaded by arguments. He was lobbied about a church that was being blocked in Guildford, in the Parramatta municipality. He was worded up by the local Copts about how dreadful it was with the discrimination against them. I was able to persuade him that when a council votes 20-0—Liberals, Independents and Labor—against the application there might be something wrong with the development application. He actually appreciated that argument.

During the visit in 2002 he separated the new Diocese of Sydney and consecrated Bishop Daniel to undertake that. I will repeat part of the quote of Barack Obama given by the previous speaker by saying that he was ‘an advocate for unity and reconciliation’. That reiterates the point made by the Reverend Olav Fykse Tveit of the World Council of Churches, who said:

He was a strong believer in Christian-Muslim co-existence.

We in Australia appreciate the very strong presence of the Coptic community. They have essentially come here on two main grounds: refugee-humanitarian, which is a recognition of their suppression and continuing struggles in Egypt; and there is a very high proportion of skilled migrants. That is a characteristic of many communities that are suppressed, whether it is Tamils, the Palestinians or a variety of other groups. They see education and professional careers as their only way out of these kinds of conditions.

We, of course, mourn with the communities, recognising his historic role from 1971. In that period, he spent three years in isolation when Sadat stripped him of his powers of leadership of his community. He was also very critical of the trend in Egypt, where Sadat in particular decided to defeat the left and the unions and the progressive liberals; he had actually appealed to the fundamentalists. That created part of the problem in Egypt, with the government relying on fundamentalists to suppress the political left.

I want to join with the very strong community in this country, predominantly in Sydney—about seven-tenths of them; it is a community contributing very strongly to our country in regard to many of our professions—in recognising his historic role and the symbol he has been for significant numbers of people outside Egypt as well as those within.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (20:11): I would like to join with other members of this place in expressing my condolences to the Australian Coptic Orthodox community on the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria. Pope Shenouda had served as Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria since 14 November 1971, an exceptional period of time, presiding over a worldwide expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church. During his papacy, he appointed the first ever bishops to preside over the North American archdiocese—which now contains over 200 parishes in the United States, 23 in Canada and one in Mexico—as well as the first bishops in Australia and the first bishops in South America. In my own community, which I am proud to represent, within Mount Druitt there is
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a large and vibrant Coptic community who would be feeling this loss exceptionally deeply. The parishioners of Great Archangel Michael and the Perfect St Bishoy in Mount Druitt will remember fondly the many visits to their church by His Holiness. In fact, their beautiful church was consecrated by Pope Shenouda in November of 1989. He returned two years later to ordain the present parish priest, Father Antonios Kaldas.

Pope Shenouda's 40-year papacy achieved a great deal for the Coptic Orthodox Church. It was just as significant in building relationships with other faiths. He was a conservative figure within the church and was also respected within the Muslim community, who represent the largest faith group in Egypt. He maintained very good relations with Muslim leaders in Egypt and attended many Muslim summits, where he gave speeches. He was well versed in the Koran, often quoted from it when meeting with Muslims. Pope Shenouda was also known for his commitment to ecumenism and had long advocated interdenominational Christian dialogue. He devoted his writings, teachings and actions to spreading and propagating the rules of understanding, peace, dialogue and forgiveness. He was very much a nationalist and volunteered to serve in the Egyptian Army before his ordination. He openly argued with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, who later exiled him. Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, provided Pope Shenouda with an amnesty, allowing him to return.

Sadly, as the Arab Spring gripped Egypt last year, his church and the flock he devoted 60 years to became the target for unjustifiable hate crimes, which I have spoken about in this place on a number of occasions. Members will no doubt remember the outrageous suicide bombing of an Egyptian church in January last year, as Orthodox Christians celebrated the new year. The attack on the Church of the Two Saints claimed 21 innocent lives. It was completely and utterly unacceptable that people, as they were celebrating their faith, were subjected to that violence. His presence among his people throughout this difficult time would have been comforting to his large church, not just in Egypt but throughout the world. His long and distinguished papacy represented stability and continuity for a church under threat. His passing will be deeply felt throughout the Christian world, but nowhere more than in his homeland of Egypt. To Copts everywhere and particularly those that I am proud to represent within the Chifley electorate, I offer my heartfelt condolences at his passing.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE
Stynes, Mr Jim

Debate resumed.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (20:15): Today we mourn the passing of a very special Australian, a man who has left an indelible mark on our lives—Jim Stynes. Taken by cancer at just 45 years of age, Jim will be fondly remembered not just as a champion footballer but as a champion human being. He was the winner of the Brownlow Medal in 1991, an All Australian, a multiple best and fairest award winner and a member of the Melbourne Football Club's team of the century.

Who would have thought that in 1984, when he responded to a local ad in an Irish newspaper looking for Gaelic players as potential AFL recruits, that such a career would come about, that he would become the Victorian of the Year three times, that he would be
inducted into the Order of Australia and that his name would become synonymous with helping others.

I met Jim last year at a Reach Foundation breakfast, where I attended as a guest of board member and friend, Bill Ranken, and which hundreds of people attended. At that time Jim was clearly battling hard against the illness, but he seemed both positive and determined. We always knew that Jim Stynes had a special zest for life. As the co-founder of Reach with his mate Paul Currie, Jim Stynes has been responsible for preventative programs that have helped over 60,000 Australians aged between 10 and 18 years of age build their self-confidence, develop resilience and emotional awareness and promote general wellbeing. This is Jim Stynes's real legacy: the hundreds and indeed thousands of lives he has left better off.

To Jim's wife, Sam, and their children, Tiernan and Matisse, I say the country's thoughts go out to you at this very difficult time. Your husband and father was a brave and dignified man who won the nation's heart, and his departure now breaks the nation's heart. We mourn Jim Stynes and we will always remember him as the champion he was.

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide—Minister for Employment Participation and Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare) (20:18): I rise to also add my remarks on the passing of Jim Stynes today and to state to the House that it was with so much sadness as well as shock that I heard the news this morning. It was with sadness because today was the day that Australia lost a true champion both on and off the field, someone whose contributions will continue to be felt for many years to come. But I have to admit I was also a little bit shocked when I heard the news, which is in some ways ridiculous, because we had all heard the diagnosis; we all knew the situation that Jim Stynes was facing. But there was the fact that anyone who has seen how inspiring Jim has been throughout this struggle, anyone who has seen just how strong a man he was in so many ways, could be forgiven for thinking that if there was anyone who was going to come out by pulling out an absolute miracle, then Jim Stynes it would have been. Yet of course, here we are today marking his passing.

I would like to take the opportunity on behalf of not just myself but also the fine folk of the electorate of Adelaide to extend my condolences. As you would know, we are not known for being Melbourne supporters but we are known for being AFL tragics. There is no question that Jim Stynes was an absolute giant of the game. We know that he won the Brownlow Medal in 1991 and that he holds the AFL record for the most consecutive games played—244 games without missing a beat. His contribution to the game has been great in so many ways including post retirement when he became the club president of Melbourne in 2007 and publicly stated that his goal was to boost membership, to attract young people to the club and to ensure that it stayed strong for many years to come.

He was an absolute champion of Australian Rules Football but, in speaking on this condolence motion, I think it is necessary to focus on the achievements of Jim Stynes off the field as well as on. If one fact illustrates how impressive a man he was then perhaps it is that he was not once, but twice, named Victorian of the Year in both 2001 and 2003. Further, in 2007, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work with youth and for his contribution to Australian football.

I consider myself very lucky because I had the chance to meet and briefly work with Jim Stynes in my capacity as sports minister when I would see him at many different sporting events. Jim always met people with a smile and always had a relaxed and fun-loving nature. I
also met him through my time as youth minister when I had a chance to see, first hand, the truly amazing work of the Reach foundation. For those of us who may not be familiar with it, the Reach foundation state that they believe every young person should have the support and the self-belief that they need in order to fulfil their full potential. They help young people get to this point through running school and community based programs designed to promote strength, mental health and resilience.

I had the opportunity to visit when Jim was there and see the work that they were doing with young people. One thing that really struck me about Jim that I would like to share with the House today is the fact that, as is so often the case when you are talking about true champions, they actually think that what they are doing is entirely normal and it comes completely natural to them. I had the chance to see a room full of kids who many people would have looked at and said, 'These are severely troubled, at-risk kids, who have some pretty serious issues in their life.' A lot of people would have talked about the negatives of those kids, about the risks and the damage that they could do to our community. But I saw Jim Stynes sit down—as if the most natural thing in the world was to sit down—and have a face-to-face conversation about his life, his experiences and how he could relate to what these kids were going through. I got to see, first hand, the defences come down and people instantly felt comfortable around this true Australian champion who was taking the time to reach out and share some of his experiences with young Australians who needed it the most. That was a pretty special experience for me.

One of the things that I think is really important about the Reach foundation is that they know that it is about empowering young people. It is a program set up for young people but, importantly, they know that the most powerful way of doing that is by delivering it through young people. Rather than having Jim or a whole host of adults stand up and lecture or tell their stores, they empower young people to relate with other young people to help build a generation that is resilient, a generation that can discuss their experiences. With many of the things that they face today, which mine and other generations did not face in the same way, they sat down and talked about their experiences with bullying and with some of the hardships of life. The work of the Reach foundation and the work of Jim has done countless good for so many people in our society. I do note that Don McLardy the Reach foundation chairman said today:

Our job at Reach will be to continue the important work Jim started, to carry the values forward he believed in, and make sure we never lose sight of the Reach spirit that we all understand and believe in.

If that is true then that is a pretty impressive legacy, a legacy that this man is going to leave behind for tens of thousands of adoring football fans who will remember all of their favourite highlights, but also for tens of thousands of young Australians—and who knows how many more to come—who will be touched by the fact that he had the passion and he had the commitment for this particular course.

I also want to give my condolences to Jim's immediate family: to his wife, Samantha, and his two children—his daughter, Matisse, and his son, Tiernan. None of us can know what it is they are going through today, but some of us can relate to it. If I could pass one thing on, I would say to his two children: I had the experience of losing my father to cancer when he too was just 45. One thing I wish somebody could have assured me of at the time was that those
memories will never fade, that the pride you have in such a remarkable father will never ever go away and that the bonds will never be broken. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (20:26): It is with sadness in my heart that I stand here today to talk about the passing of the Demons legend Jim Stynes. He was a true Demon with an enormous heart that he used in both his football life and his after-football life to help those less fortunate than himself.

As a long-time premiership starved supporter of the Melbourne Football Club, it was players like Jim Stynes who kept the passion going for supporters like me going during the barren years of the club. The last premiership was in 1964. From the time of his arrival as a new, untried Irish recruit, through his playing days and then as the club chairman, it would be hard to find a man not Melbourne born and bred with such a commitment to the mighty Demons.

There are many who might say he was not always right as chairman, but you could never question his motives when it came to the club and its supporters. He was an inspiration as a player and then as a victim of cancer. His final fight was his biggest fight and the nation was behind the big smiling Irishman, as we all hoped he would win this battle. Who could forget the holiday snaps of Jim, his wife Sam and their two children last year when he took some time off to be with his family. The smile on his face and his family's faces would only have served to reinforce to everyone in this nation how important family are when we face our biggest hurdles in life.

Jim had his own family, and my deepest sympathy goes to Sam, Matisse and Tiernan. Jim also had the Melbourne Football Club—and most of Melbourne—as his extended family. I know people from all over this country who observed his battle with cancer and I know the enormous respect he garnered with his battle, and he inspired many more. On today's Channel 9 website of the *Wide World of Sport*, the following words were written about Jim:

Jim Stynes was only 45 when he died on Tuesday morning with wife Sam and children Matisse and Tiernan by his side, after a near three-year battle with brain cancer.

Don McLardy, who succeeded Stynes as president of AFL club Melbourne early this year, recounted an anecdote on Tuesday he felt best encapsulated a man universally admired and loved in AFL circles and beyond.

"He once told me that having cancer was a privilege," McLardy said.

"He said he had worked with many young people who had been in life-threatening situations, and he never really knew how they felt.

"He believed having cancer would help him understand what those young people were experiencing, and make him a much better person to help them.

"Cancer a privilege - it takes a special person to consider that."

It went on to say:

The Dublin-born Stynes packed plenty into an astonishing life that ended far too early. After creating one of the most remarkable stories in Australian sporting history, he became a renowned youth worker. Then he stepped up to become the figurehead of his beloved Melbourne football club's fightback from near-AFL oblivion, taking over as chairman in mid-2008, a year before being diagnosed with the illness. Stynes fought cancer the same way he played football - with admirable courage and a fierce determination, regardless of what was coming at him.

It also said:
The Demons liked him because he was athletic and he would stay behind after training to practise further with the oval ball. He came to Australia in late 1984 and after a tough apprenticeship, the ruckman made his senior debut in 1987. He came to Australia in late 1984 and after a tough apprenticeship, the ruckman made his senior debut in 1987.

But Stynes' lack of AFL experience cost him horribly at the end of the 1987 preliminary final, when he ran across the mark and gave away a crucial 15m penalty in the dying seconds. That put Hawthorn's Gary Buckenara within scoring range and he kicked the winning goal.

One of the most famous photos in AFL history shows a seething Melbourne coach John Northey in the changerooms post-match. Northey is clearly delivering some choice words to Stynes who is a blurred figure in the foreground of the photo, his head bowed.

A few weeks later, during a holiday in Europe, a stranger asked Stynes in France if he was the bloke who had run across the mark.

How Stynes reacted to that epic blunder was an early sign of his immense character. A year later, he played in Melbourne's losing grand final side.

In 1991, Stynes won the AFL's highest individual honour, the Brownlow Medal. He remains the only player brought up outside Australia to win the medal. By the time he won the Brownlow, Stynes was also well into his remarkable streak of 244 consecutive games, an AFL record. That nearly ended in 1993 when Stynes suffered a serious rib injury, which was supposed to put him out for several weeks.

After treatment, Stynes insisted he was available to play and so the Demons put him through a brutal fitness test that included several team-mates. Among them was Rod Grinter, then one of the game's most feared players. The session ended in blows, but Stynes played.

The streak eventually ended in 1998 and Stynes retired at the end of that season after 264 games. He equalled the club record for the most best and fairest awards with four, including three-straight from 1995-97.

Stynes was a two-time All-Australian who was named in Melbourne's team of the century. He played 10 games for Victoria and represented Australia and Ireland in International Rules.

The Jim Stynes Medal is awarded to the best Australian player in the International Rules series. Stynes was inducted into the AFL Hall Of Fame in 2003.

In 1994, he co-founded the Reach Foundation, an organisation that aims to help young people aged 10-18, regardless of their circumstances. Stynes was a self-confessed wild child and said sport was the only part of his youth that gave him a release. He was twice named Victorian of the year for his social work and was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2007.

In early July 2009, Jim and Sam Stynes fronted a packed media conference at the MCG to confirm rumours he had cancer. Stynes had a particularly nasty form of the disease and he was initially given only nine months to live. But he stayed on as Melbourne chairman until early 2012, with the club having endured a remarkable off-field turn-around under his stewardship.
Stynes used Twitter to give updates on his battle with the disease, but the extent of his fight was laid bare in September 2010.

Jules Lund, one of his best friends, helped produce a television documentary on Stynes. It showed Stynes going to the extremes of drinking his own urine and having coffee enemas to help combat the cancer.

Sam Stynes wrote on her Facebook page that her husband was “pain-free, dignified and peaceful” when he died on Tuesday morning with his family by his side.

"Not surprisingly, in his last week of life Jim continued to defy the odds and lived his life to the fullest attending the Melbourne vs. Hawthorn football match, his son Tiernan's 7th Birthday celebration, The MFC Blazer Ceremony and a casual Friday night dinner at Topolinos in his much loved suburb St Kilda,” she said.

"In his final days Jim was immersed with insurmountable love and tenderness surrounded by his family and some close friends in the comfort of his own home.

"On behalf of Jim my heartfelt thanks to all those who have so generously cared for, guided and supported Jim throughout his challenging cancer battle.”

There is a line that ends the Melbourne Football Club's song that says:

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
Keep your eye on the Red and the Blue.
I am sure Jim will be remembered.

In conclusion, to Jim Stynes, on behalf of myself and also my son Jarrad, who is now a rookie with Port Adelaide Football Club but was a Melbourne Football Club and Jim Stynes fan as a young boy, we salute you and all you have done for your family, for your football club and its supporters, for youth through the Reach foundation and for Australia. May you rest in peace.

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (20:34): I follow on from the member for Swan by offering my sincere condolences to the family of Jim Stynes and reflecting on the fact that in the parliament today we have a motion of condolence which appropriately recognises the contribution he made not only as a sportsman but also as someone who made a significant contribution to community.

I count myself as one of those lucky people who got to know Jim over his time not only as a footballer but also as an activist in the area of youth. As the minister for youth I want to pay special tribute to the work that Jim did with the Reach foundation which he co-founded with Paul Currie many years ago. In the House as politicians we understand well that a public life of prominence is one thing and to achieve some high level of recognition because you are good at sport and have great sporting qualities is something of acknowledgment. But it is another thing altogether when someone goes that extra mile and contributes back into the community in a meaningful, genuine and a sincere way. The fact is that Jim was a man of great compassion and great heart. He had particular compassion for young Australians who were struggling either because of disadvantage or because of a difficult period in their lives and he determined that, with the Reach foundation, he would do something for them. I think that was a tremendous contribution that he made.

The other thing that I want to remark on is that you can often tell the quality of somebody in the way that they die. When he was first diagnosed with his illness not only did Jim bear it
with a remarkable equanimity and goodwill but he in no way allowed it to stop his contribution to the Melbourne Football Club, which for him was one of the most important institutions in his life and his achievements there were great. He won a Brownlow Medal and a number of Best and Fairest. Then he took the role of president to provide the necessary inspiration, leadership and integrity to that position in a period of Melbourne Football Club's history which was challenging to say the least.

In person he was a funny, humble guy who always thought about others. He was modest although confident in his abilities as he should have been because he was a great sportsman, but he was always mindful and concerned for the other. His life is a great exemplar to young footballers because of the way he played the game and the way he served his club and to Australians generally because of the contribution that he made. I do not think there will be any doubt that he will be sorely missed and he is remembered well. It is entirely appropriate for the parliament to acknowledge the contribution that Jim Stynes made.

It is extraordinary for us to think in this country about the contribution that people who come from other places make. The Irish did not play much of a game of football—if you can call it that at all, I think it is stretching it—but I will leave that go. I can hear comments from colleagues around this Federation Chamber, but the fact is that when he came onto the field in Australia to play a great code, Australian Football, he distinguished himself as a great and competitive sportsman.

Jim has received many appropriate honours during the course of his life, but in conclusion I just want to reflect on his generous, gentle humility. He was somewhat of a gentle giant who had a big, big heart and what he gave to other people was truly a mark of the man. He will be remembered well.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (20:39): James Stynes was born in Ireland and played Gaelic football for his local club, Ballyboden St Endas. In 1984 he won the All-Ireland Minor Football Championship with Dublin. Jim had never been to Australia and had only heard of Aussie Rules through watching, as a 16-year-old, the classic Bruce Beresford film of David Williamson's play The Club, starring Aussie legends Jack Thompson and Graham Kennedy. Little was this Irish kid to know that one day he too would be considered an Aussie legend.

In the search of opportunity he answered an advertisement for an Aussie Rules scholarship selection camp and was subsequently chosen as one of two players to initiate the Irish experiment in 1984. After initial difficulty adjusting to the oval ball and physical game, Jim made his senior debut for the Melbourne Demons in 1987. In an incident that would have crushed most young footballers, Stynes was responsible for giving away a 15-metre penalty in the dying seconds of the 1987 preliminary final for a very low-level indiscretion—running between the man with the ball and the mark. The penalty gave that man, Hawthorn's Garry Buckenara, an advantage to kick the winning goal and deny Melbourne its first grand final appearance in 23 years. That this was also the final game for Demons hero Robbie Flower and was not a good way for a young foreigner to win the hearts of Demons supporters. It has become the stuff of legend that just four years later Stynes would win the AFL's greatest individual honour, the Brownlow Medal—an award that eluded so many of the game's greats like Robbie Flower, Leigh Matthews, Gary Ablett Senior, Wayne Carey, Ted Whitten, Norm Smith, Darrell Baldock and Ron Barassi, the legend who piloted the Irish experiment. Stynes
went on to play an incredible 244 consecutive games of football in a career of 264 games, placing him second on the Demons’ all-time players list to Flower.

To play for over 10 years in such a highly physical and sometimes violent sport and never miss a game through injury or suspension beggars belief. This period included a compound rib fracture that club doctors said would rule him out for six weeks and a tear to his medial ligament, which he played through. There was an extended joke among sports commentators: Jim Stynes broke both his legs in the game today, but should be alright to play next week. Stynes went on to equal the club record of four best and fairest awards, including three in consecutive years—an amazing achievement in a club with such a rich history dating back to 1858. Jim went on to play for Victoria and even represented Australia against his mother country in international rules games, including against his brother Brian.

Whilst still playing footy Jim showed his heart and character by setting up the Reach foundation. Reach is based on the belief 'that every young person has the support and self-belief they need to fulfill their potential and dare to dream.' It was the dreams of a young Jim Stynes in Dublin that have led to the standing with which this parliament and the entire Australian community hold him today.

Jim received many honours following his retirement from football, including the Australian Sports Medal in 2000, a Centenary Medal in 2001 and the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2007. He was also named Victorian of the Year on three separate occasions, most recently in 2011, and named in the AFL Hall of Fame in 2003. The Jim Stynes Medal is awarded by the AFL to the best Australian player in the international rules series against Ireland. Jim's passion for his club saw him take an interest in the position of president of the Melbourne Football Club. Such was the respect and reverence with which he was held that, shortly after, the then incumbent president stepped down to make way for Jim to take over.

Just a year later Jim announced that he had been diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer that had spread to his brain. Jim fought his personal and professional battles with a unique courage. He led the fight against moves to relocate his struggling football club and, whilst they may not have achieved much success on the field since, he rebuilt the base of the club, reinvigorated the membership and raised an incredible $2 million in one night to save the club from financial ruin.

Jim stepped down from the presidency just last month to focus time on his family. The new President, Don McLardy, wrote of Jim’s unique character:

Perhaps this story best encapsulates Jim Stynes for me. He once told me that having cancer was a privilege. He said he had worked with many young people who had been in life threatening situations, and he never really knew how they felt. He believed having cancer would help him understand what those young people were experiencing, and make him a much better person to help them. Cancer a privilege—it takes a special person to consider that.

Jim Stynes has authored several books, including an autobiography called Whatever It Takes. He also co-wrote two children's self-help books as part of his work with Reach, called Heroes and Finding Heroes. Jim leaves behind his supportive wife Samantha and their children Matisse and Tiernan, as well as hundreds of thousands of football followers and young people on either side of the planet that dare to dream. AFL legend and GWS coach Kevin Sheedy has described Jim Stynes as the greatest story in the history of the AFL. It is hard to argue with
Sheeds, yet today it is a sad story as we mourn the loss of a great sportsman and a great Australian.

Just like the sad loss of St Kilda legend Trevor Barker in 1996 on the verge of becoming a senior coach before succumbing to cancer at just 39 years of age, it is a tragedy for both our nation's great game and for the broader community, when a legend and a gentleman like Jim Stynes is taken away from us so early. I send my respect and admiration to Jim's family and to all those whose lives he touched. It is appropriate that the final words should go to the Reach foundation, who today posted on their website:

Today, Reach's Crew and Staff have lost our Co-Founder, close friend, mentor and hero. Jim believed there is greatness in each and every one of us. He not only encouraged us to see this for ourselves, but supported over half a million young Australians to recognise this for themselves, too. Those of us who knew and loved Jim will honour his legacy by living our lives with passion, honesty, courage and purpose he inspired in us. We will miss you, big fella.

I would like to add, that so often the term 'hero' is used to describe sportsmen. This time, the term 'hero' is most appropriate.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (20:47): I too rise to pay tribute to the tragic passing of Jim Stynes. It is ironic that three days after Australia celebrated St Patrick's Day, the celebration of the influence of Irish culture in Australia, we mourn the passing of one of its finest exports to this country. Jim Stynes was one of our most cherished and adopted sons. To Samantha, his wife, and his two children, Matisse and Tiernan, I pay my sincere condolences. They have lost a loving husband and father all too soon to tragedy in the short lifespan that he had. But what a life, what an impact and what an inspiration.

We first got to know him in this country as the lanky Irishman who first tried his luck at Aussie Rules in 1984. He was part of what was termed 'the Irish experiment' brought to Australia under a scheme initiated by Ron Barassi. He already had a natural ability. He was a standout player in Gaelic football in his home country and an All-Ireland minor medallist with Dublin. The former Dublin captain, Paul Clarke, recalls that:

I first played against him in the under 14s and even at that age he was a giant of a man.

This experiment, the Irish experiment, worked a treat. In fact, one could not have scripted it better, because he mastered our game. He was a Brownlow medallist. He won four best and fairests for his club. He played 264 games and, incredibly, a record 244 consecutive games—a benchmark I would suggest in any code of resilience. He was 10 times the Victorian State of Origin player. Whilst it was wonderful to see him play on the field, I always hated it when he was playing North Melbourne. But it was off the field where he continued his true character and his leadership, when he hung up the boots in 1998. I did come to meet him on a number of occasions through his Reach foundation. He co-founded it during his playing career but devoted himself to it, along with many other activities, on his retirement from football. Reach's programs are now run for over 60,000 young Australians every year, and two years ago the Prime Minister and I announced support for the Reach foundation to extend teacher training, to help teenagers suffering bullying, depression and substance misuse and to prevent young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders dropping out of school. It was a wonderful day.
It was a game between North Melbourne and the Bulldogs and unfortunately the result was not good on that occasion either for the Kangaroos, but it was a wonderful day in terms of the cause that we were supporting. It was good to see Jim there ebullient, excited, inspirational as ever, even though he was going through his continued battle with cancer. The Prime Minister said at the time that Reach is about inspiring young people and nobody does it better than Jim Stynes. That is absolutely true.

Jim Stynes was determined to give something back to the game, to the community and to the country that he had come to love. He showed great leadership in everything that he did. He became president of the Melbourne Football Club, his own club, and he did it at a very difficult time, in 2008, when the club was broke. There were all sorts of discussions and predictions about its future. In three years he was able to reduce its debt and get its books balanced again. During that time also the club underwent some coaching crises. He saw that through as well. But at the same time as all that was happening he was fighting his own battle with cancer.

He was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame, he was Victorian of the Year three times and he also was awarded an Order of Australia. Whilst today we mourn the fact that the battle that he so bravely faced he lost, the way he fought it defined him in so many ways. It was about determination, courage, resilience and openness, fearful of nothing. As Jim's wife, Sam, said, Jim's lesson is that life is to be challenged and treasured. He met every challenge and he is treasured. His contribution will never be forgotten. I offer my sincerest condolences to Samantha and the children, Matisse and Tiernan, and the Stynes family.

**Mr McCormack (Riverina) (20:53):** The Melbourne Football Club song begins:

It’s a grand old flag, it’s a high flying flag,
It’s the emblem for me and for you,
It’s the emblem of the team we love,
The team of the Red and the Blue.

Today that flag, that emblem, is very much at half-mast. Today all Melbourne supporters, Australian Football League followers, the sporting world and people right across Australia and Ireland are mourning the passing of Jim Stynes. It is not often a footballer has condolence motions delivered in the Australian parliament, with the Prime Minister making the first of the tributes. Jim Stynes was, however, more than just a regular footy player—much, much more. It is not often our society is blessed to have in its presence and then be robbed by the taking away of someone of the calibre of Jim Stynes.

At 45 years of age Jim Stynes has gone far too soon, yet not without leaving a huge footprint on his adopted land. Dublin born Jim Stynes was one of Australia's best-known and most loved sporting figures. He was a youth worker, a businessman, a three-time Victorian of the Year recipient in 2001, 2003 and 2011. He was Melburnian of the Year in 2010 and was honoured with an Order of Australia medal in 2007. Both on and off the football field he possessed optimism and willpower. He was inspirational, dedicated and strong. His total of appearances, 264, is among the most in the proud history of the club which predates the drawing up of the rules of the game in 1859. Stynes won the Brownlow Medal in 1991 and he won four club best and fairest awards. His resilience is highlighted by the fact that he played 244 games in a row, the most by any player in the history of the AFL/Victorian Football
League, which dates back to 1897. He needed this resilience in his fight against his terminal cancer, which was diagnosed in 2009. In 2003 Stynes was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame. There could not have been a more popular choice. The Jim Stynes Medal is awarded by the AFL to the best Australian player in the International Rules series. Stynes's name was also used in the inaugural International Australian Football Youth Tournament.

Certainly in the Riverina, the Australian Rules heartland, there are many today who are mourning the premature death of this fantastic and warm human being. Chris Daniher, who will again be lining up for his beloved Ungarie in the Northern Riverina League at age 46 this coming season, remembered Jim Stynes as 'a competitive bloke.' 'He was very friendly, upfront, honest, a really nice fellow,' Daniher, of Essendon fame, said to me tonight. I know Paul Kelly from Wagga Wagga, the Brownlow Medallist of 1995 and former Sydney Swans captain, will also be deeply saddened by Jim's passing.

Following Stynes's 1998 retirement from the game he loved so much and which he contributed so greatly to, he took on the role of an anti-racism officer within the AFL. He became Melbourne Football Club chairman and it was his wonderful personality, his magnificent drive, which helped enormously improve the club's debt woes. He also put many hours into his youth organisation, the Reach Foundation, which has as its goal to enable every young person to have the support and the self-belief they need to fulfil their potential, and to dare to dream. He served on an advisory board, including the Victorian government's suicide task force, and co-wrote children's self-help books.

A loving husband to Samantha and father to Matisse and Tiernan, Jim Stynes was truly, truly a remarkable person. His mantra was simple: 'I love making a difference.' And he certainly did just that, every day and in every way.

Every heart beats true for the Red and the Blue
As we sing this song to you...
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
Keep your eye on the Red and the Blue.

Jim Stynes, thanks for the memories. May he rest in peace.

Mr LYONS (Bass) (20:57): James 'Jim' Stynes OAM was born on 23 April 1966 and died on 20 March 2012. He was an Irish Aussie Rules player, a philanthropist, co-founder of the Reach Foundation, writer, youth worker, qualified teacher and, from 2008, the chairman of the Melbourne Football Club. He well and truly deserves the honour of this motion of condolence in the Australian parliament. In 1994 he co-founded the Reach Foundation, an organisation that helps young people aged 10 to 18, regardless of their circumstances. And he has helped thousands. The Reach Foundation was established by Jim Stynes OAM, AFL Brownlow Medallist, youth motivator and Victorian of the Year, and by Australian film director Paul Currie. Jim and Paul were two young men who recognised that too often the greatness of young people was hidden behind fear, anger and hurt. The Reach Foundation was born from a desire to inspire every young person to believe in themselves and to get the most out of life. Today, Reach's crew and staff have lost our co-founder, close friend and mentor, the Foundation said in its statement posted on Facebook today. It went on:
Jim believed there is greatness in each and every one of us…Those of us who knew and loved Jim will honour his legacy by living our lives with the passion, honesty, courage and purpose he inspired in us. We'll miss you, big fella.

Jim had a house in Launceston and was at the football at York Park one day when North Launceston Football Club, of which I am a member, was really struggling financially. I approached Jim and asked him if he would come and speak at our lunch that we were holding to try to raise money to keep the club going. Without hesitation he agreed. He was very generous, open and honest in speaking and answering questions that day. I found him to be a humble, friendly, quiet and inspirational man. Jim fought cancer in the same way he played football, with admirable courage and fierce determination regardless of what was coming at him. The Dubliner was 18 when he answered a newspaper advertisement placed by the Demons as part of Barassi's famous Irish experiment. Melbourne wanted to see if they could recruit talented Gaelic footballers and turn them into Aussie Rules players. Jim Stynes was by far the most successful graduate of this scheme.

The Demons liked him because he was athletic and he would stay behind after training and practise with the oval ball. He came to Australia in 1984 and had a tough apprentice as a ruckman. He made his senior debut in 1987. Stynes's lack of AFL experience cost him—and I will not go into that as others have already mentioned the Buckenara incident. Jim's personal qualities and strength of character were revealed a year later when he put that behind him and played in Melbourne's losing grand final side. In 1991 he won the AFL's highest honour, the Brownlow Medal. By the time he won the Brownlow, Stynes was also well into his remarkable streak of 244 continuous games, an AFL record. That nearly ended in 1993 when Stynes suffered a serious rib injury which was supposed to put him out for several weeks, particularly after the incident with Rod Grinter. The streak eventually ended in 1998 and Stynes retired at the end of that season after 264 games. He equelled the club record for the most best and fairest with four, including three straight from 1995 to 1997. Stynes was two-time all Australian, named in Melbourne's team of the century, played 10 games for Victoria and represented Australia and Ireland in International Rules—the Jim Stynes medal is awarded to the best Australia player in the International Rules series. Stynes was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame in 2003.

Stynes, as has been said before, was a self-confessed wild child and sport was the only part of his youth that gave him a release. Former Melbourne and Demons player and Irish AFL legend Jim Stynes has died at 45 after a long battle with cancer. Mr Stynes, a Dubliner, passed away at 08:20 am today. His wife, Sam Stynes, said in a statement released this morning, 'He died surrounded by family. Jim was pain free, dignified and peaceful.' Thank you, Jim Stynes, for your contribution to Australia. Jim, you well and truly deserve to be remembered only for the good you have done. You deserve this expression of condolence in the Australian parliament.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (21:02): I join with the member for Bass in expressing my condolence on behalf of the people of Gippsland for the family and friends of Jim Stynes, who died today at the age of 45. There have been a lot of kind words expressed in this House already today in relation to Jim and I hope that Sam, his wife, and two young children, Matisse and Tiernan, can take comfort in the days and years ahead.
It is only fitting that this parliament pays tribute to an extraordinary Australian, a man who lived an extraordinary life and was quite an extraordinary man himself, although he was an adopted Australian, as we have already heard here this evening. Jim was born in Dublin and, like many of the Irish, in fact just about every Irish person I have ever met, he was a man of great passions, enormous passions. He was brought to Australia in the mid-1980s as part of Ron Barassi's experiment to recruit Irish footballers. He became a trail-blazer for others who followed in his footsteps. It is in that context that I reflect also on the tragic death only a couple of years ago of Sean Wight, who was one of Jim's great playing partners in the Melbourne Demons during the 80s and 90s. He was actually Scottish born but came here as part of the Irish experiment and was a terrific footballer alongside Jim during that era of the Melbourne Demons. His life was also taken tragically too early when he died of lung cancer a couple of years ago.

Jim went on to play 264 games over 11 years for the Melbourne Football Club.

Ms Marino interjecting—

Mr CHESTER: The member for Forrest quite rightly comments that that is incredible. To put together 264 games in 11 short years is an incredible effort in the modern era of an Australian Rules footballer. We have just heard the member for Bass—and we have heard from other speakers—say that he actually played 244 continuous games. In the rough and tumble of professional sport, that is a remarkable effort for any footballer. It was not because Jim Stynes had the luck of the Irish, not by any stretch—you do need to be fortunate to avoid major injuries which are incapacitating and can force you out of the game—but because he was prepared to play injured. He played many times when he was injured. That is the mark of the man and the determination to not let down his team mates, to be part of something, which is what is great about the Australian Rules football community. He would get himself up and do everything he possibly could to make sure he could play on any given Saturday, when others may have succumbed to those injuries. It is that same resilience and determination that Jim took from his football career that he took into his latest fight, which tragically ended today with his death, way too early.

As someone who met Jim only once in my previous life as a journalist, I am not in a position to comment too much on his personal life. But I am in a position to comment on his public life and the way that he has been able to touch so many lives not only through his involvement in sport but also through his latter-day involvement through the Reach Foundation and his work with young people in the community. As someone who does not barrack for the Melbourne Demons, I think I am more objective than most. Jim Stynes was not the most talented footballer to ever pull on a boot, but he was a player who probably had more determination and resilience than most. I think that is testament to the fact that he managed to play 244 games in a row. He was certainly good enough to win a Brownlow medal. They do not hand out Brownlow medals on the back of packets of cornflakes; you have to earn your Brownlow medal and Jim certainly earned his.

One night on the Melbourne footy show there was a joke. I hope it is not in poor taste, but I will try tonight to remember it to the best of my ability. It was towards the end of Jim's 200-odd games in a row. He might have played 220 or 230 games in a row. The joke went something like: 'Jim Stynes was injured on the weekend—in fact, he died on Monday, was cremated on Tuesday, but he'll be right to play on Saturday.' In an irreverent sense it was the
Melbourne football show's way of paying respect to someone who was a great man and a
great Australian Rules footballer—the fact that he would always find a way. Somehow, they
would patch him together with tape or whatever they might have been able to do in those
days and get him out in the field. Whatever happened, if he turned up to play, when he crossed the
line he was part of the team and ready to make his contribution.

Sadly, Jim was taken from us way too soon. But I think as we reflect tonight in this place,
and I am sure in the days and weeks and months and years ahead, his legacy will be great not
only around the Melbourne Football Club and around the Australian Rules football
community but in the broader Victorian and Australian communities. I think the term
'champion' is used too loosely in modern-day sport. Jim Stynes was a champion whose ability
on the field was more than matched by his ability and his efforts off the field. His contribution
to his adopted country cannot be measured in the years he lived but, as I said earlier, in the
lives he touched.

As a footballer, I think he was someone who provided an extraordinary role model to
young people growing up in the game not just to his team mates but the kids at Auskick and at
other clubs, who would look at this bloke and think: 'Well, if he can make it, perhaps there is
a chance for me as well.' He was not necessarily the most accomplished looking footballer—
at times, he was a bit ungainly—but certainly someone who made the most out of every bit of
ability that he had. I think that is a lesson that a lot of young people can take from the career
of Jim Stynes on the football field.

Off the football field he devoted his life to helping young Australians through his
contribution to the Reach Foundation. In 1994 he co-founded the Reach Foundation. For
those who are not familiar with it, the Reach Foundation is a non-profit, non-denominational
organisation which is committed to supporting young people between eight and 18 years of
age. Reach and Stynes worked together to encourage teenagers to realise their potential and
discover their purpose through being made to feel valued and special in a positive and
supportive learning environment. Jim went on to receive numerous awards off the football
field. His work with Reach was recognised, as a recipient of the Melbourne of the Year
Award in 2010, as a recipient of the Order of Australia and a recipient of a Churchill
Fellowship in 2007. He was also recognised as the Victorian of the Year. By any measure, his
has been a remarkable life in just 45 years. That is without even going to the fact that, when
his club called for him again—when the Melbourne Football Club was faced with desperate
times—Jim answered that call and served as president during perhaps one of the most
turbulent times in the club's history. He brought to that position his enormous passion, which I
referred to earlier, and his capacity to involve others in his work. Under his leadership I would
have to say that the Melbourne Football Club earned back the respect of the Australian Rules
football public.

In 2009 news first broke that Jim was sick, having been diagnosed with melanoma cancer,
and the football world rallied behind him. It did not matter who you barracked for at that time.
Jim was an icon of Australian Rules and his personality and his contribution to the game
transcended club loyalties. This is one of the most parochial sports of all in the Australian
community. If you barrack for Carlton you hate Collingwood—

Ms Marino: Everyone hates Collingwood!
Mr CHESTER: I accept the interjection: everyone does hate Collingwood! Jim's personality transcended those club loyalties. We have seen such an outpouring of support for his family, of grief, of expressions of deep respect for Jim Stynes. Social media networks have been overflowing with people expressing their concern for his family but also their sadness and their debt of gratitude to a man who gave so much in such a short period of time. All of those comments have been very well earned by Jim Stynes. At a time when our football clubs and our football players are often in the news for all the wrong reasons, it is actually a great moment of celebration, in a strange way, that we can be here tonight speaking to this condolence motion and celebrating a great life and a great footballer. I think it is important that we talk about the positives of these men who are involved in our football community and go on to achieve other great things in their lives.

Jim was an inspiration to many and he demonstrated some of the most important values and characteristics that you will see at an elite sporting level and in life itself—things like resilience and determination, extraordinary courage in adversity, working as part of a team, and fighting hard but still always respecting your opponent. They are some of the things that we can all take from Jim Stynes's life. I think it is one of the great things about the Australian Rules football community that those characteristics and values are held very strongly in football clubs. At their very best they can help to shape young men so that they can go on and achieve great things after their football career is finished. As much as we say that the Melbourne Football Club was lucky to have known Jim Stynes, I am sure Jim Stynes in his own private moments would have said that he was lucky to have found the Melbourne Football Club at the stage in his life that he did.

Jimmy Stynes was a champion and it is fitting that this parliament recognises his extraordinary contribution both to Australian Rules and the nation as a whole. I thank the House.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (21:13): I also rise to note the passing of Jim Stynes. Sadly, Jim Stynes passed away earlier today at his home at the early age of 45. Jim endured a public 2½-year battle with cancer. As the member for Gippsland has said, Jim was born in Dublin, moving to Australia at the age of 18 as part of the Melbourne Football Club's Irish experiment, which aimed to recruit Gaelic footballers for the AFL. Jim became a regular with the Melbourne Demons by the midpoint of the 1987 season. But in the preliminary final of that year, with only four seconds to go, he gave away a 15-metre free kick by running across the mark. This resulted in Hawthorn scoring the win, giving goal and taking the match. I suppose some of my colleagues here were glad that at least it was not Collingwood that won!

Jim's fortunes did turn around and in 1991 he won the Brownlow Medal, the game's highest individual honour. It must be noted that Jim was the first internationally raised player to win that award. In addition to his Brownlow Medal, Jim won four best and fairest awards with Melbourne, equalling the club record, playing an AFL record of 244 consecutive games. He was also twice selected in the all-Australian side. It is recorded that Jim represented Melbourne in every official game for 11 years, with a total of 264 games across the seasons 1987 to 1998.

In 1994 Jim, along with film director Paul Currie, founded the Reach Foundation. The foundation's aim was to teach young people life skills and to give young people the support, self-belief and encouragement needed to fulfil their potential. The aim of the foundation was,
in part, motivated by Jim's own teenage experience. He had attended camps back in his home
country which were taught in the Irish language and, although encapsulating a physical
education focus, additionally they were driven by a philosophy of education for life. The
Reach Foundation runs programs nationally in schools and communities, which aim to
' improve young people's self- belief and develop resilience and emotional awareness'.
Programs are run by young people aged 15 to 25 for young people aged 10 to 18, with over
60,000 taking part across the country every year. Jim remained active on the board of Reach
even during the time he battled his cancer.

Although Jim retired from football in 1998, he did not lose that footy love, becoming
president of the Demons in 2008 at a time when the club was in the midst of serious decline.
He was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame in 2003 and the Jim Stynes Medal is awarded to
the best Australian player in the International Rules series each year. Not only is Jim
remembered for these AFL achievements, he was twice named Victorian of the Year, in 2001
and 2003, and in 2007 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work with
youth and his contribution to Australian football. In 2010 Jim was named Melburnian of the
Year and in 2011 the Australian Catholic University awarded Jim their highest honour,
Doctor of the University, in recognition of his service to the community, particularly in the
areas of youth depression, homelessness and suicide. An incredible man, and he achieved so
much in such a short life.

There has been much written already today about the incredible Jim Stynes. Two
comments caught my attention. Mike Sheahan from the Herald Sun said:

Irish-born Jim Stynes was one of the mos
tost extraordinary figures in Australian life
I have to agree with that. I believe that Martin Flanagan in the Age was correct when he stated
that Jim was 'more than a great sportsman'.

Jim also had a connection with the Northern Territory. He visited the NT a number of times
and was reported to have strongly supported Aboriginal players. He held a special connection
with the Yuendumu community, which is north-west of Alice Springs. As the Herald Sun
reported, Stynes was one of six speakers at the MCG, including AFL chief executive Andrew
Demetriou, to help launch The Liam Jurrah Story, a book by Bruce Hearn Mackinnon
detailing Jurrah's rise from playing barefoot on a red soil oval to taking the AFL mark of the
year. Stynes had twice visited the Yuendumu community, just 300 kilometres west of Alice
Springs, an experience he regards as one of the most inspiring in his life.

Definitely, his story is better than mine. I used to claim my story as a point of difference, but it can't
compare with where Liam Jurrah has come from.

Said Stynes, who proudly wore his Melbourne scarf as always:

At least when I came here there was a similar culture and the spirit of our games was similar. For
Liam it was so different, he'd only just put on a pair of boots. ... I have been there a couple of times and
to meet the whole community was so eye-opening for me. I was so privileged to be given that chance
and to be given their warmth of welcome.

Former Essendon player, Tim Watson, also spoke of the recent trip Stynes made to the
Northern Territory in giving his tribute to Jimmy Stynes. He said:

I think, perhaps, he did his best work away from the football field. He became a leader in the
community, the work that he's done with the Reach organisation and the compassion that he's shown
through that.
I saw him firsthand in Yuendumu, when he went up there in the Northern Territory to visit Liam Jurrah’s family. I saw him for a couple of days there and he was struggling with his health at that time and I was just amazed by the bravery and the courage he displayed up there.

It was hot, it was dusty, he didn't have to be up there, but he wanted to be a part of the contingent that went up there to show the community that Melbourne cared about Liam Jurrah and about Aboriginal people up there as well.

He had an enormous effect on mankind. There's going to be a lot of young people out there today that owe the direction in their life that they've taken to some work that Jim Stynes may have done.

Another connection to the Northern Territory is legendary Darwin-born AFL player Andrew McLeod, who played for the Crows, and is considered by many as one of the greatest Indigenous footballers of all time. Andrew was awarded the Jim Stynes Medal in 2005 after co-captaining the Australian International Football team against Ireland. My deepest sympathies go to Jim's wife, Sam, and their two children, Matisse and Tiernan, and to Jim's parents, Tess and Brian, and their families, as well as to the many Australians who will be mourning the loss of a true legend in Jim Stynes.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (21:22): How do we define the life well lived? How do we explain a life so well loved as that of this particular man, Jim Stynes? I think the answer can be found in a simple proposition: generosity of spirit and enthusiasm of purpose. There have been of course many great footballers and many people in our society who have given of themselves, but it is hard to identify almost any other who has combined that sense of enthusiasm on the field with a generosity of spirit and passion for life off the field. That is what makes this story such a great Australian story, because it is the immigrant, the adventurer in the sense of somebody willing to participate in all the elements of life. It is the truly generous heart which defines, for me as an observer, the Jim Stynes story. I think that that is why there is such an extraordinary sense of empathy amongst Australians from all walks of life, Victorians in particular and, unusually, the young. This is a story which has gripped the young. The question is, how can a generation which is often dismissed as being so cynical, I think unfairly, be so engaged by such a story? I think it is because they cut through the silliness. They can see authenticity. They can see generosity. They can see a sense of bigness of purpose, which is beyond merely the self. That is what defined this person.

Of course Jim Stynes was best known as a footballer but in the hierarchy of things, in my view, first and foremost he was a father, a dad, a husband. He was a great family man with Samantha, Matisse and Tiernan—his wife, his daughter and his son. That is the greatest loss, as it would be in any of our circumstances. Beyond that, beyond the familial relationships Jim had with those closest to him, he was a figure who gave to those most in need within our community. That is his most profound contribution to our society. Sure, he was a great footballer—a Brownlow medallist, a grand finalist, a four-times club champion, and an All Australian team member. He is the game's record holder for the most consecutive games—244. It was as a social worker who came from the privilege of having been one of the leading AFL players that he really won his stripes with the community. He was much loved for what occurred on the field but he was even more loved for the fact that he did not seek the great prizes which came with fame and with privilege—he took the opportunity and he turned it into a platform for converting young lives.
This was not some sort of dilettante; this was a person who was generous to the extreme and whose greatest joy in his post-football career was working in Indigenous communities, working with disadvantaged youth, working with each young person to give them the sense that their lives mattered, that each life had a sense of majestic possibility. The public knew that. The public got this guy. They could see that he was able to give of himself in a way which lifted others. That was the essence of what made this a special person who was elevated in the public’s mind not out of a sense of flair, not out of a sense of talent but out of a sense of true generosity of spirit and the ability to transform the lives of others. It is the Reach Foundation, it is the personal engagement, it is the work with Indigenous communities that mean that this is not the mere passing of a person who had achieved fame or sporting prowess but the passing of somebody who has transformed individual lives through his sheer sense that he could give to others his own sense of purpose. Because of that we recognise a life which transcended what was possible for a young boy growing up in Dublin.

On the field Jim is the game's record holder for consecutive games. To me, that is a great achievement—to play for 11 years through broken ribs and extraordinary injuries. It is the sense of Tennyson's Ulysses—to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. It was a great life. We all are here in this place engaged with young people who look to move beyond the ordinary, who look to see something that is genuinely inspiring. In this case they found. There are a lot of disappointments out there when young people look around at the lives of the older citizens of society, and then there are moments that glisten—and this is what makes the Jim Stynes story so great. For that we are thankful. We give our thanks to his family for the time they allowed him to be with the broader community. We are proud of what he achieved and he will live on in the Australian Rules game. His name will be remembered long after many of the others, and many of us, have faded.

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (21:29): Today we lost a truly great Australian and, as Mike Sheahan said in today's Herald Sun, 'one of the most extraordinary figures in Australian life'—we lost Mr Jim Stynes. As the member for Flinders, who spoke just before me, so eloquently said, Mr Jim Stynes was not just a footballer, he was not just a husband, he was not just a father; he was an extraordinary figure who gave so much to our broader community. So many people connected with him in a very personal way. In his passing today, which came unexpectedly for so many people, there was an enormous and almost instantaneous outpouring of emotion for him.

Mr Stynes is best known for his achievements on the field as a footballer. He came to this country when he was 18. He responded to an advertisement placed in Irish newspapers looking for young people who might be interested in playing Australian Rules football. He came out to Australia and joined, as we know, the Melbourne Football Club. He was a natural talent and went on to have an extraordinary career. He holds the record for the most consecutive games played—244. He was also of course a Brownlow Medal winner—the greatest prize there is in Australian Rules football. As a result of this, he became Victorian of the Year in 2001 and in 2004. Later on, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. His career itself spanned all of 11 years. He fought tirelessly for the Melbourne Football Club. He played 264 games in total and kicked 130 goals over those 11 years. He got through many of those games with sheer determination—through his injuries, through the broken ribs,
through the other obstacles he had to overcome in order to stay on the football field and battle it out for his beloved Melbourne Demons.

But football was just one part of his life. That is how we got to know the man. We got to know his spirit on the football ground, but in some respects that is the least important part of who Jim Stynes was. He was of course a husband and a father. He would probably have said that that was the most important role in his life. I do not know, but I am sure he would say that. For me, being a husband and a father is of course my most important role, despite being a member of parliament and having other responsibilities. From what I understand, Jim was an exceptionally generous husband and father and an exceptionally loving one.

We knew him outside of his football career and outside of being a husband and father for his tremendous contribution in helping others. He established the youth program, Reach, in 1994 to promote mental health and wellbeing in young people. Since its beginnings, Reach is credited with bringing thousands of young lives back from the brink. As a person who has been championing youth mental health in my local community, I certainly take my hat off to Jim Stynes for the tireless work he did in helping so many young people overcome depression and other mental illnesses.

As the member for Flinders pointed out, in addition to the work he did and in addition to the exceptional football prowess that he had, we had an immediate connection with the man because of his character. That character was one of authenticity at its best. People could immediately identify that this guy was fair dinkum. He was not seeking the limelight. He did not seek media coverage, as we sometimes see with celebrities these days—far from it. If anything he was working behind the scenes. He was out there in remote locations working with Aboriginal youngsters. He was there working on youth mental health issues before that became a prominent issue, as it is today. He was doing all of this extraordinary work because, I think, deep down it was core to who he was. I think that the Australian people—young people in particular—can see that, they can sense that, they can smell that and they can love it. Today in a sometimes cynical world, I think that the Victorian public saw in this person a deeply principled man and a deeply caring man and a fair dinkum man who cared for them and who cared for the community and who worked tirelessly for them. It is truly a very sad day for Melbourne, for Victoria and for Australia with the loss of Jim Stynes. A truly great man, we will miss him greatly but of course the people who will miss him the most are his family and I pay my respects to his wife Sam, his children Matisse and Tiernan and his wider family. My thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time and I wish them all the very best.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (21:35): I rise to support the fine words of the member for Aston in his moving tribute to Jim Stynes. A lot of issues have been touched on today and tonight and I would like to go to just one of them—Jim Stynes's ability to deal with adversity; his mental toughness. I think it should stand as his legacy, stand as an inspiration to all of us both here in Australia, his adopted country, and in Ireland where he was also loved and where he was also very much an inspiration.

The first aspect of that mental toughness was shown through his career and his ability to play with injury. For those of us who know Australian Rules football and have played it, it is an incredibly tough game. People come at you from 360 degrees. There is no protection behind you, in front of you, beside you. You can get hit any which way. It requires you to
play with injury and Jim Stynes did that and set the record for the number of games played consecutively. Toward the end of his career he became legendary for it so much so that on *The Footy Show*, which is a legend in Victoria in particular, Sam Newman, the compere, at times used to joke about Jim Stynes's ability to play on. On one memorable Thursday night when the teams were being read out, Sam Newman said, 'And Jim Stynes has had his leg amputated this week but he will still be lining up for the Demons'. That lovely little bit of humour just summed up what Jim Stynes was like. He played with broken ribs. The member for Aston mentioned the fact that he had to pass a fitness test and they got three of the toughest players in the Melbourne squad to ram into him over a period of time. One of them was Rodney Grinter—one of the toughest characters to put on a Demons jumper. Jim Stynes got through the test, and I think his coach said after the game, when there was evidence of the pain that Stynes had been through, that on this occasion Jim probably put one over them.

Jim's mental toughness was absolutely inspirational. It was also there when he had to deal with adversity on the field. He had something happen to him that all of us who have played Australian Rules, and any sport, dread. It was a preliminary final—playing to make the grand final; playing to win the game that gets you a chance to play for the premiership that everyone strives for in Australian Rules football. Jim made a mistake—he ran across the mark; there was a 15-metre penalty and the Hawthorn player—Gary Buckenara—kicked the goal that put Hawthorn into the grand final. If he had not had that 15-metre penalty he would have been too far out and would not have been able to kick the goal. Jim had to deal with those demons. How did he do it? Instead of saying, 'This is all too hard; I can't deal with it; the psychological scars are too great,' he said, 'No—I am going to learn from this and I am going to be an even better player.' And he became an even better player. If you look at his final records, after that incident occurred, he was one of Melbourne's best players consistently in every single final that he played in after that event.

Legend has it that he was bailed up on a train in Paris by an Australian backpacker in the summer after that incident. The backpacker said to him: 'You're Jim Stynes, aren't you. You ran across the mark and cost Melbourne a place in a grand final.' Jim became absolutely determined that he was going to put that behind him and, through his inspiration and leadership, was going to demonstrate that you can overcome that type of adversity. And that is what he did.

Those feats on the football field were writ large with his battle with cancer. I think it was there for all of us to see: the mental toughness that he showed in dealing with that illness. He was not going to let it get him down and he was not going to let it defeat him. He tried absolutely everything he could—some of the more radical things you can do to try to overcome cancer, some of the normal things you can do. He tried it all because he was absolutely determined not to let this illness beat him. He fought it like he fought with the pain to deal with those injuries that he played with. He fought it like he fought to play with those mental scars that he had from that one mistake that he made in that preliminary final. That is how he took on his battle with cancer, and he was absolutely determined to make sure it would not get to him, so much so that he was prepared to take on the presidency of Melbourne and to continue in that role while he played that battle, because he did not want to let his football club down. He fought and fought and fought. He was, in no other words, an absolute inspiration.
People have touched on his role with Reach, which he set up after he left the Melbourne Football Club, and what it did for young people. Members tonight have talked about what he did with young Indigenous Australians. Everything that he did he did with the best intentions, he did to the best of his ability and he did with that toughness which said, 'Whatever role I take on I am going to make sure that I cut through and that I deliver.'

It is incredibly sad that in his battle with cancer, ultimately the cancer won. Today in this place and as a Richmond supporter who has sung this song for the football club that I play for, I think we could say that, from what we have heard this afternoon and tonight, every heart beats true for the red and the blue. Jim, we sing today this song to you. To Sam, Matisse and Tiernan, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

**BUSINESS**

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON** (Werriwa) (21:43): I move:

That further proceedings on order of the day No. 2, government business, be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 21:45
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Immigration and Citizenship: Portfolio Entities
(Question No. 804)

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 7 February 2012:

How many departments, agencies, commissions, Government owned corporations or other such bodies have been created within the Minister's portfolio since 24 November 2007 (excluding existing departments that have been re-named or merged into a larger entity), what is the name of each such entity, and how many full-time equivalent employees did each such entity have at the end of 2011.

Mr Bowen: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Two.
These are the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (OMARA) and the Independent Protection Assessment Office (IPAO).

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<th>Name of Organisation</th>
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<td>Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Protection Assessment Office</td>
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Aviation: Instrument Landing System
(Question No. 834)

Mr Ciobo asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 14 February 2012:

(1) For what reason(s) is an Instrument Landing System (ILS) installed at an airport; and what criteria does the Government use to determine whether an airport qualifies for one.

(2) What is the approximate cost to the Government of installing an ILS at an airport; and what is the approximate annual operating cost of an ILS to the Government.

(3) Does Airservices Australia fund the installation of an ILS for an airport.

(4) Is the Gold Coast Airport scheduled to have an ILS installed; if not, why not; if so, (i) when, and (ii) is there a reason why this might be delayed, if so, why.

Mr Albanese: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Airservices Australia (Airservices) has advised that the installation of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) is based on whether an airport is strongly impacted by weather conditions that affect visibility conditions when navigating the runway.

(2) and (3) Airservices funds the installation of an ILS.

(4) Airservices has an agreement in place with the Gold Coast Airport to progress the installation of an ILS at the airport. Airservices will be working collaboratively with the airport and other key stakeholders to progress this initiative.