COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 13, 2017
Monday, 4 September 2017

FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove AK, MC (Retd)

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker’s Panel—
Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Mr Scott Andrew Buchholz MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Andrew William Hastie MP, Mr Kevin John Hogan MP, Mr Luke Ronald Howarth MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Melissa Lee Price MP, Ms Maria Vanvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP and Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

Government Whips—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Deputy Leader—Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
Chief Whip—Hon. Damian Kevin Drum MP
Deputy Whip—Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP

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

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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
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</table>
PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; AUS—Katter’s Australia Party;
IND—Independent; LNP—Liberal National Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia;
NATS—The Nationals; NXT—Nick Xenophon Team

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
  Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
  Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
  Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanić
  Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cabinet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon James McGrath</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Aged Care</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</strong></td>
<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</strong></td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</strong></td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</strong></td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</strong></td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</strong></td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Special Minister of State</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Sport</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
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CHAMBER
Monday, 4 September 2017

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Petitions Committee

Report

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:01): Today, I present the 14th report of the Petitions Committee for the 45th Parliament, together with five petitions, and five ministerial responses to petitions previously presented.

PETITIONS

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:01): I present five petitions:

New England Electorate: Climate Change

This petition of concerned people of the electorate of New England, draws to the attention of the House the severe and urgent threat that climate change poses to the health, well-being and security of all people around the world, particularly our poorest and most vulnerable neighbours. We remind the House that Australia's greenhouse emissions are the highest per person among wealthy nations while our emissions reduction targets are among the weakest.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to protect communities in Australia and our region from the harmful impacts of climate change - such as more severe heat, extreme and unpredictable weather and rising seas - by:

- committing to deeper and more urgent reductions of our greenhouse emissions;
- developing a plan to ensure Australia achieves zero net greenhouse emissions well before 2050, and supporting families and communities affected by the transition towards renewable energy and more sustainable land use;
- providing additional assistance to help our poorest neighbours adapt to the harmful impacts of climate change.

from 512 citizens

Hume Electorate: Climate Change

This petition of concerned people of the electorate of Hume, draws to the attention of the House the severe and urgent threat that climate change poses to the health, well-being and security of all people around the world, particularly our poorest and most vulnerable neighbours. We remind the House that Australia's greenhouse emissions are the highest per person among wealthy nations while our emissions reduction targets are among the weakest.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to protect communities in Australia and our region from the harmful impacts of climate change - such as more severe heat, extreme and unpredictable weather and rising seas - by:

- committing to deeper and more urgent reductions of our greenhouse emissions;
- developing a plan to ensure Australia achieves zero net greenhouse emissions well before 2050, and supporting families and communities affected by the transition towards renewable energy and more sustainable land use;
• providing additional assistance to help our poorest neighbours adapt to the harmful impacts of climate change.
from 164 citizens

Mining

The petition of Certain Citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: The potential impact on the Sydney water catchment area and on the Kangaloon Aquifer, underlying the Southern Highlands and villages and towns of Berrima, New Berrima, Medway, Bowral, Moss Vale, Exeter, Robertson, Mittagong, Bundanoon and Sutton Forest, of the first large scale underground coal mine proposed in the area by Hume Coal which is a Korean owned subsidiary of POSCO.

We therefore ask the House to: Examine the proposed coal mine and the effects it may have on groundwater surface water, the Kangaloon aquifer and the Sydney Water Catchment, under the ‘water trigger’ powers given to the Minister under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.
from 1,890 citizens

Everton Park: Australia Post

This petition of citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: the closure of the Australia Post Office at Everton Park on 28 July 2017. Local residents and businesses will no longer have convenient reach of their postage requirements as all post office retail and boxes are relocated to another suburb.

We therefore ask the House to: commit to Australia Post remaining open or being relocated within the suburb of Everton Park.
from 1,423 citizens

Alcohol taxes

The outdated tax measures that are imposed on the alcohol industry needs to be addressed. While the craft beer community is growing, it is being held back by the current tax system that is imposed. As craft beer is generally a higher ABV, it means that it is taxed at a higher rate than multinational commercial breweries. This is opposed to wine, which is taxed under the WET system, where it is taxed by the cost the winery sets. By standardizing the tax system across all alcoholic beverages, we will continue to see growth in local breweries, bars and bottle shops.

We ask the house to standardize tax over all alcoholic beverages.
from 1,122 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:01): I present five ministerial responses to petitions previously presented.

Citizenship

Dear Mr Vasta

Thank you for your correspondence of 31 May 2017 concerning Petition number EN0154 regarding whether a parent of an adult child could fill in the adult child's form for Australian citizenship by descent in 1981.
I can confirm that there was no requirement under the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 or the Australian Citizenship Regulations at that time that required the adult child to sign and/or lodge the application personally.

I trust that the petitioners will now consider the matter resolved.

Thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Mr Dutton**

**Religion**

Dear Mrs Wicks

Thank you for the Committee's correspondence of 22 May 2017 concerning Petition EN0155 which was presenting in the House of Representatives on 22 May 2017.

I note the Petition requests the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) undertake a reclassification of Islam in the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups such that Islam is no longer classified as a religion. The petition was signed by 11,203 petitioners.

The concept of religion was considered by the High Court of Australia in *Church of The New Faith v Commissioner of Pay-roll Tax (Vic)* (1983) 154 CLR 120. Their Honours Mason ACJ and Brennan J defined religion by reference to two criteria:

- first, belief in a Supernatural Being, Thing or Principle; and
- second, the acceptance of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief.

Appropriately, the ABS has adopted the Court's definition in approaching its task of conducting the Census and classifying responses to its question about religious beliefs.

The inclusion of Islam as a religion under the ABS classification is consistent with the High Court's definition of religion.

I thank the Committee for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Small Business, Mr McCormack**

**Goods and Services Tax**

Dear Mr Vasta

Thank you for your letter of 22 May 2017 regarding a petition (EN0170) requesting the House of Representatives debate the merits of the current share of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) received by Western Australia.

The GST is distributed between the States and Territories (States) on the basis of horizontal fiscal equalisation under arrangements agreed between the Commonwealth and the States. These arrangements are designed to bring States to a comparable fiscal capacity so that Australians need not be unduly disadvantaged wherever they live in the country. This has been a principle underpinning federal financial relations since Federation, with horizontal fiscal equalisation providing a safety net for all Australians, regardless of where they live.

The Commonwealth Government recognises the concerns and grievances of Western Australians regarding the GST distribution. No one could have imagined that we would have a situation where one state's relative position would remain so low for such a prolonged period. That is why the Commonwealth Government has invested over $1.2 billion in additional funding for Western Australian infrastructure over the past three Budgets to ensure that Western Australia's GST share is effectively maintained at its 2014-15 level.
I have also tasked the Productivity Commission (PC) to undertake an inquiry into Australia's system of horizontal fiscal equalisation, to consider its effect on productivity, efficiency and economic growth for the States and Australia as a whole. The PC is due to report by 31 January 2018. The PC review is a timely look at how we distribute GST and asking whether the way we do this is holding the country back.

Once GST relativities return to more normal levels, the Government will also consider a GST relativity floor which would set a level at which no State's GST revenue could fall below.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Treasurer, Mr Morrison

Mental Health

Dear Mr Vasta

Thank you for your email of 20 June 2017 regarding petition number EN0175 on Mental Health in schools. I agree that it is essential for students to be adequately supported so they can appropriately deal with mental health issues, including providing them with coping skills.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring all Australian students receive a quality education that will equip them for their futures. The Australian Curriculum Foundation to Year 10 was endorsed by all education ministers in 2015 in order to have greater national consistency in determining what all students, regardless of where they go to school, should know, understand and be able to do.

I note the petition is seeking an addition to the Australian Curriculum to have a greater focus on emotional and mental coping skills as well as illness recognition and support. Through the Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum, students are supported to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to manage their own mental health and wellbeing and to support that of others. It is expected that all students at appropriate intervals across the continuum of learning from Foundation to Year 10 will learn about mental illness in the community, personal skills that support resilient behaviour as well as coping skills, help-seeking strategies and knowledge about community support resources.

In addition, students from Foundation to Year 6, through the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences, develop an understanding about human experience, past and present, and about their own interconnectedness to people and places across local and global settings, they identify issues and others' perspectives which inform reflective practice, empathy, communication skills, teamwork and advocacy.

This is further strengthened for students in Years 7 to Year 10 through the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship units. Students are encouraged to develop and apply personal, interpersonal and social skills, behaviours and dispositions, through working collaboratively and constructively in groups, developing their communication, decision-making and conflict resolution skills, learning to appreciate the insights and perspectives of others. Further information about the Australian Curriculum is available at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

The Committee may be interested to know that through my portfolio, the Government provides a suite of information and resources for students, parents and educators on student safety and wellbeing on the Student Wellbeing Hub (the Hub) website at www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au. The Hub is designed to be responsive to important issues affecting schools as they strive to build and sustain positive, respectful and supportive teaching and learning communities. The site includes a wealth of best-practice, curriculum-aligned resources on contemporary topics that impact on the wellbeing of students.

I trust this information is of assistance to the Committee.
Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Education and Training, Senator Birmingham

Refugees

Dear Mr Vasta

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 June 2017, concerning a petition (EN0185) on the protection of vulnerable minorities and resettlement of refugees.

Australia has a long tradition of resettling refugees and people in humanitarian need from around the world. Since the end of World War II, more than 865,000 people have been resettled under Australia's Humanitarian Programme.

Australia's offshore Humanitarian Programme is designed to provide permanent resettlement to those most in need, who are in desperate situations overseas, and for whom resettlement in another country is the only available option.

In determining the size and composition of the annual intake, the Australian Government undertakes extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including the community sector, State and Territory governments, other portfolio agencies, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to ensure available places are targeted to those most in need of resettlement.

The Government shares your concern for persecuted minorities in the Middle East and Africa. On 9 September 2015, the Government committed to resettling an additional 12,000 people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Priority for the 12,000 additional places was given to persecuted minorities, women, children and families displaced by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq with the least prospect of safe return to their home country. As at 21 March 2017, this commitment has been fully delivered, with 12,000 visas now issued to Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

In addition, Australia has committed to increase the size of the Humanitarian Programme from the current level of 13,750 places up to 16,250 in 2017-18, and 18,750 places in 2018-19 and beyond.

I note your request for safe havens or autonomous regions for indigenous Christian communities. Please note that this matter falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Mr Dutton

PETITIONS

Statements

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:01): Petitions continue to be a popular way in which citizens can engage with the parliament on various topics and from all walks of life. The petitions that I present today have a combined total of over 5,000 signatures collected from all over the country.

The committee receives petitions that are as diverse in content as they are in size and origin. We receive petitions with as few as one single signature and many that have signatures numbering in the hundreds and thousands.

The topics of the petitions that I present today also encapsulate this diversity, ranging from the closure of a post office to a petition concerning taxation on alcoholic beverages. Two petitions presented today express concern over climate change, and five more on the same topic are being reviewed by the committee later this week with possibly more to come.
Petitioning the parliament is a longstanding democratic right, and we want to know how we can improve our petitioning system for all Australian citizens. It’s all about making it easier for people across Australia to connect with their community, build up a voice, and present it to their political representatives.

But until recently, the only way you could do that was by physically getting each individual to sign on a piece of paper. That’s why we want to make it easier to petition the parliament online and, since the e-petitions system has been launched last year, e-petitions have been flooding in. To date, we’ve received around 340 e-petitions this parliament.

But it’s time for a review, which is why there’s an inquiry into how e-petitions are working and to let more Australians know about how easy it can be. The committee is launching a survey this week as part of the inquiry, aimed at finding out what people think of the e-petitions system and how it can be improved. The responses we receive from the survey will inform the committee’s recommendations for future enhancements to the system.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I will continue to provide updates to the House on the work of the Petitions Committee and the inquiry into e-petitions.

**BILLS**

**Telecommunications Amendment (Guaranteeing Mobile Phone Service in Bushfire Zones) Bill 2017**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Sharkie.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (10:04): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Telecommunication Amendment (Guaranteeing Mobile Phone Service in Bushfire Zones) Bill 2017, which I’m introducing today, seeks to ensure vulnerable communities in high bushfire risk areas can use their mobile phones for the critical 24 hours after a blackout.

This legislation would require telecommunication carriers to provide 24-hour stand-by power capability for mobile phone towers that operate in high-risk bushfire communities.

The federal government agency, Emergency Management Australia, would be tasked with identifying high-risk bushfire communities, taking into account long-established and widely used state and territory based mapping of bushfire risk areas. The Australian Communications and Media Authority would be responsible for determining the detail of the regulations that enforce these provisions.

In just a few months' time, the bushfire danger season will start in my electorate and in most electorates in the southern half of Australia, from Perth in the west and to Sydney in the east.

I do not want my community or others in high-risk bushfire areas to once again face the risk of zero communication with the outside world because the NBN doesn't work in a blackout, and there is no legislative requirement on the telecommunication companies to ensure that there is enough stand-by power available for mobile phone towners.
In a meeting in my office with NBN officials to discuss this problem, we were told in no uncertain terms that every NBN customer, no matter the technology, could assume they will have zero access to not only the internet in a blackout but also their landline and their mobile phone.

Seven months ago, in the first sitting week of the 2017 parliamentary year, I stood up in question time and asked the Prime Minister what he was going to do about the fact that, for nearly five days in the middle of the bushfire season, thousands of my constituents had zero access to telecommunications.

Let me set the scene. Just before midnight on 27 December last year a major storm swept across the mid-north of South Australia and through the Mount Lofty Ranges, bringing down large trees and powerlines. At one stage, 183,000 households were without power. The damage was particularly severe in the Adelaide Hills. On New Year's Eve, four days after the storm, 15 communities still remained without power.

If you live in the metropolitan area, you might think that this is just no refrigeration and no cooking or possibly no hot water. However, in parts of the Adelaide Hills, where there is no mains water connection, no power means no water, no pumps to run bores, no rainwater tanks, no toilets and no septic sewerage systems.

But of particular concern to my community was the lack of telecommunications. Households with the downgraded NBN fibre-to-the-node technology lost their landline and internet service immediately—no power, no NBN. Everyone with mobile phones lost coverage after approximately four hours, when batteries in local mobile phone towns ran out. Those lucky enough to have copper landlines and old-fashioned handsets had communication for about 36 hours, until the battery backup at the exchanges ran out.

So, in the middle of the fire danger season, the only way most residents could know if a fire had in fact started in our region was to go outside and look for smoke. We have residents with mobility issues, elderly residents and residents who are quite isolated, living in hilly country where there is only one road into a community. I have the oldest electorate in South Australia. That alone brings a degree of vulnerability.

This is simply not good enough. Under the NBN, I believe the high-risk bushfire communities are more vulnerable today than when the Ash Wednesday bushfires swept across South Australia and Victoria in the 1980s. Given the tragic history of major bushfires in the Mount Lofty Ranges, we were incredibly lucky a fire didn't start in that Christmas to New Year's Eve period.

Community concern was such that residents organised a series of public meetings after the clean-up, inviting local leaders to attend and answer questions. I attended as the local federal member and was asked to explain what legislation existed to ensure communications were maintained during emergencies. To summarise my investigations, there are none.

While telecommunications legislation imposes certain obligations on telecommunications providers, exemptions are available in the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster or extreme weather event. For example, communications service providers are generally exempt from requirements, such as the customer service guarantee, provided they meet certain notification requirements. And there is no requirement for carriers to keep their mobile phone services operating. According to ACMA, responding to a question on notice from my
colleague Senator Griff, the agency has not raised the NBN power problem as a potential issue with the Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council. The argument appears to be that, as long as carriers warn their customers about the limitations of NBN technology, that is sufficient. My community was shocked. They wonder how it can be when telecommunications is such an integral part of our lives and such an integral part of South Australia's emergency management plan and other state and territory management plans.

In South Australia, the State Emergency Management Plan focuses a large part of its public communication strategy via the online platform Alert SA and emergency SMS messages. If SA Power Networks cut the power, as usually happens on a Catastrophic day or when fire starts, it seems that we can expect mobile phone towers will run out of battery. If the power cuts in the morning, we'll run out by lunchtime. This bill would provide a critical window of 24 hours on a potential bushfire-risk day where residents do not have access to emergency SMS messages and other information to assess what they should do. Again, it is simply not good enough and my community wholeheartedly agrees.

After their public meetings, they put together a report and one of the 31 recommendations was a call for the federal government to work with carriers to ensure there was adequate backup. In introducing this bill, I'm attempting to address this potentially life-threatening oversight. If we, indeed, are a nation of innovation, I do not think it is too much to ask telecommunication companies to provide 24-hour standby power capability to mobile phone towers that operate in high-risk bushfire areas. Taxpayers have spent $600 million of their money for carriers to build or upgrade more than 760 towers across rounds 1 and 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Program. I think the least we can expect is 24-hour backup. This is a simple protective measure for regional communities in Australia and the higher risk bushfire areas. I encourage the government to consider this private member's bill as a matter of urgency. Mr Speaker, I would ask if the member for Indi could use my remaining three minutes to discuss this important issue.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (10:11): I'm very pleased to second this bill to acknowledge the work of the member for Mayo and to congratulate her for this really important piece of legislation. It is vitally important for all rural and regional Australia, particularly my electorate of Indi, which is absolutely fire-prone. To all the CFA in Indi, to the SES and to the local government emergency managers: it gives me so much pleasure to work together with the crossbenchers who really care for rural and regional Australia. This is an example of how we bring to this parliament issues that the major parties refuse to take up.

Congratulations, member for Mayo. I'm really pleased to second the motion, not only because North East Victoria is prone to bushfire but because the whole topic of telecommunications falls off the government's agenda. We know how vitally important it is to have access to telecommunications in our towns. In a minute I'm going to talk about round 4 of the Mobile Black Spot Program, but, before I do, I can't stress how important this is. In times of emergency and with the changes that are taking place, exactly as the member for Mayo said—in the old days we had a telephone line that was independently powered and now we're moving on to the NBN which is not, and we have limited backup—we'll really get caught in a bushfire circumstance. This particular legislation has been well researched. I call on the government to pay attention and to bring action in this regard.
I would also like to briefly talk about the Mobile Black Spot Program, which was a really important part of the government's 2013 election commitment, but they've let the ball drop. We've had round 1 and round 2. We've had promises of round 3 and no commitment at all to round 4. I've talked to the Prime Minister about this and I've talked to the members of the government about it, saying, 'Walk the talk and show us where the money is for round 4 so that we can complete the work of fixing these black spots, particularly in areas where we don't have access.' That's the whole idea: fund the telcos to build mobile phone towers where we don't normally have access, particularly in fire-prone areas. So bring on round 4.

I'm putting the government on notice, including the Prime Minister and the Minister for Communications, that in the 2018 budget we expect round 4 to be well funded. We may need round 5, but round 4 should be enough for the 200 remaining black spots that have been identified in my electorate of Indi, just for starters, to get onto the national budget and for something to be done to actually make sure that people in these communities have access to exactly the same services that our city cousins do. I'm very pleased to second the legislation. Congratulations to the member for Mayo for bringing it on. This is an example of really effective action by Independents in this parliament and I'm so pleased to be part of this team of five and the great work that we do in this area.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**


**BILLS**

**Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Continuing the Energy Transition) Bill 2017**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:16): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australia is facing an energy crisis caused by the failure to face the reality of both climate change and the technological transformation that has changed the economics of the energy sector. Worryingly, Labor and Liberal look set to create another three- to five-year valley of death for renewables by reaching across the aisle to agree on a 'clean energy target' that counts new coal-fired power stations as 'clean' and leaves proposed new renewable builds in limbo because the existing renewable energy target will soon run out. As a result, the energy crisis we face will grow worse, as will the climate emergency we are experiencing.
It is worth recalling how we got to this point. Former Prime Minister Abbott set out to politically destroy the clean energy program of the Labor-Green power-sharing parliament, which included a price on pollution. Once in power, he acted on it and repealed as much legislation as he and his government could get away with. This set in train the beginning of an investment strike in the wholesale energy market at the same time as a lot of the existing coal-fired generation was starting to reach its retirement age. The uncertainty created by the Abbott government, with its virulent anti-carbon tax campaign and its climate denialism, meant that, even though renewable energy generation was falling in cost, investors held back decisions on the next wave of investment in new generation.

Then Labor joined with the coalition government in cutting the renewable energy target from 45,000 megawatt hours to 33,000 megawatt hours, intensifying the investment strike in the energy sector. As pressure mounted, fossil-fuel generators were able to game the market using peaks in demand to drive up prices and rake in the money. Instead of creating the certainty that was needed for a new wave of renewable investment that would drive down power prices, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull used an extreme weather event in South Australia to declare war on renewables. Despite the near-unanimous chorus from industry and experts calling for a new stable mechanism to drive investment in renewable generation, the Prime Minister has continued his war, refusing to stare down the coal industry stooges who spruik for government funded coal-fired power, and he's failing to act even on his own Chief Scientist's recommendation for a clean energy target. And now, disturbingly, the opposition have ditched their policy of an emissions trading scheme for the electricity sector and last week signalled that they would support a revised clean energy target that potentially includes coal-fired power generation.

Such a clean energy target would risk creating a valley of death for new renewable energy investment, which is only just recovering from the attacks on the renewable energy target. While the falling cost of renewables, which are now the cheapest new generation and soon will be cheaper than all existing fossil fuel generation, is accelerating investment, it's a precarious recovery. Indeed, the recent investment we have seen falls well short of what is needed. If Labor and the coalition agree on a clean energy target that includes coal but doesn't include any mechanism to start closing coal-fired generators, it may create a short-term valley of death for renewables. The Finkel review recommends not extending the RET, the Renewable Energy Target, which is the subject of the bill, past 2020 and 2030 but simply starting instead with a new clean energy target from 2020. Because of that, any Labor-Liberal deal may in fact put the brakes on some new renewables investment between now and 2020. I have spoken to renewables' investors concerned that if they build something before 2020, in reliance on support from the existing RET, support will run out in 2030 and this will put them at a disadvantage compared with investors who build after 2020 and who will have the reliance of a new clean energy target past 2030. In other words, building before 2020, over the next couple of years, potentially only gives you 10 years of support, but building after 2020 could potentially give you more. This in turn may encourage renewables investors to hold off for a few years, when we should be encouraging the exact opposite.

As much as the opposition might like to think they can simply turn up the dial on ambition if they win office, this goes against the Finkel report and the words of the Chief Scientist himself, who has repeatedly made it clear that the scheme should be given time to settle in
and that there should be no short-term changes to the trajectory. Further, the whole Finkel report and the idea of a clean energy target is premised on COAG first agreeing to the emissions reduction trajectory, which then informs the emissions intensity level of the target. So, presumably then, any change to ambition would have to go back to COAG, allowing a recalcitrant state to hold out against any future progressive federal government.

As such, if a Labor-Liberal clean energy target deal is struck, there will be at least three years during which a paltry target will be in place, new coal will be incentivised and new renewables placed at a further disadvantage, and with a Prime Minister now actively canvassing how to use Commonwealth funds to extend the life of existing coal-fired power stations and others calling for a direct subsidy of new coal, and with coal potentially also being subsidised by a new clean energy target, it's not difficult to imagine a scenario where government support encourages the building of a new coal-fired power station during this three- to five-year valley of death. In turn, once built, the pressure will be immense on future governments to not adjust the clean energy target or withdraw support so as to devalue these plans.

In other words, a Labor-Liberal clean energy target deal we saw mooted in the papers last week, which includes coal, is a recipe for hobbling renewables and subsidising the new build of what would otherwise be stranded fossil fuel assets. It's a seriously bad move that has short-term failings, the potential to lock in long-term fossil fuel assets and the lack of any real mechanism to turn up the dial, should a future government have more ambition. Overarching all this, without any complementary mechanism to retire coal-fired power stations, there will be less incentive to build new renewables to take their place, especially if governments start flagging a willingness to pay to keep coal stations open longer, as the Prime Minister did last week.

The renewable energy target legislation works. People know how it works. Recharging the renewable energy target is the single most important action that this parliament could take to invigorate investment in energy and drive down electricity prices and drive down pollution. Despite the uncertainty of the last few years, the renewable energy target has proved its worth and has been the single most important driver of investment in new generation.

The Clean Energy Council estimates that over the last two years the RET has delivered over 40 projects, worth $8 billion under construction, throughout rural and regional Australia, which will deliver over 4,000 megawatts of new generation capacity and more than 4,000 jobs. But they warn that this unprecedented level of new investment is not nearly enough to replace the ageing coal generation that is continuing to close over coming decades. It will stall before 2020 unless future policy certainty is established.

That is why this bill, the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Continuing the Energy Transition) Bill 2017, amends section 40 of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act to replace the static yearly target of 33,000 megawatt hours of renewable electricity and sets out new, yearly targets from 2020 to 2030, increasing by 2,165 megawatts a year. The final target in this bill for 2030 is 55,500 megawatt hours. The bill retains the existing structure of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act, which puts in place the renewable energy target scheme and increases the ambition.

This bill alone, without the other existing policies and targets at a state level and the other policies the Greens would seek to put in place, will ensure renewables grow to around 30 per
cent of generation over the next decade, and it is part of our approach to get Australia running on 90 per cent renewables by 2030, which we know is technically feasible and we just need government policies to make it happen. If this bill is supported, investors will have another 12 years of certainty about the investment environment for renewables going forward.

So, really, we are at a crossroads. We have to decide which suite of policies is going to be put in place to drive the renewable energy transition and allow the orderly retirement of coal-fired power stations. We may be less than 12 months away from a change of government. In those circumstances, where it looks like this rotten government is going to be turfed out on its ear, really the question for the opposition is: why do a deal now with a government for a very bad piece of legislation that sets up a period of two to three years during which new coal-fired power stations will be encouraged? Given that we know that this government is bending over itself to bankroll that and find ways of funding it, why do that when we could hold out for, potentially, 12 months and put in place a much better suite of legislation? Why not put a revised emissions intensity scheme back on the table, as Labor had originally proposed—one that has some teeth? Why not complement it with a renewable energy target, as this bill proposes, so that we have a mechanism that pulls out coal from the system in an orderly way—an EIS—and a mechanism that brings in renewables, which is what this bill would do?

I commend this bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?
Mr Wilkie: I second the bill and reserve my right to speak.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time. The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The SPEAKER (10:26): I inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 110, the honourable member for Kennedy has withdrawn notice No. 4, standing in his name. The order of precedence of remaining private members' business notices, as determined by the selection committee's report presented to the House on 16 August 2017, remains unchanged.

BILLS

Commission of Inquiry (Coal Seam Gas) Bill 2017

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Katter.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:28): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The ugliest garbage dump and cesspool will be uncovered if this bill proceeds. There will be a lot of people of the mainstream parties who will be fighting tooth and nail to avoid this from happening. To give you a brief glimpse at the ugliness which we wish to uncover, a person working in the Public Service joined the LNP and, according to media reports, some 10 or 12 years later is worth $23 million. He was the conduit for the coal seam gas money that was
being paid improperly. I asked a person who was involved in the battle against coal seam gas and she answered: 'No. He was one of three.' I will just repeat that and let that sink in: a person who was working in the public service then moves to a job on around $100,000 a year and within 10 or 12 years is worth $23 million, according to a national newspaper. And when the person who knew a lot about this was asked if he was the conduit for the coal-seam gas money, she replied, 'No, he was one of three.' So how much money did change hands, and where did that money go? On an entirely different scale, the government compliance officers and the coal-seam gas companies seem to have a backwards and forwards track. One minute you're working for the government, forcing safe practice and looking after the interests of the people of Queensland and the next minute you are working for a coal-seam gas company. Or, vice versa, you're working for a coal-seam gas company and two minutes later you are working in compliance roles and overseeing roles.

Let me be specific: I have been informed—and I want to emphasise that I hope I'm not condemning the man without his right to reply—that Mr Ian Heiner was working in a senior role in the government in an overseeing and powerful role with respect to coal-seam gas companies and the next minute he is working for the coal-seam gas companies. And let me go the other way and refer to Ms Carolyn Collins, who was working for coal-seam gas companies and the next minute is on a commission overseeing the industry. And the position is paid for by the government. It is the height of impropriety, where we would look and expect arm's length relationships, we've got just the opposite. We have a national daily newspaper pointing out the wealth of just one person.

The root cause of this was legislation which existed in Queensland for 100 years that enabled a land-holder to lock the gate. It wasn't an absolute right, but it was a very powerful right, and if the mining company contested that right they went to a magistrates court. Magistrates were based in those days in country communities and they also acted as mining warden as well. These people belonged in local communities, they were part of the local community and, to some degree, be it good or bad, they were answerable to the local community. When you as a local landholder stood up against a big, foreign corporation, a coal-seam gas company, you were probably at a little bit of an advantage.

All I can say is that in 18 years in the parliament and 19 years in the state parliament, before this act was changed, I have never seen a single dispute that had to come to me or to anyone else. The lock-the-gate legislation was working perfectly well, but under the Ahern administration, after they stabbed Bjelke-Petersen in the back, then it was, 'Whatever the big mining companies want and whatever the big coal-seam gas companies want.' There was a free-fire zone to shoot us to pieces. Being a person who owned 250,000 acres of cattle land, I probably have a bit of a prejudice running for the cattlemen. I was an active member of the Cattlemen's Union and we got over 1,000 people at a big rally in Rockhampton to fight off the lock-the-gate legislation. As luck would have it, we got rid of Mr Ahern, but only a few months before an election was called. And the result was I couldn't change the legislation, but I announced officially that we would go back to the lock-the-gate legislation, as soon as the elections were over, assuming we would be re-elected. For that the mining companies had a unanimous vote of no confidence in me as the mines minister. I thank them for that because I think I got a lot of votes out of it. It proved to the people we weren't in the pockets of the big foreign corporations; we were on the side of Australians and Queenslanders.
The lock-the-gate battle continues unabated. Great Australians, such as Alan Jones, are walking in the hot sun in demonstrations. I also, shockingly, have been walking with the Greens. My only escape is that they are more embarrassed to be walking with me. People on very different sides of the political spectrum are coming together because they know that this is wrong. The greatest principle that enabled the Anglo-Saxons to get ahead of the rest of the world was that they had private property. It was locked into the wonderful document drawn up by Bishop Langton called the Magna Carta. It says that the king has no right to set upon a free man's property without due process or law. That is my land, not the government's land and not the Crown's land. The lock-the-gate battle is continuing.

Another aspect that needs to be investigated is the $23 billion a year of wealth that is taken away from Australia and put into the hands of foreign corporations. Is that a good thing for Australia? Who are the people that gave away all of the gas resources of this nation? Now we have both Mount Isa Mines and the biggest fertiliser plant in Australia at Mount Isa having to buy gas at $16 a gigajoule when their competitors are buying it at $6 a gigajoule. You don't have to be Albert Einstein to figure out that, if fertiliser is diammonium phosphate, there is more ammonia in there than phosphate. For those who don't know, ammonia is gas. So we are having to buy two-thirds of our fertiliser at $16 when our competitors are buying their two-thirds at $6. Obviously we can't compete, so let's close down yet another industry in Australia!

Who allowed every single skerrick of our gas to be foreign owned? The people in this place did. The people in this place approved the sale of all of that gas. People now are buying or have stated their intention to buy gas out of Tokyo and China to export back to Australia. That gas comes from Australia. There is a big pipeline that runs through Mount Isa to Gladstone and overseas. Instead of tapping into that pipeline, it's cheaper to go overseas and buy our gas and bring it back into Australia. Seriously, could the people in this place give a damn about the interests of Australia?

If one single person ended up with $23 million in his pocket, how much did the major parties end up with in their pockets? How much? My worthy colleague here from Melbourne would be very interested in finding the answer to that question. The worst aspect is that this country has lost $23 billion a year.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): Is the motion seconded?
Mr Bandt: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (10:39): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS) has the potential to create 3,700 jobs for northern Adelaide and add more than $500 million a year to the State's economy; and
calls on the Government to immediately commit to provide the $45.6 million in funding required by the South Australian Government for the NAIS to proceed.

Water has always been a big issue in my electorate. We have some of the leaders in the world in collecting stormwater and using it for both industrial and semiresidential purposes, such as watering of parks and recreational facilities. It started in the City of Salisbury and extended to the City of Playford. Since then, we've seen a couple of schemes extend that very principle to horticulture and agricultural produce—agribusiness.

In 2010, the first iteration of the NAIS was proposed. Unfortunately, that fell over through want of a private backer. It had a private backer, but the effects of the global financial crisis took their toll. Since then, we've had the Gawler River scheme—the Bunyip scheme—which is now providing water to the western Barossa. It is a very successful scheme. It has already proved its worth by saving some $30 million worth of crops. It is a $30 million overall scheme but with a $10 million private contribution, so it has proved its worth in just one summer.

We have here a vital proposal, the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme. I'm happy to say that, since I had the motion listed on the Notice Paper and since I've been lobbying the minister—and the South Australian government, of course, has provided a $110 million commitment—the federal government has finally come to the party.

Of course, water projects do require a bipartisan approach. Typically they run across governments and across administrations, and sometimes, due to their length of time, they run across even political careers. It's important that we do keep an eye to bipartisanship on this, but I would note that South Australia has suffered greatly at the hands of this Commonwealth government under both its prime ministers. Under the first Prime Minister, we saw a shocking assault on the industrial infrastructure in the automotive, shipbuilding and steel industries. Under this government, we've seen precious little in the way of response in rebuilding it. Finally, they have come to the party on this very important project, which will basically develop 300 hectares of additional agricultural land, provide perhaps up to 3,700 jobs and add more than $500 million a year to the South Australian economy.

The other important thing about it is that it also provides for a very important environmental outcome. The 12 gigalitres of wastewater that would've been discharged into the gulf from the Bolivar sewage works—treated water, but water that was going to be discharged nonetheless and would have had an effect on mangroves, swamps and other pristine habitats up the coast of my electorate—will now be used for agricultural purposes, so there's a dual dividend in both the economy and the environment.

This project was backed in the last federal election by the opposition. We provided an $80 million commitment. I would note that that $80 million commitment would be far fairer than the $46 million that the Commonwealth government is putting in, which of course has forced the state government to put in $110 million. In this project, the Commonwealth is not even an equal partner, despite the damage they have done to my state and the job market. We will see that damage very, very acutely next month when Holden closes.

We're happy to see a bipartisan commitment to this project. We're happy to see it developed. I'm glad I could play a small role in pushing the government to do it. I'm glad that the Labor Party provided the early impetus to develop this very important project. I know that, when it comes to actually building and overseeing it, we will be there in government to
do exactly that and to help South Australia grow and to provide jobs after a terrible period of Commonwealth government by those opposite.

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

Mr Zappia: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (10:44): I am very proud to be speaking on this motion today and to talk about the wonderful job that the federal coalition government has done, particularly in relation to water policy. The only problem we have in South Australia is the terrible state Labor government. The sooner we get rid of them, the better for the future of our state.

I'd like to highlight the effective water policy of the coalition government, which is building critical water infrastructure across the nation. The Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme will create crucial jobs for South Australia, boost the output of our arable market gardens around Virginia and the Gawler River and enhance our horticultural export potential. This is a commonsense project. It is disappointing that the failed state Labor government didn't jump onto this sooner.

Currently, half of the potable recycled water from northern Adelaide's Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant goes out to sea and has done so for years. In South Australia, where we often have water restrictions, we are wasting gigalitres of our most valuable and scarce resource by pumping it into the ocean. This is insanity. This is why the coalition government has picked up the slack in South Australia once again, as we have on so many projects—first, funding the feasibility study with $2.5 million of federal money and now committing $45.6 million to the scheme itself.

It's the first project to be funded under the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund's expression of interest process. These projects are selected on a priority basis for what will bring the biggest economic return, which is precisely what my state of South Australia needs. The Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme will create over $500 million worth of economic activity and 3,700 jobs in the process. It will do this by delivering up to 12 gigalitres of water to the region for irrigated agriculture and intensive high-tech agriculture, allowing local businesses to grow and develop greater market access to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, the UAE, Indonesia and Singapore. This project aligns well with the state Liberal Party's GlobeLink plan to create a dedicated road and rail freight corridor around the Mount Lofty Ranges into northern Adelaide, and a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week export airport at Murray Bridge.

Despite the fact that our region's farmers and primary industries are being shunned by the state Labor government, the agricultural sector is propping up South Australia's economy. It's one of the bright lights of our economic activity in South Australia at the moment. This is just as well, because the state Labor government is killing manufacturing in our state with the world's highest power prices, and the worst is yet to come. I spent the couple of weeks we've just had in our electorates talking to a range of businesses. It is genuinely terrifying, the impact that we are yet to see of these terribly high power prices and what this is doing to business investment and employment. We can contrast this with the state Liberal Party's visionary plan to build productive infrastructure as part of GlobeLink, which has the potential to create thousands of jobs and export activity. It will be a game changer for South Australia's economy, while solving local problems, such as getting freight trains out of my electorate and
others and getting trucks out of the Adelaide Hills and suburbs, which clog our roads, provide safety risks and, particularly in relation to the trains, provide a significant bushfire risk during the summer months.

This is what the Liberal Party and the National Party do. We build dams, save water, support farmers, build infrastructure and grow the economy. This is what creates jobs so that hardworking Australians can put food on their tables, pay their mortgages and provide for their families and their communities. It's policies like our National Water Infrastructure Development Fund supporting the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme that will lift South Australia's economy out of its current slump.

If state and federal Labor were serious about economic growth and job creation, they would have investigated and funded this critical scheme years ago. By contrast, the state Labor government has had wasteful and nonsensical water policy, like the $1.2 billion desal plant that sits, mothballed, not far out of my electorate while we pump almost 30 gigalitres of potable water from northern Adelaide into the sea. Federally, Labor—those opposite—are not much better. A Labor government in Canberra would have stopped the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme dead in its tracks; so I'm proud to be here today to support this very important initiative for South Australia.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:49): I commend the member for Wakefield for bringing this matter before the House because it is important for South Australia. Next month, the Holden plant at Elizabeth will close and, with it, thousands of jobs will be lost and hundreds of small businesses will struggle to survive because the Turnbull and Abbott government turned their back on auto workers in this country. The Turnbull government has known for three years about the impending closure, yet it has done very little to support the workers who are likely to lose their jobs or the businesses that will struggle to continue to keep their doors open. The pittance of support that has been provided to South Australia through the automotive Growth Fund has been nothing more than tokenistic rebadging of regular government industry assistance programs. Even more disappointing is that one of the industry sectors that is able to grow, that has been saying for years that it can grow and that has been neglected by the Turnbull government, is the irrigators in the northern Adelaide plains. The GM workers live in the very region in which these irrigators operate, and they could transition to jobs that would be created, if there were growth in this sector.

Food growing in the northern Adelaide plains isn't just about growing; it also creates opportunities for food processing and the export of South Australian food. The only thing that is stopping the expansion of many of the operators that are currently there—and I have spoken to them at length about this—is access to more water. They have limited water supplies. Indeed, one of the growers that I spoke to said that he has an application ready to go to expand his operations by hundreds of additional hectares if he could get water, and that water would depend on the extension of the Bolivar pipeline that currently goes out into the region. Those growers have been calling for that support for years. It's something that has been known, and Labor went into the last election with an $80 million commitment to extend that irrigation pipeline.

Finally—and I say finally because it has taken this government four years to do something about it and come to the party—the Turnbull government has committed $46 million to assist with the extension. It is not even half of the $110 million that the state government is going to
provide for the same purpose. And it is four years of wasted time that could've been used to have the pipeline operational and ready to go right now, in time to provide jobs that will be needed as a result of Holden closing. It has been four years of wasted time that we will never get back. But it should come as no surprise to anybody that this government has turned its back on South Australia. It has done so the entire time it's been in office.

It has particularly turned its back on South Australia when it comes to agriculture. We have an agriculture minister who has never shown any support for South Australian irrigators. His track record on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and his disregard for South Australia, speaks for itself. We debated matters related to that only a couple of months ago, where it was absolutely clear that the agriculture minister is only interested in the eastern states. When the South Australian farmers were flooded out last year, we saw a visit by the Prime Minister but we saw no real support for the farmers at all. Since that visit I have spoken to growers who were very disillusioned by the fact that the Prime Minister was prepared to go out there and claim that he was going to give them whatever support the government could, and yet they have since seen nothing.

The $46 million will help extend the pipeline, and it will create some immediate growth opportunities, but, sadly, it won't be for another two years. The northern Adelaide growers know their industry well; they are experienced operators. They also know the potential for growth in the export market. It's an industry sector that will, in fact, create a flow-on of jobs right across transport, irrigation, construction, packaging, machinery and the like, so it will create jobs for the very people who are likely to be made redundant as a result of the closure of Holden. Being located close to road, rail, sea and an airport, the opportunities for exports are indeed there. But the government has only belatedly committed to the funding because it was embarrassed into doing so by the announcement by Labor earlier this week. It's always been Labor that has led the way in supporting Adelaide's northern plains irrigators and small business operators. (Time expired)

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:54): To the member for Makin, it's a pity they hadn't put the money up then—that's all I can say. But I thank the member for Wakefield for bringing this motion forward. He must be very pleased with his work. But before his motion got into the House we'd acted on it, which we can have a laugh about. I hope, now, that he tells his electors how wonderful the Turnbull government is and what it is doing for Adelaide; in fact, what it is doing with so many other schemes and so many other projects. So, Member for Wakefield, you would be very pleased with the Turnbull government's contribution to South Australia. As the member for Boothby pointed out, by golly we need it in South Australia. We have had 16 years of regression under the state government. You know and I know and the member for Boothby knows that we're going to lose another seat in the federal parliament, and that is an absolute response to the way our state has been run. But the coalition government is there and it is making a difference.

This project is a terrific project. We live in the driest state in the driest continent on earth—that is, inhabited continent, let's get it straight. We need to make the most of the water we do have. We have wonderful fertile plains to the north of Adelaide, even though the sprawl of Adelaide is gradually reducing that as well, it must be said. The coalition government put $2½ million into the feasibility study, which I think is very important. This motion may have been brought on by the member for Wakefield's impatience in trying to get this deal over the line.
But, in fact, good government always makes sure it is backing good projects, and that's what the $2½ million investment was about. Now we are investing $45.6 million—and there will be 3,700 full-time jobs. That's a lot of jobs. I have just come out of the celebrations in Whyalla, where we've probably saved a few more jobs than that. But it is a reason to be proud and pleased with the work we do, particularly in this case coming out of this place. The project will deliver up to 12 gigalitres of new, treated water to the northern Adelaide plains.

It is worth noting that during the 2016 election campaign, the ALP actually promised to cut the $500 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund by more than $200 million—goodness me. The first investment out of this fund will fund the northern irrigation project, and you wanted to cut it in half—not you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I hasten to add; the member for Wakefield and his colleagues were going to cut it in half. In fact, in the 2016 election the ALP said they were committed to reduce uncommitted funding by 50 per cent. You can't get anything done if you keep pulling the money out. That's what happened to Defence and that's why this government has had to move in to South Australia and rejuvenate the Australian shipbuilding industry because of what Labor did to Defence—not one ship in six years. We are there working with the South Australian people, investing in the Northern Connector and investing in the Darlington interchange and the Torrens Road to River Torrens project. To me, in a quick add-up, that looks to be about $1.4 billion.

Interestingly, there has been a lot of conversation about GST receipts in recent times. South Australia is in receipt of $1.45 for every dollar our taxpayers put into the GST.

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr RAMSEY: If you would like to talk to your Western Australian colleagues, let me tell you this: I have great sympathy for you there, that the system is not working right when they get 35c in the dollar. When the South Australian government, in its electoral mode, comes out and criticises the federal government for virtually every mistake they've ever made and lays every failure it has at the feet of the federal government, I hope you, Member for Wakefield, will stand up and say, 'Well, actually, Malcolm Turnbull and his team are doing a pretty good job because they are the ones that are investing—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): Member for Grey will refer—

Mr RAMSEY: this $45 million in making sure the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hello!

Mr RAMSEY: I beg your pardon?

Mr RAMSEY: It's twice I've called you. The member for Grey will refer to members by their proper title.

Mr RAMSEY: The Prime Minister?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, not Malcolm Turnbull but Prime Minister.

Mr RAMSEY: Okay. Is it okay if I call him Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, but you didn't the first two times and that's why I pulled you up.

Mr RAMSEY: Okay. When you, the member for Wakefield, speak to your electors, you can say that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and his team are doing a great job because they are delivering this project for South Australia.
Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:59): This is a very important motion because it highlights—despite what those on the other side have said—that it was Labor out in front on this issue, talking about the importance of the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme project. It was Labor that took it to the last election as an election commitment and it was Labor that, in opposition, led the way in committing the funds. The Liberal Party—embarrassed, being outdone again and again by Labor in South Australia—have committed a measly 50 per cent of what Labor committed, so their heart isn't really in this project. But they have been forced into it by embarrassment, by federal Labor and the member for Wakefield's work in embarrassing them to this position, and they are now going to invest. It is 50 per cent less than Labor would invest, but nonetheless they are investing. They were embarrassed into doing this.

There is a good reason why they had to be embarrassed into doing this. When the budget came out on budget night, I went through the budget papers, looking for the new investment in South Australia. I saw investment into New South Wales, into the new airport, investment into Brisbane and investment into Victoria, but I couldn't find any new investment—not a single new dollar to be invested—in South Australia. That is what this federal Liberal government thinks of South Australia. It is quite in contrast to federal Labor, who have been on the front foot calling for investment in South Australia.

The subject of this motion in front of us, the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme, is just one example. Being in the southern suburbs of Adelaide, I know the transition that we are now going through with the car industry exiting, after Joe Hockey goaded Holden to leave this country—and we will never forget what Joe Hockey, the then Treasurer, did to the car industry. He challenged them to leave, and that's what they've now done. We are now facing the consequences of that in South Australia.

Only federal Labor have been willing to say, 'We want to invest in South Australia.' We want to invest. We had to run an almighty campaign to get the submarines built in South Australia, because, of course, we know that the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott had done the deal to send the whole construction, the whole contract, off to Japan. We know that is the case. And we have serious concerns about what this government plans to do with the frigates. Is it going to ensure that we get the technology and the know-how in Australia, with South Australia as the hub? This is a really important question that this government has failed to answer time and time again.

We know that the member for Sturt will use weasel words to try to get around reporters when he is asked point blank how much work will be in South Australia and in Australia. He won't answer that question, whether it comes to the frigates or the submarines. We know they are disingenuous about investment in South Australia. It was very interesting that the member for Grey brought up the GST. Only the federal Labor team have put forward a motion that both addresses the issues that Western Australia faces with the distribution and protects the carve-up for other states, including, importantly, South Australia. Only the federal government of the day are saying, 'We're thinking about potentially penalising other states.' The government are looking at that, and, once again, you get weasel words, depending on what state you're in.

Federal Labor have been very, very clear. We are leading the way when it comes to policy development and important projects like the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme. Of course,
this isn't new. When in government, federal Labor led the way. The federal Labor government invested in water infrastructure and indeed infrastructure right across my electorate and South Australia. We often hear the government talk about the Torrens to Torrens part of South Road. We know they never wanted to fund it. We know they were once again guilted and embarrassed into funding that project, because it had already started. They wanted to play politics with it time and time again. Well, it's important that they invest in this scheme and in South Australia, and we will hold them to account when they don't.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (11:04): Mr Deputy Speaker, you might know that I'm an asthmatic. But I have to say even I am struggling; it's taken some of my breath away to hear the member for Kingston go from water and horticulture to submarines to cars! Let's drag it back to water, because I'm here to speak on this motion and to talk about the bipartisan approach to this. This is $45.6 million invested by the coalition government into water infrastructure. And what will that do for South Australia? What will it do for farmers in the member for Wakefield's electorate? It will create 3,700 jobs, and it will create some $500 million for the state's economy—and these figures are important; I will come back to them.

We are talking about 12 gigs. I will leave for a moment any partisan complaints—which have been made so well by the member for Boothby, and by the member for Grey on our side—about the fact that the Labor Party sought to cut funding to this scheme. It cut funding to the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund—the very scheme which is now delivering this $45.6 million to the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme. So we're in screaming agreement, the member for Wakefield and I, and the member for Kingston and I, that an investment of this nature is unashamedly good for South Australian jobs. It is unashamedly good for South Australian farmers. And remember, we're talking about 12 gig. So, if it is good for farmers in the member for Wakefield's electorate, can the member for Wakefield and the member for Kingston—anyone on that side—tell me why we should rip out 36 gigs from irrigators in the Riverland? Because that's exactly what is currently proposed. They've come in here to champion the 12 gigs for farmers in the member for Wakefield's electorate creating 3,700 jobs. But they're not going to talk to you about the 36 gigs—conveniently, three times the amount of water—being ripped out of the Riverland. What is that going to do? Well, on these numbers, it will cost us 12,000 jobs: easy to say, hard to comprehend. It will cost the South Australian economy—the worst-performing economy in the country—$1.5 billion on these figures.

Whilst I'm in screaming agreement with the member for Wakefield and the member for Kingston with respect to this particular project, I hope they're in screaming agreement with me when I say irrigators in the Riverland can't afford to give up any more water. We can't afford to lose jobs. We as a state can't afford to lose the revenue that comes with it. But strangely, what I will hear on that proposal from those on the other side is silence. They are running this disingenuous campaign: 'Save the Murray'. To be honest, their campaign is code for: 'Rip water irrigation licences out of the Riverland', 'Cost irrigators'—in my electorate—'their businesses' and 'Cost workers in the Riverland their jobs'. So I find it passing strange that those opposite will come in here and claim so-called credit for this investment when they know, deep down in their hearts, that this is a coalition commitment, this $45.6 million out of a fund that those opposite were going to cancel, or at least cut. So I would like to see the same sort of screaming agreement, the same sort of bipartisanship, when we talk about the irrigators
in my electorate—the people that put fruit and vegetables on the tables, in the pantries and in
the fridges of Australians all across the country, and indeed on the tables, in the pantries and
in the fridges of people around the world. To do otherwise is proof positive that those on the
other side are, quite frankly, uninterested in the national interest. They are much more
interested in the interests of their respective electorates. And whilst I can come here and say
that this is an unashamedly good thing for South Australia, and for farmers in the member for
Wakefield's electorate, delivered by the coalition government, I hope the member for
Wakefield can do the same when we speak about irrigators from the Riverland.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The time allotted for this debate has
expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of
the day for the next day of sitting.

Australian Aid

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (11:10): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that Australia has a significant role in assisting countries to reduce poverty and
achieve inclusive prosperity through its international aid;

(2) recognises that:

(a) every year Australian aid improves the lives of millions of people around the globe;

(b) Australia is playing a leading role in international initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Leaders
Malaria Alliance; and

(c) Australia has played an important role in having the G20 Health Ministers commit to action on
drug-resistant tuberculosis and the World Health Assembly endorsing action to accelerate access to
vaccines;

(3) notes that:

(a) while the global community is making progress towards ending poverty, hunger and the worst
epidemics, the world is facing multiple challenges of war, poverty, hunger, displaced people and
climate change;

(b) in the Asia-Pacific region, 330 million people live in extreme poverty, 1.5 billion people lack
access to safe sanitation, and one in 7 people suffer from malnutrition; and

(c) Australia is one of 194 countries which have endorsed the Agenda for Sustainable
Development, which sets out 17 goals to eliminate poverty, improve health and achieve inclusive
economic and social development; and

(4) calls on the Government to:

(a) set clear long term goals for the Australian aid program, consistent with our interests in
supporting sustainable economic development, health security and poverty reduction for countries
throughout our region in the forthcoming Foreign Policy White Paper, which has received more than
9,000 public submissions on a range of issues, including our aid commitments;

(b) commit to consideration of increasing Australian aid in real terms in the next four years, to
support achieving these goals;

(c) build understanding within the Australian community of the work that has been achieved
through Australian aid, to lift our national pride in our contribution to the world; and

(d) expand opportunities for everyday Australians to contribute in practical ways to regional
development, through short work parties to exchange agricultural and practical skills in developing
countries.
Together, in the 21st century, I'm sure all MPs can agree that no child should die from a mosquito bite, no child should ever go to bed starving, and no single person should be denied opportunity because of where they are born, the colour of their skin, their gender, their religion or who they love. All people are born equal. In a modern-day society characterised by technological advancement and interconnectedness, in an ever-globalised world, if one person anywhere has their opportunities or dreams diminished, society loses. In this modern world, therefore, it is not acceptable for a country to retreat into itself. For Australia to stay as a strong middle power, we cannot shrink in the face of global challenges, especially in our own backyard.

These are challenging times. We face threats of terrorism, displaced people, climate change, an international order threatened by the sense that globalisation is leaving far too many behind, and expanding inequality—something even Australia is not immune to; something that threatens to entrench global class disadvantage, even where hard-earned progress has been won before. Currently, Australia's aid program is geared towards our region, towards countries like Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Cambodia. Taxpayer funds go towards supporting important projects: governance, because where governance is poor, development outcomes are also poor; health, like our leading role in the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance; and education, the greatest enabler of our world's next generation.

Sadly, the Abbott and now Turnbull government is not leading when it comes to our international aid program. In the Turnbull government's most recent budget—the 2017 budget—we saw the freezing of Australia's aid budget in 2019-20 and 2020-21. These two consecutive freezes represent the fifth and sixth cuts to the foreign aid budget since the coalition came to power. The 2017 budget cut represents $303 million less in real terms, and adds to the $11.3 billion that has already been slashed from the foreign aid budget. Despite 25 years of economic growth, Australia's international aid program has been drastically cut since the coalition took office in September 2013. The internationally agreed aid to gross national income—or GNI—target is 0.7 per cent. I'll come back to this in a moment. I wanted to mention that target to contextualise the next set of numbers I'm going to discuss: Australia's own aid to GNI percentage under the cold-hearted Turnbull government. In the last financial year, Australia's aid dropped to a paltry 0.22 per cent—our lowest ever. Remember, the international target is 0.7 per cent. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you thought that was unacceptable—which it is—the cuts I just mentioned in this year's budget will result in an even greater decline in our aid contributions. By 2021, our international aid contribution will drop to 0.2 per cent of GNI.

Before anyone argues that Australia's economic situation justifies this slashing of our aid budget, and why we need to spend $100 million or so on a postal survey, I'd like to compare our situation with another country; a country that also entered a deep recession in the aftermath of the GFC: the United Kingdom, led by a conservative government since 2010. The UK does not shy away from the 0.7 per cent international target in the face of global economic problems; it meets the target in spite of them. The former Chancellor George Osborne said this was because it was morally right, it strengthens the UK's global position, and it is compassionate. If only our conservative prime minister, Prime Minister Turnbull, could share some of the compassion of Theresa May, his conservative counterpart.
We all know the important work that our international aid programs carry out. Australia is a prosperous nation. As a good global citizen, particularly in this part of the world, in this connection between Asia and the Pacific, Australia should be playing its part in helping to reduce global poverty and inequality and in assisting the vulnerable children who need our help.

I call on Prime Minister Turnbull to not let fear, ignorance and populism and that crazy right wing of his party dictate what goes on. Do not listen to the economic doomsday theorists who fuel the fires of racism, greed and selfishness. Instead, be a Prime Minister who leads and gives a good demonstration of the compassion of the Australian people. Australia is a strong economy. We have the capacity. We can and must do more to help those in our region and across the world. We were there at the start of the United Nations and we were there as a global leader, a small power leading the world. We can revisit those days.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell):** I thank the member for Moreton. Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Hart:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (11:15):** I have pleasure in responding to the member for Moreton on his motion on Australian aid. Official development assistance, or ODA, in the year 2017-18 will be $3.98 billion to AusAID. It's the 13th largest donor in the OECD. This amount will increase from $3.9128 billion to $4.018 billion in the year 2018-19, and this figure will be maintained, at minimum, to at least 2020-21. Overall, the program is set out to reduce poverty in the countries less fortunate than Australia.

We used to give aid to Thailand, but Thailand has really kicked the poverty line, and now they actually give aid to other countries in their region. Overall, our aid is there to reduce poverty and promote sustainable economic growth in those areas, and 90 per cent of our aid is spent in the Indo-Pacific region—Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands, including the Solomon Islands. We also concentrate with our aid programs on reducing the health threat in countries with tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS and those kinds of things. Tuberculosis is rife throughout New Guinea, in parts of Indonesia and in Vietnam.

I had the honour of visiting Vietnam with The Global Foundation, to which we, Australia, donate quite a considerable sum of money. We donate about $200 million a year to The Global Foundation, which is an offshoot of the United Nations. I looked at the aid we provide and the impacts and results of our aid. I visited villages in Vietnam where tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS were rife. A mosquito net, which costs about $5 in Australian money, can go a long way to reducing malaria. There are different strains of malaria, but a mosquito net will block out all strains of malaria in those areas. We visited a village that had one mosquito net for the whole village. The men who worked in the rubber plantations, in the thick timber, took that one net with them, so five men slept under one mosquito net. That's how desperate those people were. So Australian aid came to the front and supplied a total of two villages in that area—

**Mr Entsch:** That was you, Member for Flynn. That was you, Ken O'Dowd; don't be modest.

**Mr O'DOWD:*** Yes. That's right. Thank you. That was the situation. The member for Leichhardt was with me on that occasion. It was a fact those people were hamstrung in that
wet, tropical country. There were mosquitos everywhere. I lived in Bougainville in New Guinea for several years. We used to take quinine tablets every morning. We didn't get malaria—they must have worked.

More recently, I was on an Asian delegation, and we visited places like Myanmar, where we saw a lot of poverty for sure but also facilities looking after the health of the Myanmar people—and we all know the events of the last couple of weeks will not have helped what is going on over there.

There we ran across the former member for Page, Janelle Saffin, in Myanmar. She was doing a tremendous job. Aung San Suu Kyi is now the new leader of Myanmar, and Janelle is doing a fantastic job. I would like to thank her for her support on this issue. Thank you very much.

Mr HART (Bass) (11:21): I rise today to support the motion moved by the member for Moreton and I thank him for bringing to the attention of the House the important issue of Australia's role in assisting countries to reduce poverty and achieve inclusive prosperity through international aid.

We are living in a world of ever-increasing global inequality, and in fact inequality is worse today than at any time since the 19th century. We know that the richest one per cent of the world's population has more wealth than the rest of the world's population combined. In our region of the Asia Pacific, there are more than 330 million people living in extreme poverty, 1.5 billion without access to safe sanitation and one in seven suffering from malnutrition.

Certainly, Australia has a decent record when it comes to the provision of international aid and assistance to developing nations. The highest ratio of aid-to-gross income—that is, GNI—was 0.48 per cent during the 1967-68 financial year under successive Prime Ministers Holt, McEwen and Gorton. The $5.1 billion spent in 2012 to 2013 represented the peak of Australia's aid in dollar terms—although, in terms of the ratio of aid to GNI, it was well below the levels of the 1960s and the 1970s.

Unfortunately, we've recently seen a weakening of Australia's overseas aid spending with the 2017-18 budget, cutting an additional $303 million over the forward estimates. This brings Australia to its lowest spending on overseas aid as a proportion of gross national income since records were first kept to 0.22 per cent. Nevertheless, Australia is one of 194 countries to have endorsed the agenda for sustainable development, which sets out 17 goals to eliminate poverty, improve health and achieve inclusive economic and social development.

The sustainable development goals—the SDGs—are:

… are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They address a range of issues such as poverty, education, gender inequality, health, food security and climate change among several others.

The SDGs call for action by all countries, recognising that ending poverty must be achieved within the context of economic growth and addressing social needs. Adopted at a UN summit in 2014, the SDGs came into force on 1 January 2016, although they are not legally binding on signatory nations. Rather, the expectation is that governments will take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 goals. This seems
reasonable to me. In fact, this is more than reasonable—it seems to me that charting a pathway to the achievement of the SDGs is an obligation which is imposed upon us as a privileged and advanced economy within the community of nations.

Where we have around 766 million people, 380 million of them children, living on less than $2 a day, development assistance is even more important than before. Why shouldn't we, a nation as prosperous as we are, freely commit to the global agenda of tackling inequality? We know that there is significant community support for an increased overseas aid budget and greater assistance to developing nations, with approximately 1.6 million individual Australians donating $1 billion to international aid organisations annually.

Just this last Saturday, I attended a fundraiser for a Tasmanian NGO, the Peter Hewitt Care for Africa Foundation, a small aid organisation based in my electorate, delivering education, health care, clean water and sanitation in the Tarime district in Tanzania. The CEO Diana Butler AM and her dedicated team of volunteers raise tens of thousands of dollars annually to fulfil the organisation's aims of delivering vital aid on the ground in rural Tanzania.

But our contribution shouldn't be primarily charitable from private organisations. We know that our long-term interest as a nation is served by supporting, mentoring and investing in the sustainable development of nations burdened by poverty and disadvantage. There have been over 9,000 public submissions received with regard to the forthcoming foreign policy white paper. This is an overwhelming response that clearly indicates that the great level of community concern with Australia's foreign policy interests, international engagement and commitment to overseas aid. It is in this context of community engagement and concern that I echo the sentiments put forward by the member for Moreton in his motion. I call on the Turnbull government to consider increasing Australia's aid in real terms in the next four years in support of achieving the sustainable development goals.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (11:26): In speaking to this motion I'd like to focus on tuberculosis, which is very much a disease of poverty. As a director of the Global TB Caucus and the Australian convenor for the Global HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis Caucus, I'm also the co-chair of the Asia Pacific TB Caucus and Australian TB Caucus. Australia's TB Caucus, a cross-party group of 20 parliamentarians, is focused on securing support and expertise to help end tuberculosis as a global epidemic. I would like to acknowledge my Australian caucus co-chair, the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite.

Tuberculosis is the world's deadliest communicable disease, killing 1.8 million people every year and making another 10.4 million people sick. TB may be under control in Australia, but the situation remains very grim in neighbouring countries. The Asia-Pacific region bears more than 60 per cent of the global burden of tuberculosis. Our nearest neighbour, Papua New Guinea, has one of the highest rates of tuberculosis infection in the world, with 30,000 people newly infected every year, and the island of Daru in the Western Province, which is not far from Cape York in my electorate, has one of the highest rates of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in the world. There were 19,000 new cases of MDR-TB diagnosed in PNG in 2015. Over the next 35 years, it's predicted that MDR-TB could claim an extra 75 million lives globally, at an economic cost of US$16.7 trillion. These figures are alarming, and the impact on Australia would be absolutely devastating.

Tuberculosis is a very real national security threat to our country, and Australia continues to work with PNG to create better tuberculosis identification and treatment. It also helps to
reduce the number of Papua New Guineans travelling to Australia for treatment. There are 30,000 to 50,000 border crossings per year between PNG and the Torres Strait, and there have been a series of contagious disease outbreaks, including MDR-TB. Communities at greatest risk are of course in the Torres Strait, Cape York and further south to my home town of Cairns.

The Cairns based Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, with the support of the Australian government, is continuing to work on the ground in the treaty villages of Western Province to bolster local support for sustainable TB control infrastructure. The RRRC manages the Building Resilience in Treaty Villages project, which aims to establish a platform that will deliver appropriate health services to all PNG communities and give ownership of the tuberculosis solution to locals. The project involves the recruitment and training of multiskilled community rangers to work in construction, sanitation, first aid and leadership.

Australia's initial investment of $1.8 million in 2014 saw 52 community rangers, including 12 women, trained up in four treaty villages. This resulted in the rangers using their skills to install storage for more than 1.5 million litres of clean fresh water, to build eight new reinforced capped and sealed groundwater wells, to provide emergency medical assistance on more than 100 occasions, including lifesaving first aid, transportation and childbirth support, and to complete a top-down refurbishment of Mabaduan village's hospital outpost. In 2016-17 the project was extended, with an extra $400,000 from the Australian government. Subject to successful completion, we will support its phasing up to reach all 13 treaty villages by 2019-20 and induct another 58 rangers, of whom 18 will be women, giving us a total of 122 rangers.

In a few days I will be travelling to New York to represent Australia as part of the 193 member state General Assembly of the United Nations. While there I will continue to lobby on behalf of the Global Tuberculosis Caucus for a reprioritisation of TB within the global fund and seek a commitment for a significant increase in funding for research into a TB vaccine. I will also be highlighting the work of the national Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University in Cairns, where Professor Louis Schofield, Professor Emma McBryde and Dr Andreas Kupz have recently secured funding to conduct work on developing a TB vaccine and health security in the western Pacific. Thanks to Australian and international investments in research and development, we've come a long way in developing simpler diagnostics and we are well progressed in trialling shorter oral treatments, but there is still much work to be done in developing a new vaccine.

In the time I have left I would like to put on the record my appreciation of the work of the member for Flynn. He mentioned Australian aid. When he was in Vietnam he secured mosquito insecticide nets for a village. He actually put his hand in his pocket, wrote a cheque and bought a net for every single villager during that visit. That made a huge difference to that entire village, and I have got no doubt at all that it will save a lot of lives. I want to publicly acknowledge the member for Flynn for his amazing generosity and compassion.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Bruce.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (11:32): Hello, Mr Speaker. You wandered in. I thought maybe you didn't trust the member for McEwen to supervise me. It's good to see you here.
The SPEAKER: I don't think anyone has ever been thrown out before question time on a Monday. Anyway, you're obviously giving it a try.

Mr HILL: I rise to strongly support the motion of the member for Moreton, which acknowledges Australia’s role in reducing poverty and increasing prosperity through international aid and development assistance, and recognises that Australian aid improves the lives of millions of people every year. We have seen enormous progress through the benefits of our aid in reducing poverty, hunger and epidemics. We also see in our region the immense and emerging challenges of war and climate change and the increasing challenge of displaced people. Across the Asia-Pacific 330 million people still live in extreme poverty, 1½ billion people lack safe sanitation and one in seven still suffer malnutrition.

Australia has had a very proud history of generous and effective aid. Despite our status as one of the richest countries in the world, it is a matter of great concern to many Australians that our international aid appears to have fallen. Indeed, on many metrics it's reported to be at the lowest level in our history. We are now down at around 20c in every $100 because of the sustained cuts, budget after budget, by this government. We have fallen, shamefully, to 17th out of 29, and trending down, in the OECD. I saw that on the weekend the latest contribution to public policy of the Western Australian Young Liberals—bless them—was to cut foreign aid by half again.

All members in this place would hear widely different views in the community, ranging from the enormous concern—the moral position, if you like—that we should do more to the pragmatic concern that Australia's international standing in the region and the global community and our influence as a middle power does matter. I have also heard from people in my electorate the transactional concerns that we should continue but we should focus only on our direct national, security and economic interests—and I appreciate that. Also there is the view that charity begins at home and that we should cut all or most of our foreign aid. That ranges, to be fair, from a genuine concern or focus on how we have to prioritise our domestic needs to, as I've also heard in my community, some quite mean-spirited views—that we're just pandering to the United Nations.

My view is that international aid must remain a core part of Australia's foreign policy. But there is, indeed, a moral case in a world of increasing inequality—it's not just domestically but around the globe. Who knew: trickle-down economics doesn't just fail here; it fails globally! Humans are literally starving and drowning in our region. Yes, we have enormous needs at home but it cannot be either/or. We can walk and chew gum at the same time, and we should and must continue to do our part to address extreme poverty.

The global standing of Australia also does matter, in my view. We're part of a community of nations. We must maintain and enhance our influence and standing. It does count in international forums. You do have more influence when you're seen to actually care about your neighbours and do your bit. Labor, of course, has always believed in good international citizenship and believes our generosity in times of need—perhaps, most recently, in a very stark way, the Indonesian tsunami—is noticed and remembered. Yes, economic opportunities can arise from our aid. Our education and skills build credibility and trust for future business.

I'd also point out that we have enormous direct national interest in a stable and peaceful region. Prosperity and development does matter. The security of our neighbours is enhanced through economic development. Also, in a very mercenary way, frankly, it's cheaper to invest
in aid and development than to deal with failed states in our region—vastly cheaper, as any Treasury official would quietly admit to you. We've heard of terrorism growing in the region. It is undeniably a fact that failed states and states experiencing gross inequality and poverty are the primary breeding grounds for terrorism.

In closing, I mention that, in June, I was a guest of The Global Fund in Thailand and Myanmar. I travelled with a number of members of the House and was privileged to witness firsthand Australia's contribution and the work on the ground in addressing tuberculosis, malaria and HIV prevention in the region. As well as the moral case, the health case, we have enormous national interest in helping to address the rise of drug-resistant tuberculosis and drug-resistant malaria in our region. This stuff sitting in PNG can come directly into Australia through our northern border. In that context, it was devastating to hear, particularly from our friends in Myanmar, of the impact of 40 to 50 per cent cuts in the last couple of budgets to such small programs that affect public health. Indeed, the phrase 'was aid' was bandied around quite commonly in the meetings we had. I endorse the member for Moreton's motion.

The SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Privilege

The SPEAKER (11:37): On 15 August 2017 the Manager of Opposition Business raised as a matter of privilege whether the circumstances surrounding the former member for Dunkley, Mr Bruce Billson, accepting an appointment as a paid director of the Franchise Council of Australia whilst still a member of the House gave rise to any issues which may constitute contempt of the House. I am satisfied the member has raised the matter at the earliest opportunity. The Manager of Opposition Business tabled a number of related documents, that I have examined, and I have examined these as well as his statement to the House on 15 August.

House of Representatives Practice, relying on the experience in the United Kingdom as noted in Erskine May's treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and the usage of parliament (known commonly as May), refers to two relevant matters that could be considered as contempts.

The first is corruption in the execution of a member's office as a member. To quote from May:
The acceptance by a Member of either House of a bribe to influence him in his conduct as a Member, or of any fee, compensation or reward in connection with the promotion of or opposition to any bill, resolution, matter or thing submitted or intended to be submitted to either House, or to a committee is a contempt.

The second is lobbying for reward or consideration. Again to quote from May, citing a resolution of the House of Commons in 1995:
No Members of the House shall, in consideration of any remuneration, fee, payment, reward or benefit in kind, direct or indirect, …advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any outside body or individual; or urge any Member of either House of Parliament, including Ministers, to do so, by means of any speech, Question, Motion, introduction of a bill, or amendment to a Motion or Bill.
Clearly these matters are not unrelated and there could be a fine distinction between them. As I understand it, the Manager of Opposition Business has cited both as grounds for possible contempt in this case. He also refers to the actions of the Franchise Council of Australia in making the appointment of the former member for Dunkley and has raised whether this action also may give rise to contempt issues. In his statement, the Manager of Opposition Business refers to a number of statements and actions of Mr Billson after his appointment to the Franchise Council of Australia that he states 'appeared to show support for a position on the council or indicated an association with the council'.

I am not in a position to determine the nature of any connection between the appointment of Mr Billson to the Franchise Council and his subsequent statements and actions, but I appreciate that issues are raised. In relation to the question of matters being contempt, I also note they must meet the test of section 4 of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987 and be conduct that is:

… intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by a House or committee of its authority or functions …

I am not in a position to determine whether there's a prima facie case that this test has been met in the matters raised by the Manager of Opposition Business, but, again, I note the nature of the issues that have been raised.

I note that, in the United Kingdom, matters to do with lobbying for reward or consideration would now generally be dealt with as matters of conduct under the House of Commons' Code of Conduct. The House of Representatives does not have a similar code for members, even though a case such as this raises matters that may, potentially, be more to do with appropriate conduct than contempt. In this regard, I note that the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests has responsibility under the standing orders for questions about a code of conduct for members. I am willing to give precedence to a motion for matters to do with contempt or conduct in relation to the circumstances raised by the Manager of Opposition Business to be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. In doing so, I reiterate that I have not made a determination that there is a prima facie case, but I'm sufficiently concerned by the matters raised to consider that they should be examined by the committee.

I note that the Manager of Opposition Business referred to the member for Isaacs having written to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests in relation to the former member for Dunkley's obligations in relation to the registration of members' interests. I also note the remarks of the Prime Minister in response to a question from the Manager of Opposition Business on Thursday, 10 August that he had asked the secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to examine the former member for Dunkley's compliance with the Statement of Ministerial Standards.

Finally, I wish to address the issue of the jurisdiction of the House in relation to a former member. I note that the matters raised by the Manager of Opposition Business relate to the period when Mr Billson was a member of the House. The requirements of a member's accountability to the House relate to the period in which they were a member and can be dealt with by the House after a member ceases to be a member. The most recent relevant case is that concerning the former member for Dobell, Mr Craig Thomson.
Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (11:42): I move:

That the following matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests:

Whether the former Member for Dunkley, Mr Bruce Billson, by accepting an appointment as, and acting as, a paid director of the Franchise Council of Australia whilst still a Member of the House gives rise either to any issues that may constitute a contempt of the House or to any issues concerning the appropriate conduct of a Member having regard to their responsibilities to their constituents and to the public interest.

In moving that way, I acknowledge that the motion does no more than your statement. I am not asking the House to form a conclusion on this matter and I acknowledge that your statement didn't seek to either. The motion simply seeks to refer a serious matter to the Committee of Privileges.

The motion is designed, quite specifically, to allow the committee to examine the conduct of both Mr Billson and the Franchise Council during the time that Mr Billson was a member of parliament. When I raised the issue, I specifically referred to—while it is in different words—the fact that the intention of the motion is to incorporate the issue which I raised, which was for the House to be able to give precedence to a motion to refer to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests the question of whether Mr Billson's conduct, in accepting an appointment as, and acting as, a paid director of the Franchise Council of Australia while still a member of the House, amounts to corruption in the execution of his office as a member of the House such as to constitute a contempt of the House, and whether his conduct amounts to lobbying for reward or consideration such as to constitute a contempt of the House and whether the Franchise Council, or any of its staff or directors, has by appointing and paying Mr Billson as a director of that lobby group while he was still a member of the House, sought to bribe, or has bribed a member of the House, such as to constitute a contempt of the House. I urge the House, as has always been the case, to deal with this matter of privilege in the usual way. We make no conclusion by carrying this resolution but we do determine that the House will ensure that the matter is examined in the appropriate way by the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests.

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Misuse of Market Power) Bill 2017
Education and Training Legislation Repeal Bill 2017
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2017
Petroleum and Other Fuels Reporting Bill 2017
Petroleum and Other Fuels Reporting (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2017
Public Governance and Resources Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2017
Statute Update (Winter 2017) Bill 2017
Treasury Laws Amendment (2017 Measures No. 4) Bill 2017

Assent

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

COMMITTEES

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough) (11:46): The Speaker has received two messages from the Senate informing the House of the appointment of senators to certain joint committees. As the list of appointments is a lengthy one, I do not propose to read the list to the House. Details will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

BILLS

Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (11:47): I rise to speak on behalf of the opposition on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017 and can indicate the opposition's support for this legislation, though I foreshadow we'll be moving a second reading amendment to the bill. The bill deals with Australia's obligations under the International Energy Agency's agreement on an international energy program. It has long been a bipartisan position for the Australian parliament to support the work of the IEA, which was established in the wake of the oil crisis of the 1970s and provides strong policy and industry advice on energy to governments and to the industry across the country. This bill forms part of the government's plan to ensure that Australia complies with the IEA's fuel emergency reserve requirements, which are an important part of that IEA agreement. In particular, there is a requirement, reasonably well understood, I think, across the industry, for Australia and all other members of the IEA who have signed that agreement to have available 90 days worth of emergency fuels—in this case, liquid fuels.

This bill deals with the fact that in Australia over a number of years, through declining domestic production, we have seen a number of refineries shut down, such that we only have four oil refineries still producing in Australia. Also, because of increased demand for liquid
fuels through population growth and the mining boom, Australia's stocks are no longer sufficient to meet the 90-day requirement under that agreement and, indeed, Australia has been noncompliant with that stock-holding obligation since about March 2012.

This bill will facilitate processes to allow the government to ensure that we do become compliant with that requirement, particularly by increasing the reserve of fuel by entering into financial contracts that are essentially call options that enable fuel reserves to be held financially, obviating the need to require Australia to hold them physically onshore in Australia, which obviously involves a whole range of logistical costs of fuel transport and storage. In particular, this bill enables the government to enter into commercial oil stockholding contracts with either foreign or Australian entities. These contracts include purchasing rights to access oil stocks, which are known within the industry as ticketing. Ticketing is a type of commercial oil stock contract that is commonly used by IEA member countries, particularly in Europe. Under a ticketing contract, the seller agrees to reserve, on behalf of the buyer—which, in this case, if the legislation passes, would be Australia—a predetermined amount of oil in return for an agreed fee. During the contractual period, the buyer—again, Australia in this case—has the option to purchase those stocks with the price being determined by a market-based rate or, alternatively, could release the stock back into the global oil market. Ticketed stock is able to be held either offshore by a foreign entity or onshore by an Australian entity.

Importantly, this amendment is required to ensure that the government has the legislative authority for the expenditure of funds on oil stockholding contracts or ticketing contracts for the purpose of complying with the principles outlined by the High Court in the Williams decision back in 2013-14. The Australian government plans to purchase, as we are advised, 400 kilotons of offshore tickets through 2018-19 and 2019-20, which will involve the expenditure of $28.3 million over the forward estimates.

As indicated, the opposition supports this bill. The opposition values very highly the IEA's work and places great store in Australia's ongoing ability to comply with the obligations that Australia has signed up to through the various IEA agreements, including the stockholding obligations—the 90-day rule—which is included in the agreement I referred to earlier. This is important for all countries, but particularly important for an island nation situated in an increasingly volatile region of the world. We applaud the government for bringing this legislation to the parliament and indicate, as I said, that we will support it.

I move:

That all the 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:

(1) the Government's lack of national energy policy, which is causing an investment strike in new electricity generation; and

(2) the Government's failure to ensure an adequate and affordable gas supply for Australian industry while Australia becomes the world's largest LNG exporter"

While this bill is all well and good, there are much bigger, much more influential issues of policy in the energy sector that the government continues to prevaricate over. This government has presided over almost exactly four years of failure on energy policy since its election in 2013. The former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah, had a great plan about what he wanted to dismantle and demolish—and he did dismantle almost all of the
former government's climate and energy policies, but he had no plan to put in place a replacement energy policy.

This government knew what it wanted to do by way of dismantling policy but has failed dismally to put in place any replacement energy policy. It is now well understood across Australia that Australia is in the throes of a deep energy crisis caused principally by a lack of policy certainty around energy. Power prices are not only crippling business investment but they are hurting households across the country. Every member in this House, I'm sure, is constantly approached by their constituents about power prices biting their household energy bills and their household budgets more generally.

The Reserve Bank governor gave some evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics back on 11 August about the importance of policy certainty in driving down prices for business and for households. Governor Lowe said:

There is uncertainty about the policy environment and that is delaying investment. That is not in dispute. The investment uncertainty is not just in electricity generation; it's affecting investment decisions in other parts of the economy, because businesses aren't sure about the future price of electricity, so it's another reason to wait. We talked right at the beginning, in response to the chair's question, about why business investment isn't picking up. Some businesses say, 'Well, we're not sure what the future price of electricity is, so we'll just wait to see if that works itself out.' The higher prices of electricity are also affecting household budgets, particularly for lower income households, who spend a disproportionately high share of their income on electricity. It's crimping their budgets and having an effect on consumption …

That is what the RBA governor said, and it reflects the fact that, over the four years of this government's tenure, wholesale power prices have doubled, feeding into household prices, which we saw increase on 1 July by as much as 20 per cent in states like New South Wales, following increases elsewhere in the Federation since this government came to power. The Reserve Bank governor was asked in that hearing:

So it would help if the Australian parliament sorted out this issue of a clean energy target and providing some policy certainty …

The governor responded:

… I couldn't disagree with the proposition that providing some certainty about the future structure of the electricity generation industry would be useful for the country, for investment, on prices and on household budgets. Yes.

That just adds to a cacophony of reports and advice—from Alan Finkel, the Chief Scientist, and his panel and many other think tanks and energy market bodies—all saying that this country has got to get some policy certainty around electricity generation to ensure investment flows to replace those ageing generators that are inevitably shutting down because of their age.

Meanwhile, yes, the Prime Minister brought the retailers to Canberra for another meeting last week, or the week before, and we do hope that will yield some behavioural change on the part of the retailers and allow consumers some ability to navigate their way through a very complex retail market, but it is no substitute for policy certainty around investment generation. I point out also that, meanwhile, for all that the Prime Minister professes in his concern about the impact on household budgets of rising electricity prices, he is continuing to press ahead with his intention to remove the energy supplement from 400,000 age pensioners,
109,000 people on the disability support pension and 105,000 carers, who would lose, if they are in a couple household, $550 a year specifically targeted to help them with the impact of energy prices.

In the context of this legislation and our second reading amendment, I particularly want to talk about some of the government's rewriting of history about the gas market over the last several days—and I have heard a couple of interjections from the backbench and from the minister about that again. I think anyone with a passing interest in the energy sector will have noticed manufacturers crying out in distress at the gas prices that they have seen in the market under this government, particularly over the last six to 12 months. There was a reminder only this morning, published on the front page of the Financial Review—a story by Angela Macdonald-Smith indicating that manufacturers are continuing to be subject to contract offers of up to $17 or $18 a gigajoule for firm deliveries. That is still common and about triple the level of the expiring contracts that these manufacturers have been operating under for some time.

Anyone who has studied this at all knows the history of what's happened to the gas market over the past 20 years in Australia, particularly in the eastern Australian market. It was the Howard government, in its first year in office, that abolished export controls over gas. These controls had existed for a long period of time, controlling the export of our gas resources. The export controls were also lifted on a range of other commodities. But, importantly for the current debate, those export controls, lifted by the Howard government in 1997 to plant the seeds of an export industry in LNG, were lifted in the face of opposition from the Labor Party at the time. No controls were put in place. No national interest test was put in place. At the time, there was a consistent rejection of any calls for reservation or other controls on the export of our gas resources to ensure that there would be sufficient and affordable supplies of gas to Australia's manufacturing industry and to Australian households.

The inevitable consequence of opening up Australia to the global gas industry was that you saw price convergence with the global gas price, as you would have with any other internationally traded commodity. I was talking earlier about oil, and Australia pays the global price for oil because we participate in a global market. An inevitable consequence of the Howard government opening up Australia's gas market to the global market was that there was what's called export price parity, or at least the net back version of export price parity—the price paid overseas for our exports, minus the cost of refrigeration and transport. This is not rocket science; this is not something that governments of the day had to receive particular advice about. This is something that a year 10 economics student would be able to tell you, if you asked them.

Last week, I did an interview with David Speers, and he purported to have extracted from me the great revelation that, when the Labour Party were last in government, we had been advised that the Australian gas price would converge with the global price. This was some apparent great revelation. It's not a great revelation. It has been orthodoxy in the gas market for years, as is reflected in a number of statements by the Prime Minister and by different ministers of this government. It has been quite clear that from the time former Prime Minister John Howard opened up the Australian gas industry to the global industry we would see price convergence and Australians would be paying the same price as the global price for gas, as we do for oil and all other internationally traded commodities.
I want to be clear about what I was asked by David Speers, because I want to compare it to some of the narrative from the Prime Minister and other ministers of the government on export price parity. David Speers asked me about the energy white papers that were produced under the Labor government and whether there was any particular advice about the impact on prices and possibilities of supply shortages arising from the LNG operations being built in Gladstone. I said, 'Now, there would be a price impact. I think everyone always had eyes wide open about that, that we would move to the Asian export parity price.' Again, that is an orthodox economic position that a year 10 economic student would be able to tell you at length, I'm sure. But I went on to say, 'But there were assurances given by the LNG operators that it would not impact supply to the domestic market.' Speers went on to say that our own white paper told us there would be an impact on prices, but I'd said we weren't warned. I responded, 'No. Everyone knew there was going to be an impact on prices, but the problem we are confronting now is that the pricing impact is not just moving into an Asian price, which might be $9 or $10 per gigajoule. The price we're actually seeing in the manufacturing sector is now $15 and even more than $20 a gigajoule because there is scarcity in the market.' I'm not sure whether some people don't understand the difference between export parity pricing and scarcity pricing or deliberately choose not to understand the difference because it makes for political stories, but it is quite clear that I had said we were not warned in the energy white paper about scarcity pricing. It was well understood by everyone who paid even casual attention to what was happening in our gas market that after the Howard government lifted export controls Australia would move to the global price, as we have in every other internationally traded commodity.

The then resources minister, Ian Macfarlane, said in 2014 on the ABC:

Gas is now being sold in Australia at an international price. That's the reality of a world market. When Senator Canavan, then minister for resources, and the Prime Minister announced the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism on 27 April 2017, Senator Canavan said:

So a more appropriate price would, of course, be what's known technically as the netback price: that is, the price that exists in Asia minus the costs of getting it there. That is a much more appropriate benchmark.

And he said, importantly:

... in connecting our market up to the world that's what we were expecting and that's what was the promise, but we have not got there at the moment because of this export industry.

Again, there is the distinction between export pricing, export parity pricing and scarcity pricing. For the sake of completeness, on the same day, when the Prime Minister was interviewed about his announcement of a security mechanism by Steve Austin—not the Bionic Man, I don't think; another Steve Austin—he said of the mechanism:

It will ensure that the price of gas in Australia is at levels comparable to that in the international market, because it is a global commodity.

Later, in that same interview, he said:

... the point is, Steve, there is a global market for gas. We all get that.

That is no particular revelation—in spite of the treatment that David Speers and the ABC have given to the interview I did last week. There was no particular advice. I could've got that advice from a year 10 economics student.
What I was asked on *Insiders* in April earlier this year and during the David Speers interview was not about export parity pricing; it was about scarcity pricing. And that's because these LNG operations, particularly the GLNG operation, have started to impact the domestic market—the local supply of gas which, traditionally, manufacturers, power generators and households have relied upon. I just want to be clear about the interview that I did with *Insiders* that the ABC, David Speers and the government have said created some sort of conflict in my positions. Barrie Cassidy at this interview was talking to me about the impact of the LNG operations. I said:

… the supply crunch and its impact on gas prices is even worse than anyone had expected.

Barrie Cassidy then asked me:

Yeah, but you say, though that is you saw it coming a couple of years ago.

I had said that. We did when we developed our national interest policy in 2015. He said:

You're in Government about four years ago and you got plenty of advice then that the surge in exports would lead to these sorts of problems.

That was the proposition he put to me when we were talking about the supply crunch that has characterised the gas market over the last 12 months.

I said:

No, we didn't get that advice. We were given assurances by the industry that the establishment of export operations at Gladstone would not impact …

Then he interrupted my answer. I went on to say that we, indeed, were given express assurances from the gas industry that they would not impact local supply. Indeed, the LNG operations at Gladstone would be using so-called new gas. I said to Barrie Cassidy:

… they would be using new gas for exports and not impacting the existing gas supply to manufacturers and households …

Again, there is a distinction between export parity pricing and scarcity pricing that has arisen because of a supply impact being critically important.

There is some dealing with this in *The Australian* newspaper this morning, particularly about what it was that Santos, or GLNG, in its environmental impact statement indicated about what its operations might or might not do to local supply—old gas, if you like—that manufacturers, power generators and households had for many years depended upon. I will read an extract from Santos's EIS from, I think, 2010. It said that the project, being the GLNG project at Gladstone:

… may initially supply domestic gas markets, but it is not diverting gas from local markets to export markets. … Therefore the project has no direct implications for domestic gas prices. The gas to supply the LNG facility will come from newly developed CSG fields.

That was the advice provided to the previous Labor government, consistent with the advice expressed in the narratives that I read out from former Minister Macfarlane, former Minister—perhaps again to be minister one day—Canavan and the Prime Minister, when he was announcing the domestic security mechanism.

It started to become pretty clear to the manufacturing industry—and, increasingly, to Labor—over the past couple of years that those promises, particularly made by Santos, had not come to pass. One of the LNG operators in particular had found itself too short of so-called new gas to be able to satisfy its overseas contracts. We then developed as a policy a
national interest test that would ensure that new gas operations would be subject to a national interest analysis. It was something rejected as far back as 1997, when the Howard government lifted export controls on gas and other commodities, and was again rejected in the 2004 energy white paper that was released by John Howard. Indeed, our position to adopt a national interest test was rubbished by the Prime Minister, who said that we were being leftist and raising potential sovereign risk issues around the gas operations that had been developed at the LNG.

In the energy white paper that was released in the same year—in 2015—by this government, again, any idea of a national interest test or domestic gas reservation was roundly rejected by a government who continued to try to reassure the manufacturing industry of Australia that there was no problem, that it was all fine. Of course, there was export parity pricing, but there was no shortage of supply and there would be no scarcity pricing in the market. Indeed, in 2016, the then environment minister approved, through an EIS process, a whole range of new CSG fields for Santos to be able to develop and divert to LNG export operations without any analysis of whether there was a shortage in the domestic market and whether that gas, instead, should be diverted to the domestic market rather than refrigerated and shipped overseas.

We're not going to take lectures from this government about a position that we've been articulating for two years now and to which we had to drag this Prime Minister and his government kicking and screaming. We hope that the domestic gas security mechanism, if it's ever triggered, does provide some relief to manufacturers, power generators and households in Australia. There is a reasonable assumption in this country that we will have secure and affordable supply to our own gas to continue those operations that employ many tens of thousands of Australians, provide electricity to Australian households and businesses and, through gas, provide direct energy to Australian households—particularly in gas-heavy states that you would be familiar with, Deputy Speaker Goodenough, like Victoria.

I do note, though, that the ADGSM, the Domestic Gas Security Mechanism, through its regulations, is supposed to be triggered 30 days from 1 July and no later than 60 days from 1 July. We are currently 65 days from 1 July, and there is still no indication as to when this government will deal with the gas crisis and decide whether or not it will trigger the security mechanism for 2018.

We and, I think, industry are concerned that this has become inextricably intertwined with the future of the Deputy Prime Minister, who—given the decision by Senator Canavan to step aside—now has authority for the implementation of this security mechanism. All of the questions that have been debated over the last couple of weeks by constitutional scholars over whether any decisions taken by the Deputy Prime Minister might be invalid if the High Court ultimately decides that his election was invalid raise even more uncertainty for manufacturing industries and many other users of gas in Australia.

Australia is in a deep energy crisis. The quotes from the Reserve Bank governor are only one contribution to a debate that is now, I think, genuinely a barbeque stopper in Australia, and it's certainly hurting business investment across many different sectors of the economy. The government have shown over the last few days—pretty true to form, I have to say, unfortunately—that their tactic is a blame game. They will just try to rewrite history, try to finally pass pretty orthodox statements about how the gas market operates and try to shift
blame and any responsibility for taking some hard decisions themselves in their party room
and implementing some very clear blueprints that have been provided to this parliament, this
government and this nation about how we get out of this energy crisis.

The SPEAKER: Is the amendment seconded?

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

The SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To
this, the honourable member for Port Adelaide 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. So the question is now that the
amendment be agreed to.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (12:16): It is a pleasure to speak on the Liquid Fuel Emergency
Amendment Bill 2017 and to raise my concerns. I have to say that it does surprise me that
there is bipartisan support for this when there should be some questions being asked around
this bill. Having been a very practical person, I always take my role in this place and the
defence and security of the Australian people very, very seriously, and I am not satisfied that
Australia does have enough fuel in reserve.

I am also not satisfied that we have enough refiners, and I have noticed the significant
wind-down of the refining capacity of this country for many, many years. As a grain farmer
for a long time, 20 years, I know that there would be diesel shortages at times. A standard
harvester now would use 1,000 litres of diesel a day, let alone the trucks on it. I remember at
times ringing up to buy fuel by the semi-load, 30,000 litres at a time, and not being able to get
it and being told that there would be rationing to get our grain harvest off.

So I simply do not have comfort in the rhetoric that says Australia has over 50 days of fuel reserve.

The SPEAKER: The ticketing mechanism was set up in Europe. Under the ticketing contract,
a seller agrees to reserve, on behalf of a buyer, a predetermined amount of oil for the period of the
contract in return for an agreed fee. During the contractual period, the buyer—in this case,
Australia—generally has two options. The first is to purchase oil or part of the reserved oil
stock with a price determined by a market based rate under the contract. The second option would be to release the stock back under the global oil market. That works in Europe when you have land borders, and that's where it was originally designed. If you have land borders you can literally truck fuel from one country, which is a small geographical area, to another country and ensure that everyone is meeting their obligations. I don't believe it works satisfactorily for a country that is an island.

We of course have chosen to put a lot of money into submarines, and submarines will become essential for keeping the laneways open for fuel to come into Australia. But I do note, even in the talking notes here, that in 2015-16 there is a boast here about how 30 per cent of Australia's oil never comes from more than one source. But the sources where we do get our oil—the 30 per cent—South Korea, Singapore, Japan, China and Malaysia and Taiwan—are all within the very same region that we are very nervous about a conflict at this point. So, when you start thinking it through, out of the list of countries that we source our oil from, there is only one that isn't in the region of a potential conflict zone, and that is India. So, we all stand here, in a bipartisan way, and say, 'We're meeting our obligations, because we've got tickets to access oil that we can turn into aviation fuel. We've got tickets to access diesel that we can run our tanks on, run our defence systems on, run or boats on, but it's all in the same region.' The tickets frankly may not be good enough for us. So, I guess my role in the parliament, which I take very seriously, is to raise at times a warning.

I also point out: we are a large geographical land mass with all our agricultural products in the regions and all our populations centred in three big cities—the population of Sydney is a bit over four million; the population of Melbourne is just under four million people; and the population of Brisbane is two million people. Our food is distributed on trucks running on diesel, and so we started to think this is not just an issue of our defence capabilities; it's also an issue of the ability to transport food to our populations that only hold very limited food reserves in those populations.

So, I do believe that, whilst ticketing perhaps ticks that box and saves the government a lot of money, we are skimping on our obligation to look after the security of the Australian people, and I think someone in this parliament needed to raise it. It astounds me that no-one on either side has raised it until now. So, in doing so, whilst I will vote in support of the legislation, I will be seeking a very strong commitment that both sides of the parliament will move towards increasing our oil refining capacity because of national security; that oil refining capacity will be in different geographical locations, which limits the ability for them to be taken out in an air strike; and that we will be making a long-term commitment to move towards our 90-day obligation, which should be our obligation. This is simply, I believe, buying a boat with holes in it in case of a flood. This is maybe buying us time, but it is not addressing adequately the major risks that we have in our region. I want to put my resolve to that in this parliament and hope that other members of parliament also take their national security obligations as seriously as I do. Thank you.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:23): I commend the former speaker on his contribution and also the contribution that was made by my colleague, who is in the chamber with me today, the member for Eden-Monaro. I know that the member for Eden-Monaro has been very, very concerned about energy security in Australia for a very long time. He worked
on it when he was serving our nation in the Australian Defence Force, and it's an issue that he's been raising ever since he has been a member of parliament.

The member for Eden-Monaro is greatly concerned about the fact that Australia's national security could potentially be compromised by our lack of energy security, which is why he's been pursuing so rigorously alternative options to secure energy here in Australia, to secure our nation, particularly in the biofuel area. There's a lot of innovation in this area in Australia, particularly in this region, the capital region. I think that it's an area of energy that we need to be taking a closer look at. I commend the work that the member for Eden-Monaro has been doing in pursuing policies on that, pursuing innovation ideas on that and pursuing options for the future, so that we can ensure that Australia, as an island nation, as was pointed out by the previous speaker, can have the energy security of the future to ensure our national security. It's national security and military 101 that you have to have energy security to ensure a secure environment. You have to have food security and energy security. It is absolutely vital. We know that liquid fuel is the lifeblood for industrialised nations in the absence of any other form of energy source. We rely on liquid fuel to support the industries that underpin our economy as well as the Defence Force that protects our national interest.

Australia's defence strategy has primarily focused outwards—the force projection, the need to protect our interests from external threat—which has meant our strength to patrol, monitor and surveil has been in our Navy and our Air Force. Our naval history started with the passing of the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865, which gave Australian colonies power to officially acquire warships and to raise and maintain seamen to serve in these vessels. A year later, Victoria took the lead on naval defence and applied to the British government for assistance in establishing a naval force under the provisions in the 1865 act. The request was agreed to, and the Victorian colony was awarded a grant of 100,000 pounds towards the cost of a monitor turret ship and an old wooden man-of-war named Nelson. Construction began in 1867 near Newcastle, in England, and the ship was completed two years later, commissioned as Her Majesty's Victorian Ship Cerberus, named after the three-headed dog which, in Greek and Roman mythology, guarded the gates to the underworld. How fantastic is that image—a three-headed dog guarding the gates of the underworld! On Sunday, 9 April 1871, having spent 123 days at sea, Cerberus finally arrived in Port Phillip Bay, with the arrival noted in the Melbourne Age:

As she came up she excited the greatest possible interest. As might be expected, she was not regarded as a handsome ship by any means. She appeared, as in great measure she is, a huge, long, square box, cut down straight at both ends, and surmounted by stunted masts, the tops of her turrets and her funnel.

I think there was a kind of mixed enthusiasm for the arrival of the ship! But the arrival of the Cerberus to the Victorian colony meant that the colony briefly possessed the most powerful warship on the Australasian station, which was the Australian naval command responsible for the waters around Australia. For over half a century, Cerberus was a regular sight at Williamstown and in Port Phillip Bay, where she spent her commission. In 1924 she was sold to a scrap company, where she was stripped of useful fittings and valuable metals, and in 1926 the hull was purchased by the Sandringham municipal council, filled with concrete and towed across Port Phillip Bay to be sunk at Black Rock, where she remains as a breakwater.

I was fortunate enough to recently visit the naval base down at Balnarring, in Victoria, named after Her Majesty's Victorian Ship Cerberus, which the Navy has operated out of since
1920. The base was commissioned in 1914. While I was at HMAS Cerberus, I was able to see the connection to Canberra, with some of the stunning buildings that house the mess and the CO's offices to this day. It's a very special site. The beauty about HMAS Cerberus is that the community can get access to it, because the local Anglican church and the local Catholic church are there, and on Sundays people can go and attend mass. The general community has access to the base every Sunday. It is a stunning base, probably one of the most stunning bases I have seen in the suite of the Australian Defence Force estate, which is vast, rich in history and extends throughout the country. But HMAS Cerberus would have to be one of the most impressive bases I've seen. As I said, it has a beautiful mess building, which was designed by John Smith Murdoch, who designed our Old Parliament House here, just down the road. HMAS Cerberus doesn't quite have the wedding cake that we have down the road, but you can see the connection with the design features there, particularly in Murdoch's obvious love of wood panelling. The mess is a stunning building. Quite tragically, it was extended in the 1960s. There was no architectural integrity in the extension, and it has, in my view, defaced that mess building at HMAS Cerberus. But I understand work is being done to fix that up so that it can be restored to its past glory. It is a very, very lovely base. I say to all Australians: if you have the opportunity to get there, either through open days or through worship on Sundays with the Anglican Church or the Catholic Church, then do take that opportunity. It's a very, very special place.

Murdoch's master plan for HMAS Cerberus was reminiscent of the military style of architecture developed for training establishments in Great Britain. He created this through open areas and building forms that instilled hierarchy, routine and unity. It was pleasing to see that Defence noted in its Cerberus redevelopment submission that any new developments will take into account the historical elements that Murdoch instilled into the buildings. The orientation of the proposed new buildings will also be consistent with the design principles first implemented by John Smith Murdoch and include axial and symmetrical emphases, the orientation of buildings to face the parade ground, as well as sympathetic use of scale and massing.

HMAS Cerberus is one of the leading training institutes for Navy personnel in Australia. The base has a permanent workforce of about 980 people with about 6,000 training places each year and over 300 courses, ranging in duration from one week to one year, with an average of 1,100 trainees at any one time throughout the year. It's a hive of activity in terms of young Navy trainees going through a range of courses in that facility. When I was down there recently getting a briefing on the PFAS contamination issue, I had the great pleasure of visiting the fire training facility. I understand this training facility is the only one of its kind in Australia in Navy. They have quite an impressive set-up there. The young trainees who are coming through, to go on to great and interesting careers in Navy, are put through their paces—and I'm glad it's them, not me!—and they get the chance to put out fires, be they fires from liquid fuels or other inflammables. For example, they have to put out fires in a very tiny area that has been flooded. Not only do they have the challenge of water streaming in and knocking them off their feet, but they are also in quite a confined space and, of course, they are also wearing very heavy protective safety gear. These young trainees managed to put the fire out without in any way getting affected—I take my hat off to them, because it would be a challenging environment for anyone. Well done to all those trainees who were put through their paces in that training. Well done also to the people who were training them. Speaking to
those trainers, I know that they were very proud of the work they did. Some of them had been doing it for a very long time and had seen thousands of Navy trainees come through their school. I take my hat off to them as well, and I thank them for their contribution to training our future Australian Defence Force.

I’d also like to thank Commander Matthew Hoffman and those we met during the visit to HMAS Cerberus. I have a very strong interest in architecture, particularly architecture that has a connection with Canberra, as it does at HMAS Cerberus, and he not only gave us a tour of the beautiful architecture but also a really comprehensive briefing on the PFAS contamination issue there, as well as on some of the other challenges that the base is experiencing at the moment. He also gave us a broad overview of the great work they do in training young Navy personnel.

One of the main purposes of this legislation we are discussing today is a plan to return to compliance. I’m quoting there because I know that my colleague, the member for Eden-Monaro, has some concerns about the achievement of that aspiration, with our obligations as a member of the International Energy Agency. As part of the agreement under the international energy program, it requires members to hold stocks equal to 90 days of the previous year’s oil imports. Australia has not maintained its side of the agreement since 2012. I am acutely aware of it, because of the many conversations with the member for Eden-Monaro about the fact that this has been actually allowed to happen. The fact is that people have dropped the ball on. How has this been allowed to happen in an island nation that looks outwards? We need our energy security for our nation’s security. It is vitally important, which is why I endorse the member for Eden-Monaro’s concern about this and the fact that he has had an ongoing concern about it. He is the reason I’m talking about this issue today, because he has been in my ear for a very long time on this issue. So I thought I owed it to him to get up and speak on this bill.

Part of this plan to ‘return to compliance’—I say that in quotation marks—is the purchase of 400 kilotonnes worth of oil stock tickets in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial years. Australia’s non-compliance has been attributed to decreases in domestic oil production and increases in fuel consumption. In 2014, an NRMA-commissioned report on the nation’s liquid fuel security showed that Australia’s liquid fuel stocks were heading towards 100 per cent dependence on imported liquid fuel and oil for transport, hence the member for Eden-Monaro’s concern. With Australia becoming ever more reliant on oil imports, it has a chain reaction on many industries including Defence. An article in Australian Defence Magazine in 2015 noted the combined cost of Defence’s liquid fuels is already the second biggest component of the sustainment budget, and, overall, Defence’s energy profile is heading in a direction that is strategically unsustainable over the medium to long term.

As I noted before, Australia has been non-compliant as part of its agreement under the international energy program since 2012, meaning this government has had four years to address this issue and has failed to do so. We welcome this legislation, but we cannot take our eye off the ball on this. This is just a return to compliance, an aspiration. We cannot take our eye off this. We need to ensure that Australia’s national security is assured through energy security, which is why we need to keep our eyes on this issue. We need to hold the government to account on this issue, and, as the member for Eden-Monaro has pointed out
time and again, we need to start looking at alternative energy sources so that we can ensure we have our energy security and, through it, our national security.

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (12:38): I rise today to speak on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017. This bill fulfils a number of important functions, and that's why the Labor Party is supporting it. The bill seeks to amend the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984 to enable the Australian government to enter into commercial oil stockholding contracts, known as ticketing contracts, with either foreign or Australian entities. By way of explanation, as set out in the bill's preamble, ticketing is widely used by member countries of the International Energy Agency, particularly in Europe. Under the auspices of a ticketing contract, sellers agree to reserve on behalf of buyers, which equates to a predetermined amount of oil for an agreed fee. During the period of the contract, the buyer, specifically in this case Australia, has the option to purchase the stock. Price is determined by market mechanisms. Significantly, the buyer also has the option of releasing the stock back into the global oil market. Ticketed stock is either able to be held offshore by a foreign entity or onshore by an Australian one.

The reason this amendment is so important is it provides the legislative authority to spend money on oil stockholding contracts, according to the legal rules from the Williams case in the High Court. The purchase of oil stockholding contracts represents a return to compliance by Australia, with the IEA's agreement on an international energy program agreement, which is obviously a step in the right direction and a positive development for the country.

The agreement creates both rights and obligations. One obligation set down in the agreement is that IEA members hold oil stocks equivalent to 90 days of the previous year's average daily net oil imports. The government says it intends to purchase 400 kilotonnes of offshore tickets in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 years. This initial ticket purchase, the government says, will be the first phase of Australia's return to compliance with the IEA's 90-day oil stockholding obligation, something that can only be welcomed. As per the IEA requirement, the ticketing contracts will be supported by government-to-government level arrangements or treaties with the host country. This bill is important also because it empowers the Secretary of the Department of the Environment and Energy, on behalf of the Australian government, to enter into contracts for oil stockholdings. This means the secretary will have the ability to exercise the various contractual rights of the Australian government, and this will generally include the ability to exercise the option to purchase a ticketed stock or to release the ticketed stock back into the host country, as defined by the contract.

This bill seeks to partially restore compliance. But it doesn't get all the way there, and, quite frankly, it can only assist with one of the two possible emergencies that will affect oil stockholdings. There are two sorts of emergencies. One's a conflict in our region, particularly one that closes down the Strait of Malacca. This will obviously do nothing for that, and that's been pointed out by a couple of speakers already. It will assist if there is a shortfall, particularly a spike in prices. In that particular instance, this will have some merit, but it doesn't assist in the case of a regional conflict. I think it's quite right for the member for Canberra and even the member for Mallee to point that out.

I should point out that it's symptomatic of the energy fiasco this government has got into that a bill that it has put up is being questioned and opposed by the member for Mallee, who is the government's appointment, as the Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy. Let me repeat that: the chair of the environment

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and energy committee, appointed by the Prime Minister, is questioning the energy policies of this government. This is how poor it is at running energy policy in this country. Without putting words in his mouth, I'll be interested in the position of the member for Hughes, given he's chair of the backbench energy committee for the government. I don't want to be Nostradamus, but it would be quite interesting if both the chair of the backbench energy committee for the government and the Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy, appointed by the Prime Minister, both draw attention to serious concerns with the government's energy policy. I'm happy to be contradicted in the member for Hughes's contribution. I look forward to it, as I always do.

In the time remaining, I want to talk about the broader context for this bill—the energy crisis we face in this country and the four years of mismanagement we have had from the government in trying to affect that crisis. No-one should be lulled into a false sense of security that, if this bill passes, it will be anything but a bandaid solution to some of our myriad energy problems or that the gas crisis that this government has allowed to fester like an infected sore will be in any way substantially improved. Despite the Prime Minister and the energy minister trying their best to blame the last Labor government for their current predicament regarding gas supply, responsibility rests squarely with the Turnbull government and its short-sighted, inadequate energy policies and inaction and paralysis around these urgent problems. It's about time the energy minister admitted as much.

The government has presided over astronomical gas price rises that should make it hang its heads in shame. A few short years ago, Australian industry was paying about $5 per gigajoule for gas. It's now paying four times that much, with average costs hitting $20 per gigajoule in new contracts being negotiated right now. We've seen the government and the minister leap on comments from the shadow minister last week, comments that were just common sense. They were an accurate reflection of what the Labor government expected in 2010 to 2012, which was: when the LNG processing plants in Queensland open up, we would expect the domestic gas price in Australia to reach export price parity. If we're going to be exporting twice as much gas as we have for the domestic market, then obviously the prices are going to equalise over the long term. That's a statement of common sense. It's a statement of logic. That's all the shadow minister did last week. But what we're seeing now is prices well above export price parity. Export price parity would be somewhere between $8 to $10 a gigajoule. We've got gas prices at $20 a gigajoule. This is clearly scarcity pricing. This is clearly indicating that the market is broken.

Instead of actually taking action on this, we've got the minister, assisted by elements of the media, supporting the lies by Santos, defending the actions of Santos and aiding and abetting lies by Santos, the company that is most responsible for the gas crisis. Let me read onto the record what Santos said in their environmental impact statement pertaining to their gas export facility: 'This project is not diverting gas from local markets to export markets. Therefore this project has no direct implications for domestic gas prices.' It cannot be clearer. They're trying to point to other obscure references in EISs and other documents, but this is the base document. Let me repeat it: Santos have said that their project has no direct implications for domestic gas prices and is not diverting gas from local markets to export markets. That is a lie. Santos are perpetuating right now that they didn't say that and didn't give the assurance to the Australian government that their project would not increase gas prices in this country.
I find it interesting that the minister, who has been quite shambolic in his handling of the portfolio since he assumed it, is choosing to become a mouthpiece, a spokesperson for Santos, rather than trying to actually solve this energy crisis. Nothing demonstrates this government's hypocrisy around a gas crisis more than their failure to support Labor's national interest test. It is a national interest test that was passed at Labor's national conference in 2014, a national interest test that I have been supporting since 2013, and an interest test that was announced and formed as part of our 2016 election policy. What do we see from the other side? Claims that we were imposing sovereign risk on the country, that we were the Venezuela of the South Pacific and that we were somehow creating a crisis when one didn't exist. Well, they've been dragged, kicking and screaming, to recognise that there actually is a massive crisis and that Labor's national interest test has to be engaged with.

We've been sounding the alarm on this for four years and all we get from the other side is a blame game. Like every other policy area in this country, we get a blame game from the government. This is also symptomatic of their inaction around the broader electricity crisis because, obviously, gas prices feed into electricity prices, given that gas is the marginal generator in most scenarios. As a broader issue, the national energy crisis is a crisis of this government's making. This government has been unable, in four years, to develop a coherent energy policy, let alone a coherent energy policy that Labor could agree to in the interests of getting a bipartisan consensus on this—a consensus that is essential to providing investment certainty to end the investment strike in this country.

The Energy Council is the peak body for all of the generators in this country. It's not some out-there, hippy-dippy greenie group. This is the council that has people like AGL, Origin, EnergyAustralia, the Snowy Hydro and Pacific Hydro—the who's who of the energy industry are in this council. This council has made it very clear that the energy crisis in this country, the doubling of the wholesale energy prices in this country, is due to the policy uncertainty driven by this government. It's up to this government to fix it, quite frankly, but I have zero confidence in their ability, given the way they've mishandled the Finkel review. We're yet to know their position on the Clean Energy Target. One day they're pro building a new coal-fired power station in the north of Queensland, the next day they're going to build it in New South Wales or Victoria, the day after that they're going to force Liddell to stay open longer, and the next day after that the member for Warringah was talking about keeping Hazelwood open. They've had more positions on energy policy than there are in the Kama Sutra. It's this country, these workers, our pensions and our families that are paying the price for it. That is a great tragedy and it needs to end soon. It is a national shame. This government should be condemned by both this generation and future generations for their inaction on solving this crisis and for not playing a constructive role in combatting climate change.

I also want to touch on the role of the Greens in this particular crisis. We saw some posturing from the member for Melbourne earlier today. We saw some relevance deprivation syndrome. The major parties are talking energy policy and the Greens are being completely shut out, so we had a little 'Look at me, look at me' opportunity, where he put forward a piece of meaningless legislation that won't get supported by anyone to extend the renewable energy target, and lots of words about how Labor can't agree to a clean energy target with the coalition. Yet again, this shows the hypocrisy and the cynical opportunism of the Greens when it comes to climate change and energy policy. Let's revisit a bit of history.

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In 2009, if the Greens had shown some ticker, some coherency and some commitment to future generations, we would have been able to legislate the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme—a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme that was supported by the great majority of the Australian people and by business groups, environmental groups and the trade union movement; a policy that would have legislated a carbon price through an emissions trading scheme that would have set us on a pathway to decarbonising the economy. It would have provided the policy certainty for the energy sector to invest so we wouldn't have the crisis we have right now. What happened? What happened is the Greens squibbed it, because they are rank opportunists. They would rather have this climate change crisis continue because it gives them a point of differentiation with the Labor Party. They would rather win the seat of Melbourne. They would rather contest inner city seats against the Labor Party than solve this national crisis.

They are the greatest opportunists in this parliament. I know that's a big claim because there are a few contenders, but they are the greatest and they are rank hypocrites. This nation, yet again, is paying the price for their failure to compromise. Compromise is not a dirty word. Skilled politicians are able to compromise as long as they are true to their values and always have the end goal in mind. Our end goal must be reaching a bipartisan consensus on energy and climate change policy in this nation. Other countries have done it. Germany has got it. Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is very conservative, has a Greens member as her energy minister. There has been a consensus in the UK for many years, so much so that the three major parties didn't even discuss climate change policy in the 2015 election because they all agreed on it.

We don't have to go out on a limb to say we need consensus and it is achievable if we see a bit of leadership. We need a bit of leadership and ticker from the government, who have squibbed it over the last four years, and a bit of commitment to values from the Greens and putting the national interest ahead of their petty, short-term political interests. It is achievable. I'm really proud that the Labor Party—and we've lost a lot of skin by doing this—have signalled a preparedness to compromise and signalled that we will put the national interest first rather than a grubby, vote-grabbing exercise, as the government and the Greens have done. This is an important policy and this is the way we must go forward on this issue. I commend the bill to the House but, unfortunately, it's another symptom of this government's mismanagement of energy and climate change policy in this nation.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:53): I rise to speak on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017 because it seeks to address a major issue of Australian national security. Australia currently holds no significant national liquid fuel strategy reserves to call on in the event of a disruption to the supply chain. As noted in the Senate inquiry of 25 June 2015—Australia's transport, energy resistance and sustainability inquiry—this makes Australia noncompliant with the International Energy Agency 90-day holding requirement, despite it being a requirement of our membership. In simpler terms, this means that in the event of a major economic shock or international armed conflict inevitable fuel shortages would result.

Australia currently does not hold any substantial fuel reserves within its borders to help it weather such a storm. This has been allowed to happen against the backdrop of a slowly multipolarising world. The Pax Americana of the post-World War II world appears to be eroding both from within the world's liberal democracies themselves and from the resurgence
of powerful authoritarian states. The current nuclear brinkmanship between North Korea and the United States, and the very real possibility of a calamitous conflict brings Australia's vulnerability into sharp relief. It is in this startling context that I both welcome the steps this bill will take to build up Australia's strategic fuel reserves and decry how slowly it intends to achieve compliance with the International Energy Agency standards. As dreary as a topic as fuel reserves might sound, let me be clear: this is a very serious issue and an issue that will affect every Australian.

The Senate inquiry report that I referred to noted that Australia is almost totally reliant on liquid fuels for transport and transportation services which underpin significant economic activity, utilities and essential services. Any substantial disruption to Australia's transport fuel supplies would have a significant impact on safety, national security, national productivity and society.

Australia's declining crude oil production and refining capacity, coupled with its growing reliance on crude oil sourced from relatively unstable regions, is changing Australia's fuel-risk profile. Noting Australia is at the bottom of a long supply chain, the committee was repeatedly reminded of the vulnerabilities to the supply chain that result, quite apart from Australia's continuing inability to meet the International Energy Agency's stockholding requirement.

It is my understanding that Australia is currently the only member country to the International Energy Agency that does not have the fuel reserves that the agency believes to be necessary for an absolute minimum to safeguard our economy and way of life in the face of a disruption. To put that into a practical context, let us consider chapter 4 of the Senate inquiry report. In this chapter, the report referred to the federal government analysis of the Port of Adelaide which revealed:

… were a container ship to run aground at the entry to the port, off-loading the ship and its removal would take up to 14 weeks. The port retains up to 12 days of fuel stocks. The report revealed that, while the port remained blocked, only 10 per cent of Adelaide's fuel demand would reach Adelaide City after the first two weeks of supply ran out. Therefore, the state would have to survive on 10 per cent of its demand for up to 10 weeks. Air Vice Marshal Blackburn (Retired) explained the consequences:

If you lose 90 per cent of your fuel to a capital city for eight to 10 weeks, I have got to tell you that that is absolute chaos. It is not war. That is because there are single points of failure through our supply system.

I also note the major disruption that was caused at Melbourne Airport in November 2016 when a single shipment of aviation fuel failed quality controls. This followed two major aviation fuel shortages in 2015.

On 4 March 2017 this year, the Adelaide Advertiser ran a front-page article entitled 'Panic stations' which reported that police feared an outbreak of civil disorder as South Australians scrambled to stock up on essential items during the statewide blackout. Frantic emergency messages show, and details obtained by The Advertiser reveal, the true extent of how close South Australia came to chaos during the September blackout. The story went on to state that police warned of 'civil disorder if fuel is not available to public'. While the service stations had fuel in their tanks, there was no electricity to pump the fuel. If the disruption to fuel supplies created by a statewide blackout can cause the police to be seriously concerned about
the possibility of a breakdown in social order, one can only imagine the widespread distress that ruthless fuel rationing would incur.

This bill does take some steps towards rectifying the situation by granting authority to the federal government to enter into commercial oil stockholding contracts with foreign or Australian entities, an arrangement commonly known as ticketing. However, the government's management of this issue is far from perfect. Firstly, they do not expect to achieve 90-day fuel reserve compliance until 2027—that's a full decade away, a full decade of global instability. In the meantime, oil companies in this country will progressively continue to close oil refineries and convert them to import terminals. Secondly, this ticketing system is but a conditional commercial arrangement which does not result in Australia holding physical reserves. This leaves us beholden to exactly the same breakdown of international commerce we are trying to avoid. I also cannot help but wonder whether these ticketing contracts also have force majeure provisions.

In conclusion, I welcome the government's willingness to remediate Australia's complete lack of strategic fuel reserves and work towards the 90-day International Energy Agency compliance. However, I question the efficacy of purchasing commercial tickets rather than holding physical stocks and, with the background of a challenging geopolitical environment, I strongly urge the government to greatly accelerate their efforts towards full compliance. We have increasing uncertainty in the world, and a decade is too far away.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (13:00): At long last! In the outbreak of the last major war that we were involved in, Vietnam, the tank was probably the most important item of land warfare, and you would have an anti-tank weapon. Our anti-tank weapon was the Carl Gustaf rocket. They came from Sweden. Sweden said, 'We don't want you in Vietnam so we're not going to supply you.' So we had no anti-tank weapons in Vietnam in the First World War. We had 12 Beaufort fighters with which to defend Australia against an invading Japanese army that was turning out 1,000 planes a month. The Americans were turning out 25,000 planes a month. You would say, 'Well, there's no war on the horizon.' No! North Korea is making missiles and they now have a nuclear capacity to put on those missiles and they're flying them over Japan with gay abandon. Clearly, there is a person completely out of control. There was a bloke in Europe called Adolf Hitler who was completely out of control. He was a terrible man. Anthony Eden came back to Britain and said, 'Peace in our time,' but placating mad, crazy people is not going to create peace. As Winston Churchill said at the time: 'He who feeds the crocodile does nothing else except guarantee that, in the end, he will be eaten by the crocodile.' Those words apply today.

Let's compare the performance of the American government and the Australian government. We'll see who are the donkeys and who are the runners, and why they are the most powerful country on earth and we're going broke at the speed of 100 miles an hour. Every 11 years our national debt doubles. We've had a balance of payments and trade deficit for so long we've forgotten. We think 'current account deficit' is one word. America immediately moved—it's a fair while ago—when the threat from the Middle East was to cap their marginal oil wells. Something like 15 to 25 per cent of their capacity is capped oil wells. So, if they run into trouble, they can uncap them and put them into production. The United States already had ethanol—that was for health reasons—at around five per cent, on average. It was mainly concentrated in the big population centres, such as New York. 'Ozone non-
attainment levels' was the technical term used. Then America switched to what is effectively 11 per cent ethanol content in their petrol.

Just how dumb a nation are we? So many people say to me, 'You can't have ethanol. Your car will break down.' All the cars are breaking down in America, are they? Are all the cars breaking down in Brazil? It has 500 million people—over a 10th of the world's population. One country has 60 per cent ethanol and the other one has 11 per cent ethanol. China has five per cent ethanol, Japan has five per cent, half of Indonesia has five per cent, and Europe has five per cent and is ramping up to 20 per cent.

To go back to America, they moved to get shale oil. Australia is one of the most shale-oil rich countries on earth. I represent the Julia Creek shale oil, which is the most lucrative and attractive shale oil in Australia. Almost by itself it could provide 10 per cent of Australia's oil requirements. But there are many other shale oil deposits in Australia not enriched by vanadium, as the Julia Creek shale oil is.

Let's just have a look at this. Julia Creek can produce 10 per cent. Hells Gate dam, which the government is looking at and the previous government initiated, can produce five per cent. STDS, the southern tablelands development scheme, is an irrigation scheme. There's one on the Herbert River and one on the Burdekin River. It can produce four per cent. Five per cent can come from existing ethanol plants. They can be ramped up to do five per cent. The plants are at Manildra and at Dalby in Queensland. The Bradfield scheme, using just some of the waters in the high-elevation rainfall areas which I represent plus the Mitchell River and Gilbert River—even if we only take five per cent of their water—can most certainly produce 15 per cent without any difficulty. The Mitchell River is the biggest river in Australia—it's bigger than the Murray-Darling and produces nothing at the present moment—and the Gilbert River is not all that much smaller than the Mitchell.

Let me make a side point. We are talking here about oil security but we are closing a sugar mill every two years in Australia. The fourth-biggest agricultural industry—or, arguably, the third-biggest agricultural industry—is slowly closing down because we can't compete against the Brazilians. Even they admitted in the hearings in the 1990s that they have a $1,000-million-a-year cross-subsidy into their sugar industry from the ethanol industry. That's their opinion. The Americans said it was nearly $3,000 million. So let's say a $2,000 million subsidy. We can't compete against a subsidy of that magnitude to Brazilian sugar.

In the grains industry, the Americans are getting a 16 per cent benefit because they have ethanol. Our grain producers don't get that. Once again, the grain producers are going down like ninepins. The biggest grain producer in Australia, Nicoletti, in Western Australia, has gone down. The third-biggest producer in the grains industry has gone down. The twentieth-biggest producer in the grains industry has gone down. So there is a 16 per cent benefit there and a 23 per cent benefit for the sugar industry.

But we're not here today to talk about that. We're here today to talk about a million people that have to get to work every day in the greater Brisbane area on petrol-fuelled, oil-fuelled and diesel-fuelled transportation systems. They simply can't go to work if there's nothing there. Infinitely more serious for North Queensland is: how the hell do we get our goods up to North Queensland? If you're on heart medication, as I am, and you don't get the medication, you die. I'm probably pretty well off, but there are maybe 20,000 people in North Queensland
that are in a serious position: if they don't get that medication they die. How are you going to get the medication? Are we going to get it on horseback?

We have the same irresponsible governments that sent my battalion up to Kokoda with one machine gun—there was no artillery because we couldn't produce artillery pieces—and with 12 Beaufort fighters to defend Australia. People in this place were responsible for that treason. Infinitely more terrible is the situation that, if you blow up a couple of dozen tankers coming into Australia, you cripple this whole nation. We can't take a single weapon a single yard without some form of transportation—unless we're going to walk, of course.

We have an existing five per cent now from ethanol and some other alternative fuel sources. With the Bradfield, even if you only take five per cent of the waters of the Mitchell and Gilbert rivers it will give you another 15 per cent of your petrol requirements in Australia. The grains industry, without even noticing it and by fixing themselves up, can provide 12 per cent. Why is this not happening? Ethanol is cheaper. The last time I looked it was 84 cents a litre in Brazil, 94 cents a litre in the United States and 154 cents a litre in Australia. One country has 60 per cent ethanol and the other has 10 per cent ethanol; yet they are so much cheaper than we are here in Australia. I won't go into the issue of taxation but I wish someone would do a public debate because I will really smash you up if you use that argument. That is really stupid.

With the Julia Creek shale oil we have the ability to provide 10 per cent, and I'm sure that there's another 10 per cent locked up elsewhere in other shale oil deposits that we can produce from—the same as they do in America. From the Hells Gate irrigation proposal, near Townsville, we can provide five per cent of Australia's fuel needs. From the same scheme on the Herbert River, near Cairns, they can produce four per cent. So there's 30 per cent of your requirements. You already have five per cent from existing ethanol plants that can be ramped up. So there's 35 per cent. With Bradfield, on the Mitchell and Gilbert, if you start doing water schemes there, you get another five per cent. That's 50 per cent. With 12 per cent from the grains industry, you're on 62 per cent. America, at present, are on 75 per cent self-sufficiency. They were on 40 per cent when things got a little bit touchy with the Middle East and they immediately moved with great aggression to 75 per cent supply from their own resources of shale oil and ethanol. And, if necessary—and I'm not including this in the 75 per cent—they can bring onstream at any moment the capped oil wells.

Australia, until this moment, has done absolutely nothing. What do we people in here get paid for? What do you do to get paid a $200,000-a-year salary package? Surely, the most elementary thing is to provide safe transportation in this country. It is not as though each of you don't know. Each of you got the NRMA report, done by a retired admiral. But you should not have to get that report to know that this country is dependent upon tankers coming through Singapore, which is Chinese racially, and on both sides are countries of Muslim persuasion. There's a lot of friction in that situation. So those tankers have to come through Singapore, which is Chinese; an area where the people are committed to the Islamic faith. I'm not knocking that; I'm just saying that there has been a lot of sensitivity and abrasiveness there—and that's where our tankers come through. The South China Sea is reachable by missiles, and, as we speak, there are huge bases being built there by the Chinese.

What are we doing about it? Absolutely nothing. The port of Darwin, the only port we have in Australia that is in South-East Asia, was handed over and the bloke got himself $880,000 a
year—and the government has done absolutely nothing about what can only be described, and will one day be described, as treason to this country. The Americans have 2,000 marines in Darwin to protect a port that is not now theirs. The minister at the dispatch box is grinning. He thinks this is funny. He thinks it's funny that his nation has no oil and no defence capability. He thinks it's funny that someone is getting upset about him being on his $250,000 or $300,000—or whatever ministers are on. Well, your days are coming to an end, my friend. Have a look at the polls. You're on 30 per cent.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): I remind the member to put his comments through the chair.

Mr KATTER: And the ALP is on 30 per cent, and we people sitting here are also on 30 per cent. So laugh now, my friend, but future generations of Australia will remember that you sat there laughing while someone told this parliament that we need a secure supply of oil. It can be produced tomorrow for negligible government outlay.

I might add that, when they say we have to have foreign investment in Australia, I'd like to know why. I speak with authority, because I was one of the two people running Queensland at one stage. The great Sir Leo Hielscher—two of the four biggest bridges in Australia are named after Leo Hielscher—said, 'It's just money.' When we're talking about development—made money—he says, 'It's just money.' Of course it is, but you want to spend all your money building ring roads around Sydney and Melbourne and tunnels in Brisbane and not on development. $25 billion of superannuation money is going offshore into the American stock market, which is nothing more than a gambling casino. In the good old days, 60 per cent of all superannuation moneys went into government securities, which then went into building dams, railway lines and ports. (Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:15): I'm pleased to rise to speak on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017. The reason for this bill is the International Energy Agency places an obligation upon all their members to have a stockpile equivalent to 90 days of their imports of oil. For many years, since we became a member of the International Energy Agency, it was something we didn't have to worry about here in Australia. We had our Bass Strait oil on stream and we were almost, for most of that time, either oil self-sufficient or very close to it. In the year 2000, the supply of oil from Bass Strait started to dry up, but, contrarily, while our supply was drying up, our demand for oil in this nation was increasing. Today, we face a prospect in this nation where we are more reliant on imported oil than at any time in our nation's history. Even before the discoveries of the Bass Strait oil, we are now more reliant on oil than at any time of our history.

As for meeting our obligations under the International Energy Agency, it was estimated in April 2017 that we only had 51 days' equivalent worth of oil imports against a requirement of 90. That makes us the only member of the International Energy Agency to be in breach of those obligations. The first question is: how relevant is that 90 days? Ninety-one days doesn't make you secure; 89 days doesn't make you insecure. It's an arbitrary line about where it is. As well as an international obligation, we also need to be looking out for Australia's national interest. What level of oil do we need in the country—a reserve holding in stocks—that could get us through a crisis?

In relation to that, I note that the Australian Institute of Petroleum has argued that that 90-day requirement should be reviewed, considering it was set back in 1974 and that global oil
markets have evolved sufficiently in that time. The Australian Institute of Petroleum has questioned the logic of investing in oil stockholdings, suggesting that there 'is no evidence that the substantial cost of emergency stockpile is justified on energy' grounds, noting that 'Australian fuel supplies have not been disrupted' even during global supply disruptions. Similarly, Caltex has argued that increasing Australia's oil stocks to 90 days of net imports 'would make very little difference' to Australia's fuel security and suggested that the high cost of investing in a strategic fuel reserve 'would need to be met either by increased fuel prices or diversion of public funds'.

There would be a very, very significant cost to this economy, to this nation, if we were to meet that 90-day requirement with physical stocks of oil in this country. Effectively, by going with the mechanism of purchasing tickets, we are running the gauntlet on our nation's national security of ensuring that we have enough liquid fuel in this nation. In contrast, we look at what they have done in the USA. It wasn't that long ago in the USA that the term 'peak oil' and their concerns and their reliance on imported oil from the Middle East was a major political issue. In fact, it was President Obama who said, 'We can't drill our way out of oil,' while others said, 'Drill, baby, drill.' Thankfully, that is what the USA did. They developed new techniques of drilling. I would like to quote a very significant quote. It is from Allen Gilmer, the co-founder and executive chairman of Drillinginfo. He said of the new discoveries of oil in the Permian Basin in West Texas—and this seems almost contradictory:

We should view the Permian Basin as a permanent resource—

of oil—

The Permian is best viewed as a near infinite resource—we will never produce the last drop of economic oil from the Basin.

That is what their situation is in the States. Here in Australia, we have Labor and the Greens wanting to stop every possibility of oil exploration. We have members of the Labor Party in this debate talking about how they are concerned about oil security in this nation, and yet at every opportunity their state colleagues seek to block, with their Greens mates, oil exploration and gas exploration in this country. That puts our nation at a significant risk, and it imposes a significant cost to the economy.

Then we had the amendment moved by the hapless member for Port Adelaide, the shadow minister for energy. I would like to read part of his ill-considered amendment to the House. He said:

… the Government’s lack of national energy policy … is causing an investment strike in new electricity generation …

This just shows how completely out of touch the shadow minister for energy is. There is no investment strike; there are billions and billions of dollars—I estimate, on the back of an envelope, around $7 billion—worth of investment in new generation facilities, in wind turbines and Chinese solar panels. There is no investment strike in those, but the problem we have is that those sources of energy generation are intermittent and are unreliable. Whatever investment we have, we must have it backed up, and backed up 99.9 per cent, if not 100 per cent, by dispatchable power.

What are the Labor Party doing? They say they want to close down all the coal-fired power stations in this nation. We don't have enough dispatchable power in the marketplace at the
moment, and the Labor Party, with their friends the Greens, want to close down the rest of the coal-fired power stations in this nation. How are we going to get the electricity to run this economy? It's not only liquid fuel that we should be concerned about in the security of this nation, but there is also electricity that we should be concerned about in this nation. Without electricity, you cannot run your hospitals, you cannot run your public transport systems, you cannot run your list of high-rise buildings. This economy grinds to a halt if we cannot continue to supply it with enough electricity.

What do the Labor Party do? They want to invest this nation's precious capital in building more intermittent and unreliable sources of electricity generation. We have seen that with the cost of the Renewable Energy Target and federal schemes, which was a $60 billion subsidy—by 2030, a $60 billion subsidy. And that is only the federal subsidy! On top of that, you have to add the state subsidies—even the Grattan Institute has estimated an additional $14 billion subsidy. It's simply a reverse Robin Hood: taking from the poor and giving to rich green people $14 billion worth of subsidy. Then you have the hidden costs of hooking all these wind turbines and solar panels up to the grid—billions of dollars of further cost to the economy. And then there's the cost of what it does in distorting the market. When you force intermittent and unreliable electricity generation into the grid, the more you put in, the higher the cost because you have to back it all up 100 per cent. That is why the Prime Minister is correct to look at projects like Snowy 2.0, the expansion of the Snowy Hydro Scheme, because you have to back it up.

We have a crisis in this nation. We have a crisis with our liquid fuel, with our greater reliance on imports; we have a crisis in electricity generation; and the third place, which is also mentioned in the member's amendment, talking about the government's failure to ensure adequate and affordable gas supply—whose fault was that? It was the state Labor government of Queensland and the Rudd-Gillard government that were clearly warned that, if they went down the track of opening up all the gas exports without putting steps in place to ensure that we had sufficient supply in Australia, gas prices would skyrocket, and that is exactly what happened. So we have three issues putting the energy requirements of this nation at risk, all caused by the Labor Party.

As for the member for Port Adelaide's motion about the investment strike in new generation, the simple reason there is an investment strike in dispatchable power, be it coal or gas, is that anyone that invests in a new coal-fired electricity generation plant knows that they need a commercial return over at least 30 years, and they know that, in that time, there is a grave risk of a mad, left-wing, Green-Labor government taking control of policy in this country and pulling the rug out from underneath them. That is why there is an investment strike.

We need to do better. We need to acknowledge that the cost of energy is one of the most important things for driving wealth creation and prosperity in this nation. You combine that with human ingenuity and risk-taking—it is low-cost energy that is the force multiplier that creates wealth. If we want to fund all the social programs that we talk about in this parliament, like continuing to fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme at a cost of $22 billion a year, and if we want to fund our health care, our hospitals, our schools, our roads, our public transport, our aged care and our pensions—if we want to fund all those things, we
must have low-cost energy in this country. And yet every single policy lever that Labor can put their hands on pushes up the price of electricity to Australian consumers.

We need to get drilling. We need to understand that the oil capacity development that we have in this country has fallen off the edge of a cliff. We need to ensure that we get our gas drilling started again. We wish that the Labor members from Victoria would talk to their state counterparts about the nonsense of pursuing a 40 or 50 per cent state renewable energy target and the dangers to the economy of locking up all their gas supplies, but we don't hear a peep from them. All we hear is that they don't want to pursue the Paris targets, which the government's agreed to, of a 26 to 28 per cent cut; they want to pursue a 40 per cent cut. I would like a member of the Labor Party to explain to me how we are going to get a cut of 40 per cent in our liquid fuels? You may want a 50 per cent Renewable Energy Target in electricity, but what are you going to do to liquid fuels? How are you going to get that cut of 40 per cent in this nation's liquid fuels? How will you get it in aviation? How will you get it in trucking?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sydney Electorate: Climate Change

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (13:30): On Friday, 25 August, I was delighted to meet several of my constituents: Jo and Peter Huntington and their lovely son Ethan; Dr Ann Long; and Zhi Yan, who have been busy arranging for a community climate change petition to be signed by Sydney residents. This petition campaign has been organised by a number of faith-based groups including Micah, Caritas, World Vision, the Uniting Church and TEAR Australia. It is being driven by community members who recognise that climate change is disproportionately affecting poor and marginalised communities around the world. The petition calls on the government to take stronger action to reduce our emissions, transition away from fossil fuels, move towards renewable energy and support our poorest and most vulnerable neighbours as they face the increasing impacts of climate change.

Jo was the principal petitioner in my electorate of Sydney. She is a community worker, a committed Christian and a mum, who got involved with the community climate change petition because she believes that most people want the government to act on climate change to protect our children's future. The Labor Party agrees. Jo, her family and other concerned locals went out and gathered signatures at street stalls and church events in Newtown and nearby suburbs. I'm pleased to say that over 1,481 other caring Sydney residents signed this petition. I know that many Labor MPs around the country have been delighted to accept these petitions, but I'm shocked to hear that several coalition members have refused to accept them from their electorates. It is a great shame and it reflects— (Time expired)

Bowman Electorate: Literacy and Numeracy

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:31): The 2017 NAPLAN results having been received allow Queensland in particular to take an even stronger longitudinal view on high school performance. That's occurred with the release of the data to relevant schools of interest. I want to congratulate a number of schools outside of the GPS system that were extraordinarily high
performers. They include Good Shepherd Lutheran College in Noosa, West Moreton Anglican College, Cannon Hill Anglican College, Mansfield State High School, Ferny Grove State High School, and schools from Beenleigh, Nambour and Mount Tamborine. These schools demonstrated extraordinary student journeys as a cohort between year 9 NAPLAN results and their ability to generate OP results within that cohort, after we corrected for the number of students that were actually taking an OP pathway.

I reiterate my great concern that the lack of quality metrics in the vocational space in schools, where it is competency based, makes it almost impossible to tell whether students are gaining a qualification of any level in English or maths literacy or numeracy. Within the limitations of the data, publicly available, I am delighted that we have been able to look longitudinally at the performances of every one of our high schools and primary schools in Queensland, building a better picture for schools, their staff and their principals, to be able to identify what's making a difference, track performance and intervene where required. I seek leave to table these documents.

Condran, Mr Kevin

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:33): Kevin Condran was right off the top shelf. He was mischievous, straight-talking, selfless and loyal. He was fierce and compassionate at the same time. He was a former president of the Rankin federal electorate council, a true Labor stalwart. He was wonderful company and a great mate. When he took his final breath last week, we lost someone genuinely special. I last saw him at the state Labor conference in Townsville in July. We presented him with a photo, signed by the Leader of the Opposition, of a meeting they had when Kevin and Jeanette came to Canberra in 2014. On the same trip, he also talked his way into a photo with his arm around Bronwyn Bishop. He was that kind of fellow and that cheeky.

The Condrans' visit here coincided with the passing of Gough Whitlam. Gough was their MP in Green Valley before they moved to Logan City, in my community. They spent time with him at Mount Pritchard Workers Club. They were sitting up there in the public gallery listening to us praise Gough Whitlam at the same dispatch box as we praise Kevin Condran from today. We will miss him terribly. We send our love and our hugs to Jeanette and the family, and we farewell Kevin with the exact same words he wrote in Gough's condolence book: 'Goodbye, old mate.'

Capricornia Electorate: Major Projects Capricornia Cluster Forum

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (13:34): Business and economic development bodies in my electorate are gearing up for major investments in Capricornia. Just last week, we saw a room packed full of industry leaders coming together for a forum jointly organised by Capricorn Enterprise and a division of the federal department, AusIndustry, and including the Centre for Defence Industry Capability. The Capricornia Major Projects Forum featured key presentations by Adani and the director of the Australia-Singapore Military Training Initiative, and attracted record interest from across the region. By proverbially teaching a man to fish, we're making sure that our business knows how to get ready to tender for work packages being advanced by Adani, how to engage with traditional owners and how to develop a better understanding of defence primes.
I am proud that our government is working side by side with industry, helping business navigate growth opportunities and creating an ideal investment environment. Together, we're making sure that those interested in engaging in identified projects understand the processes, linkages and pre-qualification requirements. Showing a united front strengthens our region and makes sure that we are at the forefront of major opportunities. I particularly wish to thank Capricorn Enterprise for continuing to bring the business community of Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast together.

Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:36): Last week, I visited Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia in my electorate to speak with staff following its decision to withdraw from the 1800 RESPECT trauma counselling service. RDVSA has provided trauma counselling to 1800 RESPECT clients since its inception. In October 2016, its contract with the federal coalition government expired and the contract for 1800 RESPECT was put out to tender. Recently, the federal coalition government has announced it will continue the service, but RDVSA will lose 75 per cent of its funding and must operate as part of the MHS call centre model.

RDVSA made its decision to withdraw last week following considerable negotiations with Medibank Health Solutions. It was a decision not made lightly, especially given that up to 110 specialist sexual assault and domestic violence workers and other specialists employed at RDVSA will lose their jobs in October. Worse still, RDVSA may need to close its doors. Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia has been providing specialist sexual assault and domestic violence trauma counselling for almost 50 years. It's regarded internationally, including by the UN. It plays a critical role in its community, supporting many women through very challenging times. The government must ensure that both the staff at RDVSA and RDVSA itself are not hung out to dry. (Time expired)

Vandalism

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (13:37): I rise to condemn the acts of vandalism perpetrated against the statues of James Cook and Lachlan Macquarie in Sydney over the last fortnight. Defacing statues is usually associated with the liberation from tyranny of places like the former Soviet Eastern Europe or Saddam Hussein's Iraq, but to equate two of the most liberal men of their era to those tyrants shows the bankruptcy of thinking on the Left.

Captain Cook is one of the most remarkable men of his era. His voyages greatly contributed to the expansion of human knowledge. Responsible for navigating and mapping among other places Labrador, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Hawaii, New Guinea and the east coast of Australia and Tasmania, Cook created accurate maps, confirmed centuries later by satellite images, using what were quite unsophisticated tools. With Sir Joseph Banks, he promoted greater understanding and knowledge of a wider variety of Australian flora. He was fastidious about health and hygiene and, on his long voyage between 1768 and 1771, he lost not a single person to scurvy. This was an amazing feat because, although scurvy had been linked to bad diet, the link between it and vitamin C had not been established until Cook's voyage. Lachlan Macquarie was similarly one of the great liberal reformers of the colonial period. He treated emancipists with great respect, giving those convicts who had served their time equal rights as citizens, and this didn't make him popular. Rather than tearing down the
statutes of these great men, we should celebrate their contribution to Australia and to global knowledge.

**Australian National Flag Day**

**Father's Day**

**Ms VAMVAKINOU** (Calwell) (13:39): Yesterday was Father's Day. It was also Australian National Flag Day. During the week I took the opportunity to go down to the Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School in Roxburgh Park, in my electorate, and I was delighted to be given the opportunity to present an Australian flag to the students of grade 1 and to talk to them about the Australian flag. The two children who were chosen to receive the flag from me were Michele and Angela. Both children are refugees from Iraq. Angela's family arrived in November 2016, and Michele and his family arrived in January 2017. Michele was so impressed by the opportunity to be given the flag that he wanted to keep it. I had to promise him that I would get him his own very special flag, and I intend to get him one of the flags that are flown in this chamber, as a welcome to Australia. I also had the opportunity to meet with Michele's mother and father. His father is a man who has come to Australia for a better future for his children. On that note, I just want to say that fathers have a very important role to play in the lives of their children. Father's Day is a very important event. It has been so for as far back as I can remember, and it will continue to be. I see the importance of that relationship in my own son's relationship with his father, and I just want to re-affirm and acknowledge that Father's Day recognises and acknowledges the role that dads play in raising sons and daughters.

**Country Women's Association**

**Ms LEY** (Farrer) (13:41): The week is Country Women's Association Awareness Week. As a member of the CWA, I had the pleasure of attending a meeting in Yanco recently. Yanco is a small village in the Leeton local government area, with a population of just 948. The Yanco CWA has been part of the fabric of that community for over 80 years. What struck me immediately was the passion and enthusiasm of this dedicated band of country women, embodying the spirit and tenacity of rural women everywhere. After a recruitment drive, they have almost doubled their numbers. They now have 24 members and have aims to attract many more. The group have some big plans for the future. One of the most important is to continue with the grassroots aims of the CWA—to provide an avenue for the Yanco community to connect with each other. The benefits of such get-togethers are, of course, social inclusion and interaction, better mental health and general community happiness. The next big event will be a lavish afternoon tea on 23 September. While creating a network of support and those famous afternoon teas is what the CWA are famous for, they do so much more. They make an immeasurable contribution to our rural communities as advocates and lobbyists to improve the lives of women and children, especially those in country areas. I'm going to help this group with a new dunny—their outdoor facilities are not up to scratch. I congratulate them and wish them all the best for the future.

**Fleurieu Film Festival**

**Ms SHARKIE** (Mayo) (13:42): What usually happens with beautiful places is that they attract creative people—musicians, artists and, in this case, filmmakers. Three years ago a group from the Fleurieu Peninsula decided to create an event that would showcase the work
of local short filmmakers to a local audience. The inaugural Fleurieu Film Festival had a theme of landscapes. As word got out, organisers had to change the venue twice to accommodate growing ticket sales. The 2017 festival needed a bigger space and again was a sellout. I've been to both festivals and I've been moved and amazed by the talent out there. In February next year I will be back again. This time I will not just be watching; I'll also be sponsoring some of the best work of South Australian and Australian filmmakers. This year's theme is fire. In particular, I'm looking forward to seeing the short-listed entries for the Young Filmmaker award, which is a new category. I commend the organisers of the Fleurieu Film Festival for creating not only an outlet for aspiring cinematographers but an exciting event for my community.

**Blackbutt Avocado Festival**

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (13:43): This Saturday the streets of beautiful Blackbutt, in my electorate, will be humming with locals and tourists for the Blackbutt Avocado Festival. Not only is the festival a huge boon for the Blackbutt community; it's a great opportunity to showcase Australia's sweetest and finest avocados, fresh from the Blackbutt area. The festival runs all day Saturday, and those going along will get to participate in avocado cooking lessons with Jason Ford, taste-test Blackbutt's best guacamole and try the very best produce the beautiful Blackbutt region has to offer. Locals and visitors will also get to dance the night away with the Rockin Bodgies, where the aim of the game is rock'n'roll. This will be the ninth birthday of a festival held annually by one of Queensland's friendliest towns to welcome in spring.

In fact, it's one of the largest community festivals held in the South Burnett region. Last year more than 5,000 people participated in a full itinerary of events. The event attracted about 3,000 tourists to the region. I encourage everyone to make a trip to the gateway to the South Burnett and check out what Blackbutt has to offer. While you are there, you can check out Blackbutt's iconic businesses from the Blackbutt Woodfired Bakehouse, which has the best lamb and rosemary pies in the country; the historic Ratnor Hotel; the renowned Benarkin General Store; the Bunya Nut Cafe and Scrubby Creek Bar; the Oasis Cafe; and the Edelweiss Cafe. You won't be disappointed you made a day of it.

I thank Jeff Connor and the Blackbutt Avocado Festival team for their tireless and passionate work. Their dedication is truly appreciated, particularly in their community and across the greater South Burnett region.

**Broadband**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:45): It's 12 months since I asked Canberrans to start sending me their speeds. I continue to be inundated with Canberrans sending me their speeds as they continue to express their frustration with their internet services and speeds. Annabel Crabb, please take note. Greg from Gilmore has a download speed of 3.3 megabits per second and an upload speed of 0.88 megabits per second. Therese, also from Gilmore, has a download speed of 1.49 megabits per second and an upload speed of 1.49 megabits per second. Lesley from Gordon has an upload speed of 2.22 megabits per second and a download speed of 2.22 megabits per second. Lesley said that, because she was the furthest away from the exchange, she had to put up with the slow speed.
Wendy from Fadden is trying to run a small business from home with a download speed of just 1.13 megabits per second and an upload speed of 0.39 megabits per second. Eleanor from Chifley has upload and download speeds of just 0.35 megabits per second. Finally, Marguerite from Curtin has some of the worst speeds I have ever seen. She has a download speed of just 0.13 megabits per second and an upload speed of 0.04 megabits per second. This is in the nation's capital in 2017. Marguerite from Curtin is putting up with an upload speed of 0.04 megabits per second. (Time expired)

Investing in Our Youth

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (13:47): I commend the work of a very active and effective south-west community organisation—Investing in Our Youth. In 1999 the Telethon Kids Institute held a forum in the region on ways to assist and empower children and young people. This led to a group of committed parents forming a committee with the core objective of promoting the healthy development of children and young children.

Investing in Our Youth became incorporated in 2002 and appointed their current CEO, Carmen Gregg, in 2006. The organisation has grown since then, particularly in the last six years, and it now employs over 40 people. It runs child and parent centres in both Carey Park and Collie. They do work in youth mental health development and early intervention and resilience through various programs. They target children up to the age of eight. I know of their positive tickets program where police are encouraging mentors for young people. There is also one which responds to deliberate self-harm. There has been a forum held in that regard.

Indigenous Australians and new migrant families in the south-west receive assistance from the organisation through the government's Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters. The program visits families in their own homes, empowering new parents about the fact that learning starts at home. I thank Carmen Gregg and her team at Investing in Our Youth. (Time expired)

Djuric, Ms Bonney, OAM

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:48): I am honoured to rise to congratulate the fabulous Bonney Djuric on being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia this past Queen's Birthday. This honour comes to Ms Djuric as recognition of her fervent commitment to highlighting and preserving the stories of those incarcerated in the Parramatta girl's home. At the age of 15 Bonney was committed to the Parramatta girl's home and was, tragically, subjected to the abuse and cruelty of the welfare institution systems of the day that exploited nearly half a million Australians.

In 2003 Ms Djuric courageously founded Parragirls, a platform used by so many former inmates and other forgotten Australians to seek support in order to overcome their experiences in welfare institutions, as Bonney Djuric herself has done and continues to do every day. Ms Djuric's work as Director of the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project brings to light the stories of abuse and bravery of the Parragirls. It raises their voices and reminds us all of the terrible stories and the importance of compassion, humility and perseverance in our lives.

I had the honour of assisting a number of the Parramatta girls in 2008 to travel to Canberra for Prime Minister Rudd's official apology to the forgotten Australians. Because of the work
of Bonney, both before and after that day, it's not a one-off day. Her bravery and commitment to helping others brings those stories to life and ensures that they will be remembered by the people of Australia. Well done, Bonney. It's well earned.

**Groom Electorate: Toowoomba Hospice**

**Dr McVEIGH** (Groom) (13:50): The recent Hang Your Boss Out to Dry fundraiser in Toowoomba saw a number of our business and community leaders placed high up in a cherry picker and spending their Friday morning seeking donations to raise money for the Toowoomba Hospice. They called in donations from friends, family and work colleagues. Only when they had raised at least $1,000 were they allowed back on to solid ground.

The hospice provides care to anyone with a life-limiting health condition when their doctor believes them to be at the end stage of their illness. They do this free of charge. It relies heavily on the local community to raise funds needed for the activities and the care that they provide. This year's event raised more than $23,000 in just three hours. Over the past 14 years, the hospice has cared for more than 1,280 patients. It is, truly, a service that is worth being 'hung out to dry' for.

On behalf of our community, my congratulations and appreciation go to chairman, Graham Barron OAM; manager, Mark Munroe; director of nursing, Allison Leech; and the entire staff and volunteer team at the Toowoomba Hospice. As a fair dinkum philanthropic community, Toowoomba and the Darling Downs regularly get behind the hospice. We all look forward to continuing to do so through their fundraising activities and other events through the annual calendar.

**Equal Pay Day**

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (13:51): Today is Equal Pay Day. Here a few facts. Fact: Australian women earn 15.3 per cent less than men. Fact: the average man's wage in this country is about $127,000 a year. The average woman's pay is about $97,000 per year. That's a difference of $30,000 just because of gender. Fact: in media, the gender pay gap is 23 per cent. Fact: women who work in women dominated industries compared to men dominated industries can be $10,000 to $20,000 a year worse off—like in ECE, or early childhood education.

We should note that this Thursday, in the week that we acknowledge equal pay, about 3,000 educators from across our country will walk off the job. They will take industrial action to demonstrate the gender pay gap that we have in our country. They are calling for equal pay. They are calling for their skills and their qualifications to be recognised. They are also calling on this government to recognise that and to work with them to address the gender pay gap that exists within our community. These are top women who work hard educating the next generation of Australians, yet they don't see that recognition in their pay. On Equal Pay Day, we should acknowledge their work and the work of women across our country.

**Tangney Electorate: Willetton Basketball Association**

**Mr MORTON** (Tangney) (13:53): You might have seen some footage on the weekend of the Prime Minister and I at the Willetton basketball stadium. Having heard so much about this fantastic local association, the PM was keen to see the stadium in action and the stadium's plans for expansion. The Willetton Basketball Association has such a great story to tell. It has more than 300 teams, with 3,500 players and more than 1,100 volunteers. The current four-
court stadium is stretched beyond capacity with over 150 kids on the waiting list—and possibly many more—wanting to play, but space restrictions make it impossible.

The expansion will double the number of courts, getting even more kids active, staying healthy and playing team sport. As always, the footage you might have seen only shows part of the story. The full story is that the PM took his shot, the ball rebounded off the ring, and the PM collected the ball off the rebound and passed it on to me. With a little jump, the ball floated through the air and, boom, into the net! Now, that's teamwork! That's the kind of teamwork that will deliver the federal funding for this project.

Thank you so much for visiting, PM. I'm sure we'll be catching up very soon about locking in a federal funding contribution for the very important stadium expansion project in my electorate of Tangney. I appreciate your support. I appreciate your visit. I know that by working together we'll deliver on this project.

Rockingham Kwinana Chamber of Commerce Regional Business Awards

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (13:54): I congratulate all of those who participated in the annual Rockingham Kwinana Chamber of Commerce Regional Business Awards on Saturday, 26 August. Speaking to the more than 200-strong attendees at the awards dinner I reflected on my childhood in Rockingham, where my mum and nan owned and ran the Family Traders drapery store on Railway Terrace in Rockingham. This small business was remembered by many in the room on Saturday night, who were gathered because of their own business commitments in our community.

Once again, the Rockingham Kwinana Chamber of Commerce organised a fantastic event where excellence in the local business community was recognised. I would like to thank the CEO, my fellow Rockingham Beach Primary School graduate, Tony Solin, for making such an excellent event happen. The business of the year winner was Malibu Podiatry, and Glen Sell was named business person of the year. The microbusiness winner was the very popular Shoalwater Physio. The Rockingham Beach Cup, an amazing horse race along the beautiful Rockingham foreshore, an outstanding community event, was honoured with the outstanding corporate community event award—no surprises there. Organised by the Rotary Club of Palm Beach, the inaugural event of the Rockingham Beach Cup was such a success in 2016 that an even bigger and better expanded event is planned for next year. I congratulate the Rotary Club of Palm Beach for all their efforts over many years in Rockingham. The young businessperson of the year prize this year went to Scott Patrick of Be Media, and both Sharon Robertson and Robyn Patterson won judges' commendation awards. There were numerous other winners on the night and countless nominees, who reflect the strong and vibrant business community that is growing up in the electorate of Brand.

Father's Day

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (13:56): Today I am wearing a tie that my five-year-old daughter gave me for Father's Day. While I was flying to Canberra yesterday, Father's Day, it had me thinking. Here we are in parliament, all of us sharing a vision of making this great country of ours even greater for our children and for all future generations. Doing so requires us to focus on those things that matter. Those opposite would contend that what matters most to Australia is rewriting the plaques that sit on historical statues, or they would promote the
false gods who believe in a world of 100 per cent renewables or they will play parliamentary
games hypothesising on section 44 of the Constitution.

But in the real world we have a crisis on the Korean peninsula and we have ISIL in our
region. At home we have businesses and families being smashed by higher power prices.
What really matters in Australia is national security: controlling our borders and ensuring our
communities and families are safe. What really matters in Australia is economic management:
ensuring that we have jobs and that family budgets can be reduced. This is what our country
expects of this parliament. Happy Father's Day.

His Holiness Pope Tawadros II
Coptic Church

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:58): I was honoured to attend the
official reception last night for His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the Patriarch of the Coptic
Church internationally, which was held to welcome him on his first visit to Australia since he
took office in 2012. I was fortunate to join a thousand members of Sydney's Coptic
community to welcome the 118th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark.

Australia is home to the third-largest Coptic community outside Egypt, with the first
Coptic migrants to Australia arriving in 1969. According to the Church, there are more than
100,000 Copts in Australia, with 70,000 of those living in Sydney. Many of those have
chosen to live in the community that I represent, Kingsford Smith, which has a strong and
vibrant Coptic community centred around St George Coptic Orthodox Church in Kensington,
which was established in 1973. The local church maintains strong ties to the community,
providing spiritual guidance to many followers, including many wonderful young people.

In recent times, of course, the Coptic community has been the victim of horrendous acts of
terrorism, including the bombing of St Mark's Cathedral last year, which killed 13 people.
The Pope's visit will serve to strengthen the faith of Australia's Coptic Church followers. I
welcome Pope Tawadros II and wish him the very best for his visit to Australia.

Workplace Relations

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (13:59): Once again, the Leader of the Opposition has
been outed as the great pretender. He comes into parliament pretending to care about
Australian workers and he prances around the country in his big red bus, pretending to want
to save penalty rates, but these fake tears come from a man who, when he headed up the
AWU, signed away the penalty rates of thousands of workers while taking secret payments
for his union. Research from the Department of Employment shows how, all over Australia,
the unions are short-changing Sunday workers. Sunday workers at Big W, Pizza Hut,
McDonald's and David Jones will have to work up to 50 hours a week to offset the impact of
these union deals. How is it fair that unions and big business clinch awards discounts while
unions and Labor want small family businesses to pay higher rates? The Leader of the
Opposition attacks the Fair Work Commission, which he set up, but when his union mates do
deals to undercut workers he goes silent. It shows that the Leader of the Opposition is all
hypocrisy, lacks integrity and certainly can't be trusted to run this nation. He may have treated
the hardworking members of the AWU like mugs, but the Australian people will see straight
through his double standards.
The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Everingham, Hon. Douglas Nixon 'Doug'

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:01): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 24 August 2017, of the Honourable Douglas Nixon Everingham, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Capricornia from 1967 to 1975 and 1977 to 1984, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of Doug's son Rick and Rick's wife, Madonna. Today, we pay tribute to a man of sincerity and compassion who inspired a great deal of affection from both sides of the House. We record the passing of a man who oversaw significant reform which, crucially, has had an enduring, beneficial impact on our nation, benefitting and advancing the health of so many Australians. We remember one of the true characters of this place, very much his own man, walking his own path.

Doug Everingham was born on 25 June 1923 in the town of Wauchope, New South Wales, on the North Coast. He won scholarships to Fort Street High School and later to the University of Sydney to study medicine. After graduating, he worked for years on the front line of psychiatric institutions in Sydney. That experience instilled in him the strong belief that the mentally ill did not belong behind closed doors in institutions, as was the practice of the day. When he became the health minister in the Whitlam government, he pushed to deinstitutionalise mental health, long before that approach was broadly accepted as appropriate. He was a man ahead of his time in many ways, in particular in urging restrictions on cigarette and alcohol advertising, going to the extent of sticking antismoking signs on the cigarette vending machines that were once commonplace at Parliament House.

He first entered parliament after winning the seat of Capricornia in 1967 against his brother-in-law. In his maiden speech, he gave a passionate defence of peace, calling for openness to globalisation and more meaningful engagement with the wider world. He also singled out the great concept of the Snowy scheme. I can't help thinking that he would have been pleased to see that great Australian enterprise enter a new era.

It was as Minister for Health between 1972 and 1975 that Doug Everingham left his mark. He was the architect of new community, health, school, dental and family planning services. He secured federal funding for the expansion and modernisation of hospitals across the country. He was instrumental in the introduction of Medibank, which today we know as Medicare. One of his famous pet causes of the time was his campaign for simplified phonetic spelling. He would have preferred his own department, the Department of Health, to be spelt H-E-L-T-H, but, on his attempt to implement such a system, the minister received a deceptively curt letter from Prime Minister Whitlam, reminding him that spelling fell outside of his responsibilities as health minister.

He retired from political life in 1984 and will be remembered dearly for his good nature, his easy smile and his wit. I place on record, Mr Speaker, our acknowledgement and thanks for his outstanding service to his constituents and to the Australian people, and our sadness at his passing. A dearly loved husband of Beverley and later Shirley, Dr Everingham is survived
by three of his four children, a stepdaughter and stepson, grandchildren and one
great-grandchild. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this time of loss.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): I thank the Prime
Minister for his words. Today the Labor family salutes the life of a faithful son. We offer our
condolences to Doug Everingham's family and loved ones, including his son Rick, and Rick's
wife, Madonna, who are here with us today.

Doug Everingham was one of the first of the 'Whitlam academics'—a new breed of
tertiary-educated Labor candidate—a trained psychiatrist, surgeon and GP who became a
reforming health minister, present at the creation of Medibank and the beginning of universal
health care in this country.

It was actually 50 years ago this very month that Doug won the by-
election for Capricornia. He did so as an atheist suspected of communist sympathies. He was considered,
perhaps, a risky candidate for a regional seat under the new leader, Gough Whitlam. When
Graham Freudenberg was moonlighting as an advancer for his leader's visit, he learned that
Doug had named his house 'Ingersoll', after the famous 19th century US orator and radical
free thinker. Graham was concerned that the press gallery would revive this 'atheism' thing, so
it was politely suggested that Doug might want to remove the plaque, or perhaps put up a
clarification. He replied: 'I have done everything you and Gough have asked me in this
campaign—I have shut up, I haven't written any letters—but this is my home, and the name
stays.'

As we are all aware, electoral boundaries change. In his time, Doug's seat, centred on
Rocky, stretched as far and wide as Sarina, Biloela, Gladstone and Bundaberg. It is no
surprise that a man familiar with the vast expanses of this nation was passionate about
extending opportunity beyond our capital cities, bringing first-class medical facilities to the
suburbs and the regions.

Doug himself was a humble person, and a private one. He shunned the trappings of office.
A friend who knew him well informed me today that he was one of the last people in
Rockhampton to buy a colour television. Unusually for those times, Doug was a teetotaller,
and a zealous campaigner against smoking—to the point of covering the cigarette machines in
Parliament House with skull-and-crossbones stickers. And, unusually for any time, he was
passionate about Esperanto and spelling reform. Doug held to the idea that, if everyone could
speak the same language, then we would be free of the misunderstandings that fuel conflict.
He thought this was a great path to world peace. When he was asked by the author of Who's
Who to list his interests, he replied, 'semantics, interlinguistics, pasigraphies, symbol systems
and spelling reform'. Throughout his life, he championed phonetics and the removal of
extraneous vowels; indeed, he wanted to remove the 'a' from his own title as Minister for
Health. He would often write to his constituents and his colleagues using Esperanto.
Esperanto, of course, relies on phonetics, so Prime Minister Whitlam—himself no stranger to
the intellectual or the exotic—would sometimes send up his colleague by writing him notes
addressed to D-U-G and signing his own name as G-O-F.

Like every Queensland MP except for Bill Hayden, Doug lost his seat following the
Dismissal in 1975. He travelled to London to practise as a locum. In 1977 he contested and
recaptured Capricornia, representing his community until he retired at the 1984 election.
In conclusion, Mr Speaker, when you look back at the record of Doug Everingham's speeches in this place, the overwhelming majority focus not just upon health but also upon the disadvantage, the poverty and the poor health suffered by Aboriginal Australians. He was someone who spent years providing free medical treatment at the Woorabinda settlement near Rocky. He knew firsthand of what he spoke about. So many of those speeches, and colleagues here could briefly imagine them, were given as part of an adjournment debate—heartfelt words delivered to empty chambers late at night. But what I think is remarkable is that those speeches could be read on adjournment tonight with only a word or two changed. It is perhaps something we should all reflect upon.

Today, another member of a famous government marches into history. We pause to honour the memory of a man of decency, humility and intellect and we offer our party and our nation's thanks to his family for his service.

The SPEAKER: As a mark of respect, I ask all present to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:10): by leave—I move:

That the resumption of debate on the Prime Minister's motion of condolence in connection with the death of the Honourable Douglas Nixon Everingham be referred to the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): Mr Speaker, I seek indulgence to make a statement about the concerning situation in North Korea.

The SPEAKER (14:11): If the Leader of the Opposition could just resume his seat. I am not prepared to grant indulgence on this matter. I will hear from the Manager of Opposition Business briefly on a point of order and then I will perhaps explain why.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I respect that indulgence is your call as Speaker. Indulgence on these issues is usually granted on the basis that there are some issues that should be used to unite the parliament. If this issue is not granted indulgence, it will mean this House has had a statement of indulgence on Yarra Council but not on North Korea. I simply ask that indulgence be granted.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Manager of Opposition Business. For the benefit of all members, I will explain why I won't grant indulgence on this occasion. Indulgence can be granted to members for personal reasons, but, when it comes to these sorts of matters, the practice is very, very clear that the indulgence is granted following a similar statement by the Prime Minister.

Government members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: Perhaps members on my right could cease interjecting; I haven't finished yet. In fact, page 500 of the Practice makes this very clear when it says, when the Prime Minister makes a statement by indulgence on an issue, the Leader of the Opposition is commonly also granted indulgence to speak. Members will know that's been the practice in this House. I think that, if we depart from it, it will mean that there will be endless speeches on subjects. So, really, when it comes to these sorts of serious matters, the Leader of the Opposition will always be granted indulgence following any statement by the Prime Minister.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Qualifications of Members

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. The last time the parliament sat, the government waited an entire week before revealing at the last possible moment that Senator Nash would be referred to the High Court. Will the government guarantee that there are no other government members or senators where the government has sought or received advice on their constitutional qualifications to sit in parliament but not yet made these doubts about their qualifications public?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:13): Sometimes the conduct and tactics of the opposition beggar belief. A moment ago, we just saw the grave faced Leader of the Opposition seek indulgence, contrary to all precedent, to make a statement about North Korea. Then came the turn for them to ask a question, which could have been about North Korea. But, instead, it's asked about the matter of citizenship. As honourable members know, the High Court will be dealing with a number of citizenship matters—I think it is now seven in total—most of which are citizenship-by-descent matters. I hardly think the Manager of Opposition Business has much credibility on this issue when his leader is not even prepared to demonstrate that he has renounced his own British citizenship.

North Korea

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:15): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister please update the House about recent developments on the Korean Peninsula and the government's response?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:15): This morning I convened a meeting of the National Security Committee of Cabinet, and the committee was briefed by our intelligence agency heads and Defence chiefs. As honourable members will be aware, the North Korean regime has boasted of a sixth nuclear test, with a seismic event of a 6.1 magnitude on the Richter scale, detected underground yesterday at a North Korean nuclear test site. This is considerably larger than any previous nuclear tests. The North Korean regime claims it is a hydrogen bomb. It is certainly consistent with a thermonuclear weapon of that type, but it is not yet established whether it was in fact a hydrogen bomb.

Nonetheless, this is yet another reckless and dangerous step in the conduct of this rogue regime in North Korea. Only last week North Korea fired a missile which travelled over northern Japan and landed about 800 kilometres to the east in the Pacific Ocean. I spoke shortly afterwards with the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, and offered him our strongest solidarity. We agreed that we would at the soonest opportunity be meeting again with our partner in the trilateral security dialogue, the United States. We condemned that action by the North Korean regime as we condemn today this shocking test.
This is the most dangerous moment in time on the Korean Peninsula since the end of the Korean War. Much is at stake. The reckless and illegal conduct of this regime cannot be rewarded. We have to ensure that the global community continues to impose stronger and stronger sanctions on North Korea.

The nation with the greatest leverage over North Korea is China. I want to be very clear to honourable members: China finds North Korea's conduct frustrating and dismaying. China has condemned it strongly and has stated unequivocally that it will implement the latest range of Security Council sanctions—for which, of course, China voted as a permanent member of the Security Council. So it's important to understand North Korea is not an obedient client state of China like East Germany was to the former Soviet Union. Nonetheless, China has the greatest leverage and hence the greatest responsibility. And so we call on China to use that economic leverage to bring this rogue regime to its senses.

I want to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the ambassador for Japan, Ambassador Kusaka. I say to the ambassador, as I said to his Prime Minister, that we stand in solidarity with the people of Japan and the people of South Korea, with the whole global community in standing up to this rogue regime and demanding that it come to its senses. The global community, thoroughly united, brings the strongest economic sanctions to bear to ensure this reckless and dangerous conduct ceases.

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the Leader of the Opposition, I point out to the House that people were drawing my attention to the clock on these matters. There is an agreement, I understand, between the sides that we can run on, and that's why the Prime Minister went on for a little over a minute more than the allotted three minutes. The Leader of the Opposition, I imagine, is seeking indulgence now the matter has been raised and I will allow him to speak on indulgence as briefly as he can.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): I would like to say to all Australians who may be watching or listening to these proceedings in parliament that, whatever disagreements might colour the next hour or so, on this question the parliament is of one mind. Keeping our people safe is the first priority and responsibility of all who serve in the parliament. The security of our nation and our region in the world unites this parliament and that is precisely as it should be.

Labor unreservedly condemns North Korea's deliberate, dangerous and provocative nuclear testing. It is a regime that force-feeds its people on propaganda whilst they starve in poverty. It is a dictatorship that calls itself democratic whilst its people suffer in slave labour. It is a regime with no respect for the security of our region or the future of global peace. This latest nuclear test is a calculated demonstration of contempt—contempt for the international community as a whole and for China and its nearest neighbours in particular; the Chinese government who has explicitly called for these nuclear and ballistic missile programs not to proceed. Every nation must do what it can to turn North Korea back from this incredibly dangerous path on which it has embarked. As Secretary Mattis has said, 'If this goes to a military solution, it is going to be tragic on an unbelievable scale.' Therefore, every nation must present North Korea with an unequivocal message: halt your nuclear program, de-escalate your aggression and turn back from this path to conflict upon which you have embarked.
Qualifications of Members

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:21): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports in The Courier-Mail quoting a Nationals member saying, ‘I know there are some Libs who have questions to answer about their own citizenship.’ Will the Prime Minister now advise the House whether there any other members or senators where the government has sought or received advice on their constitutional qualifications to sit in the parliament but not yet made doubts about their qualifications public?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: I ask how anonymous gossip in the newspapers is within the Prime Minister's area of responsibility? He has asked the first question.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House can resume his seat. To be very to the point: the first part of the question wasn't in order, but the second part of the question went to whether the government had sought advice and that is in order. I call on the Prime Minister to answer it.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:22): Mr Speaker, I have dealt with this matter on several occasions. At this stage, as honourable members are aware, three members of the coalition, three ministers, have been very candid about the fact that they believe that they have citizenship, or had, citizenship by descent. Those matters have been raised; they have all been referred to the High Court. The advice that we have from the Solicitor-General, as honourable members know, is that we expect the High Court to find that those matters will not disqualify any of those members from sitting in the House or, indeed, the Senate.

The honourable member asks me about other members of the House. There has been a welter of speculation about many members in the House and the Senate, including a number of members in the opposition, including its leader, and the opposition takes the view that they are under no obligation to demonstrate that they do not hold dual citizenship. To the honourable member's question as to whether advice has been sought: the advice that I have sought from the Solicitor-General is limited to the situations of the three ministers that have already been referred.

North Korea

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. On behalf of the large Korean-speaking community of Bennelong, will the minister outline to the House the diplomatic efforts to bring the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to its senses and end its dangerous and provocative actions?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:25): I thank the member for Bennelong for his important question. The North Korean regime continues to threaten nations in our region and to progress its illegal development of weapons that would enable it to carry out those threats. North Korea continues to directly defy the authority of the United Nations Security Council, which has repeatedly banned these illegal tests, ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs.

Yesterday, the North Korean regime conducted its sixth illegal nuclear test. As the Prime Minister said, it claimed it was a hydrogen or thermonuclear bomb. It claimed it now has the
capability to attach such a device to an intercontinental ballistic missile. It was exponentially more powerful than previous tests, which regrettably gives credence to the regime's claims.

We are dealing with a pariah state and a cruel and ruthless leader who has no concern for the welfare of the impoverished people of North Korea, no concern for international law and no regard for the peace and security of our region. Australia's response will continue to be firm, measured and calm. We are working with our partners and allies in the region. I am in constant contact with my counterpart foreign ministers and secretaries of state, and with the United Nations, to compel North Korea to reassess its calculation of risk in relation to its behaviour and to deter it from carrying out any further illegal tests.

We urge all nations to fully implement the sanctions that were unanimously agreed by the UN Security Council on 5 August—that includes banning exports of North Korean coal, lead, iron, iron ore and seafood. It includes banning any new work visas for North Korean workers who were working outside of North Korea and sending remittances back to the regime which it was using to fund these illegal programs. It also includes sanctions on North Korea's foreign trading bank, its primary source of foreign exchange.

There must be unprecedented pressure brought to bear on North Korea. North Korea must understand it will pay a significant price for its illegal behaviour, and nations are urged to consider additional autonomous sanctions against North Korea as Australia has done.

We welcome the very strong stance taken by the UN Security Council, which will meet again this evening. There will be immense consequences for our region, if North Korea's illegal tests are left unchecked, and we will pursue every political, diplomatic and economic option to bring about a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

**Deputy Prime Minister**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): My question is to the Prime Minister. Last time this parliament sat the Prime Minister claimed in question time:

... the Deputy Prime Minister is qualified to sit in this House, and the High Court will so hold.

On what basis did the Prime Minister make this claim?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:28): Mr Speaker, I have answered this question on many occasions now, and the basis of our confidence, our very strong confidence, in the High Court holding that the Deputy Prime Minister—and, indeed, Senators Canavan and Nash—being held to be qualified to sit in the House and the Senate is plainly based on advice from the Solicitor-General. We hold that confidence very, very strongly indeed.

The last thing we want to get into, perhaps, is a debate about legal opinions. But I would say this: there is one opinion that every Australian has and that is that the Leader of the Opposition cannot be trusted. The one thing we know is that he claims to have renounced his UK citizenship. Where's the proof? Where's the evidence? He won't show it. All he has to do is produce a piece of paper—that's all he's got to do. What is he trying to cover up? We don't know if it is his situation or is it others? He can table it right now. We won't object. The Leader of the House gives me an assurance that he won't object to it being tabled. Whether it is on trading away workers' penalty rates or what about trading them away so that they have to work for almost another week to make up for what they have lost, the reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is not fair dinkum. He's had a test. He could have put the paper on
the table and everyone would know, but he's failed that test. The question Australians are asking is, 'What has he got to hide?'

**Environment**

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:31): Minister for the Environment and Energy, crocodiles are now killing North Queenslanders at almost one a year. There are sightings at our tourism beaches and attacks on dogs almost weekly. Humans of unbalanced natures are introducing toads and protecting crocodiles. Groppers ate the baby crocodiles and the gropers are gone. Goannas and pythons ate the eggs and they are both gone. The biggest predators are my First Australian brothers—gone. They were told by white fellas far, far away that after 40,000 years they can't hunt crocs or harvest eggs. Would the minister agree that Premier Palaszczuk ain't gonna become no Cleopatra no matter how many human sacrifices she makes to the crocodile river gods?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Minister for the Environment and Energy) (14:31): The Premier may not be the member for Kennedy's Cleopatra but I am sure I am safe in saying that you're not her Mark Antony! I can assure the member for Kennedy that we stand side by side with him in putting people before crocodiles, just like we stand side by side with the people of Western Australia in putting people before sharks. I know that on our side of the House, we have the original crocodile hunter in the member of Leichhardt. I understand that he's turned a nice pair of crocodile skins into a nice pair of boots for two previous US Presidents: President Clinton and President Bush.

On a more serious note, we have expressed concern about the rise in crocodile-related fatalities. There have been ten deaths in the last six years including in places like Cape Tribulation, and, clearly, we have seen an increase in the number of crocodiles particularly in areas that are human inhabited. I know in the member's own electorate that in Mareeba crocodiles have come into the area and should never have been allowed in that area.

Under federal legislation, under the EPBC Act, crocodiles are listed as a migratory species, but, as the honourable member knows, it is under state legislation in Queensland where crocodiles are listed as a vulnerable species. We call upon the Palaszczuk government to take stronger action to put people first. I know that the LNP in Queensland released their policy earlier this year—which we support—about removing crocodiles from marinas and other areas where there are a lot of boats or where people are swimming. We support those measures. The Commonwealth stands side by side with the member for Kennedy and with the member for Leichhardt in ensuring that the Queensland Labor government does more to put people before crocodiles.

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Corangamite, could I inform the House that we have present in the speaker's gallery this afternoon Mr Grant Chapman, a former South Australian Senator. On behalf of all members, a very warm welcome to you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Defence Industry

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. Will the minister update the House on the largest peacetime build-up of our military capability, a record $200 billion commitment by this government? How will this assist Australia to defend itself? And how does it compare to alternative approaches?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:35): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question. We sit in a region that we share with seven of the world's 10 largest standing military forces and five of the world's declared nuclear nations, including North Korea. The events of the last few months, particularly the last week, remind us of how important it is that the government has committed to and embarked on the largest build-up of our military capability in our peacetime history: a $200 billion investment. That's why we're taking this investment so very seriously.

On the sea, to support the Collins class submarines and the Anzac frigates, we are building three air warfare destroyers, the most lethal air warfare destroyers in the world. We've also, on this side of the House, committed to building 12 offshore patrol vessels, nine future frigates and 12 new class submarines that will also be patrolling our waters. The work for those projects is well underway. But we also have room in the integrated investment plan, which followed the Defence white paper, to upgrade the air warfare destroyers to meet a range of missile threats. That upgrade of the air warfare destroyers is costed. It's in the integrated investment plan. All options for the capability of the air warfare destroyers—in terms of meeting missile threats—are being considered.

We're also implementing a land based surface-to-air missile defence system, which we announced earlier this year. It is a $2 billion investment that will be provided by Raytheon Australia and CEA Technologies, an Australian radar company. It will install a surface-to-air missile defence system for our deployed forces and will intercept a range of air threats: planes, helicopters, drones, cruise missiles and rockets. So the government is not just investing in things like the Joint Strike Fighter, the Tritons, the Poseidons, the ships that I've talked about and the cybersecurity capabilities. We're also investing in the kinds of platforms that can protect us from the missile threats from North Asia that have been talked about.

This, of course, stands in very stark contrast to the period when Labor was in office. In that period of six years, they did not commission one Australian-built vessel—not one Australian-built vessel! They reduced spending of GDP as a percentage on defence to 1.56 per cent—the lowest since 1938, the last year of appeasement. We will hit two per cent of GDP being spent on defence by 2020, two years early.

Deputy Prime Minister

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Prime Minister. Since the government became aware that there was doubt over the qualifications of the Deputy Prime Minister to be a member of parliament, how many executive orders, grants, delegations—

*Mr Fletcher interjecting*—
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The SPEAKER: Member for Sydney, resume your seat. The Minister for Urban Infrastructure will cease interjecting and is warned. The member for Sydney will start her question again.

Ms PLIBERSEK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Prime Minister. Since the government became aware that there was doubt over the qualifications of the Deputy Prime Minister to be a member of parliament, how many executive orders, grants, delegations, appointments and legislative instruments has the Deputy Prime Minister signed or made?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:38): I can advise the honourable member that the government is absolutely satisfied that the Deputy Prime Minister is qualified to sit in the House. Our legal advice is very clear, and we're very confident that the High Court will confirm that when the matter is heard, so the premise of her question is false.

National Security

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Can the minister update the House on the benefits of a well-managed national security agenda? Why are strong and consistent border protection policies important to securing our nation? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:39): I want to say thank you very much to the member for Wide Bay for his hard work in his electorate, and I want to thank all Australians for the confidence that they've got in this government when it comes to border protection. We have worked hard over the course of the last several years to clean up a significant mess, where 1,200 people drowned at sea. When Labor lost control of our borders, there were 8,000 children put into detention and 17 new detention centres opened. We've got all of those children out of detention, we have closed those detention centres and we have restored integrity to the border protection system in this country.

As the member for Wide Bay points out, the global security environment is deteriorating. It is more important than ever that our country, like many others, keeps our borders secure. The Australian government alone must determine who enters our country and we reassert that sovereign right today. Since we stood up Operation Sovereign Borders, it's been 1,135 days since the last successful boat arrival, though we know that the people smugglers are still in business and they still seek to take money from people and to have them hop on those boats and come to our country.

But it seems that, over the course of the last week, while the Leader of the Opposition has been trying to say to the Australian public that Labor Party policy is the same as the coalition's policy, it turns out that it's not. In fact, the statements of the Leader of the Opposition over the course of the last week demonstrate to the people smugglers, as clearly as they demonstrate to the Australian public, that there has been no weaker leader since this Leader of the Opposition has come into his office than the former leaders of the ALP, in Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. It is clear that this Leader of the Opposition is as weak as Gillard and Rudd when it comes to boats, and it is clear when you see some of the statements from those members sitting opposite him that they have not learnt a single lesson since the
time when they had those drownings at sea and they allowed the 50,000 people in on 800 boats.

The fact is that there were people from Nauru and Manus who came for medical assistance. The arrangement was that, once they had received medical assistance and had been given clearance by the doctors to go back to Nauru or Manus, or indeed back to their country of origin, they should have gone. They're refusing to go and—

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Mr DUTTON:** We see one member up there screaming and interjecting wildly. He's obviously representing many others on the Left of the party who would undo the policy that has been successful in stopping boats. At a time when the Australian public is watching what is happening in the national security space in this country, it is demonstrated on a daily basis that the Leader of the Opposition simply is not up to the task and, if he were elected at the next election, we would see the boats recommence under Labor as they did in the past.

### Qualifications of Members

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:42): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Leader of the House said, and I quote, 'The Constitution, of course, allows a person to be a minister for three months after they've been deemed not to be eligible.' Is it seriously government policy that ministers will keep their jobs for three months after being disqualified by the High Court?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House on a point of order?

**Mr Pyne:** Mr Speaker, the question is entirely hypothetical. As you have said before, the member for New England is entitled to be the member for New England in the House until the High Court rules otherwise. As a consequence, these fishing expedition hypothetical questions should be ruled out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** I'll hear from the Manager of Opposition Business.

**Mr Burke:** Mr Speaker, the question asks what the government policy is. If there's no government policy, he can say that there's no government policy. But the question asks what the government policy is.

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** If the Leader of the House ceases interjecting, I can come to his point of order. I would just point out to the Leader of the House that I haven't made comments about eligibility. I've pointed out that, to the extent that I have constitutional responsibilities, they don't relate at all to the matter of eligibility; they relate to swearing members in and other matters.

The question did ask whether it was government policy. On that basis, I think that, whilst the Leader of the House could point out that he thinks it offends the standing orders, there have been many questions asked about government policy—about whether the government has a particular policy or whether, in a different circumstance, it would adopt a different policy. So I'm going to allow the question. I call the Prime Minister.

**Mr TURNBULL** (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:44): Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is another far-fetched hypothetical question we get from the opposition, which stated over the last few days that its object this week was to create chaos in the House of Representatives.
That was what they wanted to do. They wanted to do it this week: at a time when we face the gravest threat to peace on the Korean Peninsula; at a time at home when we have Australian families and businesses bearing the brunt of higher and higher electricity prices; and at a time when the Labor Party have finally made the stunning admission that it was their complacency, their neglect and their wilful recklessness that resulted in there being a shortage of gas on the east coast of Australia—when, in other words, they put their hands up and said that they were guilty of the high electricity prices we're currently facing and that are putting tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs at risk. At a time of all of that, the Labor Party's goal is to create chaos and mayhem. They threatened that they were going to create disorder in the House. At one point, they said they were going to walk out.

The Australian people expect this House, this parliament, to focus on their security: their national security, their energy security, and securing their jobs and the opportunities for the future. That's what the government is focused on. I know the opposition has no interest in taking advice from me, but I would counsel them to focus on the same real issues themselves.

Economy

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (14:47): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the news reported in recent economic data releases? How does this data point to better days ahead for all Australians and for the constituents in my electorate of Brisbane?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:47): I thank the member for Brisbane for bringing attention to matters of the economy and people's jobs—the things Australians are concerned about. I'm very pleased to report both to the parliament and to the member for Brisbane—as an economist himself and as the member for Brisbane concerned about jobs in his own electorate—that there is further good news about the economy, which has been released in the economic data even as of today. Over 181,000 job advertisements were recorded in August—more jobs. That is the highest level in over 6½ years in the number of job advertisements out there today. We know that in the last fiscal year over 240,000 jobs were created. The last six months to the end of July was the strongest six-months jobs growth in full-time employment in almost 40 years. More jobs is what the positive economic data is revealing. But today I can say also that, in figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the amount of wages and salaries earned by Australians in the June quarter rose by 1.2 per cent—1.2 per cent in just one quarter—and that is the fastest pace of increase since late 2013. So there are more wages as well as more jobs—more money in the pockets of Australians, because more Australians are getting more work.

But there's also been more investment. Last week's capital expenditure survey showed that non-mining related capex rose 2.6 per cent in the June quarter, and the estimates for 2017-18 are up five per cent. That is an increase in non-mining investment in our economy, and it comes on the back of the strong pro-investment, pro-growth, pro-job policies of the Turnbull government. We also see surveys of manufacturing activity showing the highest level of rises in manufacturing activity from that survey in 15 years. On top of that, we have business conditions, as surveyed in the business community, at their highest levels in almost a decade.

And so what we have is the national economic plan that is driving jobs in this country, producing those jobs and producing that growth. We have a Turnbull government that's focused on the economics of opportunity, not the politics of envy, by the most left-wing
Labor Party leader we've seen in generations whose only policy, he believes, to encourage growth in this country is to tax it into oblivion.

**Qualifications of Members**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:50): My question is to the Prime Minister: Why is the government knowingly putting at risk every ministerial decision and every ministerial action being taken by ministers who have responsibility for regional development, regional communications, local government, resources, territories, agriculture, water resources and northern Australia? How can the Prime Minister act so recklessly on the arrogant basis that he knows what the High Court will so hold?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:50): Over the last two weeks, all we've heard from the opposition is their plans to create trouble and chaos, so they've said in the House of Representatives.

**Opposition members interjecting—**

Mr Hammond interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: Oh, yes, you all have. That's what you all said to do: try to create chaos in the parliament. We've read it every day. We've read about your cunning plans to create mayhem in the House of Representatives. We haven't heard anything about the first ever national strategy to protect Australians from terrorism in crowded places. We haven't heard anything from the Labor Party about that. That's what we have set out.

We haven't heard any support at all for our drug-testing trials. We believe welfare money should not be spent on drugs and alcohol. So do most Australians, and so does anybody that cares about somebody who is in the grip of alcoholism or substance abuse. But the Labor Party won't support us on that. We have heard snide remarks, backtracking and hedging on the cashless welfare card, which has meant that, in the communities where it has operated to date, we have seen a dramatic reduction in alcohol abuse, in substance abuse, in domestic violence, in public violence. We've done that. We've rolled that out.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. Has the Prime Minister concluded his remarks?

Mr TURNBULL: I have.

**MOTIONS**

**Deputy Prime Minister**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:52): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Watson from moving the following motion forthwith—

That the House calls on the Prime Minister to immediately stand aside the Deputy Prime Minister from Cabinet until his constitutional qualifications have been determined by the High Court.

Mr Speaker, this motion deals with one question and one question only. This deals with whether or not this Prime Minister—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Leader of the House has the call.
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:53): I move:
That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Manager of Opposition Business be no further heard.

The House divided. [14:57]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 74
Noes ...................... 73
Majority ............... 1

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartseyker, L
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Vasta, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Faliniski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilson, AJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T
The Speaker (15:00): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Fitzgibbon (Hunter) (15:00): I second the motion. We cannot expect people to have respect for this parliament if this parliament is not prepared to respect the Constitution—

The Speaker: The member for Hunter will resume his seat. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr Pyne (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:00): He hasn't got his heart in it. I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The Speaker: The question is that the member for Hunter be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:02]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 74
Noes ...................... 73
Majority ............... 1

AYES

Abbott, AJ  Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ  Andrews, KL
Banks, J  Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ  Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S  Chester, D
Christensen, GR  Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB  Coulton, M
Crewther, CJ  Drum, DK (teller)
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Evans, TM  Falinski, J
Fletcher, PW  Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA  Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA  Goodenough, IR
Hartseyker, L  Hawke, AG
Henderson, SM  Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR  Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ  Joyce, BT
Keenan, M  Kelly, C
Laming, A  Landry, ML
Laundy, C  Leeser, J
Ley, SP  Littleproud, D
Marino, NB  McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ  Morrison, SJ
Morton, B  O’Brien, LS
O’Brien, T  O’Dowd, KD
O’Dwyer, KM  Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ  Porter, CC
Prentice, J  Price, ML
Pyne, CM  Ramsey, RE (teller)
Robert, SR  Sudmalis, AE
Sukkar, MS  Taylor, AJ
Tehan, DT  Tudge, AE
Turnbull, MB  Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX  Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE  Wilson, RJ
Wilson, TR  Wood, JP
Wyatt, KG  Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN  Aly, A
Bandt, AP  Bird, SL
Bowen, CE  Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS  Burney, LJ
Butler, MC  Butler, TM
Byrne, AM  Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND  Chesters, LM
Clare, JD  Claydon, SC

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:04): The question is that the motion moved by the member for Watson be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:04]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 74
Majority ............... 1

AYES

Albanese, AN              Aly, A
Bandt, AP                 Bird, SL
Bowen, CE                 Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS                 Burney, LJ
Butler, MC                Butler, TM
Byrne, AM                 Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND              Chesters, LM
Clare, JD                 Claydon, SC
Collins, JM               Conroy, PM
Danby, M                  Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA               Elliot, MJ
Fenney, D                 Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR            Georganas, S
Giles, AJ                 Gosling, LJ
Hammond, TJ               Hart, RA
Hayes, CP                 Hill, JC
Husar, E                  Husic, EN
Jones, SP                 Katter, RC
Keay, JT                  Kelly, MJ
Keogh, MJ                 Khalil, P
King, CF                  King, MMH
Lamb, S                   Leigh, AK
Macklin, JL               Marles, RD
McBride, EM               McGowan, C
Mitchell, BK              Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK               O'Conner, BPJ
O'Neil, CE                O'Toole, C
Owens, JA                 Perrett, GD (teller)
Plibersek, TJ             Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA               Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC              Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE               Stanley, AM
Swan, WM                  Swanson, MJ
Templeman, SR             Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakou, M               Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD                Wilson, JH
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CHAMBER
Questions without notice

Energy

Mrs Sudmalis (Gilmore) (15:11): My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Energy. Will the minister update the House on the action the government is taking to put downward pressure on energy prices, as this is of great concern to local residents in Gilmore? Is the minister aware of differences in policy proposals that would ultimately hit the family budget for all Australians?

Mr Frydenberg (Kooyong—Minister for the Environment and Energy) (15:11): I thank the member for Gilmore for her question over her deep concern about large employers in her electorate, like Nowra Chemical Manufacturers and like Manildra, who are dealing with higher electricity prices. The Turnbull government has been taking action on all fronts to put downward pressure on prices. We have been reining in the power of the poles-and-wires companies, and, if the Labor Party had done it, consumers would be $6½ billion better off.

When it comes to the retailers, we've got significant commitments from them to provide more information, better information, comparable information to consumers. And we're putting in place a mechanism to restrict gas exports to ensure we have more gas for domestic supply. And we know that the more gas we produce puts upward pressure on gas prices. And you know who was in government when the decisions were taken to make these big exports of gas? It was the Labor Party when the Leader of the Opposition was a senior minister.

The member for Port Adelaide was asked about what they knew and when, and he said he didn't know anything. He told Insiders he didn't know anything. But you only have to go to the 2012 white paper, when Labor was in office, which said about increasing gas exports that it will lead to 'tighter supply and higher prices'. So you can imagine the great interest I had in the interview with David Speers last Thursday that the member for Port Adelaide now would rather forget. Normally, you would get those interviews sent out to you in emails by the member's office. But it didn't come on Thursday. It didn't come on Friday. It didn't come on Saturday. It didn't come on Sunday. It hasn't even come today. Do you know why? It is because there was a question in there from David Speers, who said to the member for Port...
Adelaide, ‘Your own white paper said there would be an impact on prices, but you said you weren’t warned.’ This is what the member for Port Adelaide said:
Everyone knew there would be an impact on prices.
Here is the Labor Party and the Leader of the Opposition who said they stand up for blue-collar workers, but through their actions gas prices have increased, electricity prices have increased and the jobs of people in manufacturing, in plastics, in papers and in pubs are all put in jeopardy because the Labor Party, in order to win Greens votes, have given away the blue-collar workers that they should be standing up for. (Time expired)

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS
Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS
Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:15): I wish to make a personal explanation.
The SPEAKER: Does the Leader of the Opposition claim to have been misrepresented?
Mr SHORTEN: Very much so. I’m seeking to explain a matter of a personal nature as allowed under standing order 68.
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is correct and he may proceed.
Mr SHORTEN: I want to address comments made by the Prime Minister and the member for Warringah and other members of the government suggesting that I might be secretly be a UK national—a dual national, like his ministers. I will not allow the Prime Minister to use a smear about me as cover for the crisis which engulfs his government. This silly distraction has to end. The circus has to stop. The country does not have time for it. So, in order to put this matter to rest once and for all, I seek leave to table a copy of correspondence from the UK Home Office confirming that I successfully renounced my United Kingdom citizenship prior to my election to parliament in 2007.
Mr Pyne interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting. Is leave granted?
Leave granted.
Mr SHORTEN: I accept that, if I want to be elected Prime Minister, there cannot be any doubt about my constitutional eligibility. Pushed by the conspiracy theorists like the Prime Minister and the member for Warringah, I offer this proof to the parliament today to put an
end to baseless allegations, not reward them. I strongly believe that MPs and senators should not be forced to produce evidence to counter claims that are made completely without evidence. I repeat: MPs and senators should not be forced—

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

Mr SHORTEN: to produce evidence to counter claims that are made completely without evidence, no matter which party they are from. This is our chance to draw a line in the sand. This must end. In an age of Twitter trolls and baseless online conspiracies, this is a chance for our parliament to declare we are bigger and better than this. To accept otherwise, to turn our back on the notion that a person making an allegation must have some evidence, sets a dangerous precedent. I suspect the Prime Minister and his colleagues knew the claim about me to be completely false, but that is not their motive. Their tactic is clear. It is to do anything, no matter how desperate, to distract from the crisis of legitimacy shrouding this government.

The SPEAKER: I just ask the Leader of the Opposition to conclude his remarks.

Mr SHORTEN: I'm concluding my remarks. The Deputy Prime Minister should not be allowed to serve as Acting Prime Minister. If he does, the entire legitimacy of this government and this parliament is at risk. I say to the Prime Minister: do the right thing, do the honest thing, be the strong leader you claim you are and make the Deputy Prime Minister stand aside.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (15:18): Mr Speaker, a member of parliament in this place—

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Kennedy seeking to make a personal explanation?

Mr KATTER: Yes. I claim to be misrepresented in the media and by people in this place.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy claims to have been misrepresented. He may proceed.

Mr KATTER: The representation was that there is not a dog being taken every week or there is not a crocodile sighting closing our beaches in North Queensland every week. In anticipation of that allegation coming today, we brought in a photograph taken just one week after the scuba diver was taken, and that—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will put his prop down.

Mr KATTER: Sorry?

The SPEAKER: Just place your prop, your photo, back on the table. You've made your point.

Mr KATTER: All right. The photograph is of a crocodile with a very much loved little pet dog in its mouth. A father and his daughter were walking along the main river that goes through Innisfail, and they had their dog in front of them. The dog was taken—

The SPEAKER: If the member for Kennedy could pause for a second and resume his seat. He needs to go where he's been misrepresented. Unless he's got anything additional to add to where he's been misrepresented, he needs to bring his matter to a close.

Mr KATTER: I've not rebutted the misrepresentation.
The SPEAKER: I haven't called the member for Kennedy. I haven't called you. Resume your seat. As I said, the member for Kennedy needs to show where he's been misrepresented and to state that and not to tell us the entire story that doesn't relate to him.

Mr KATTER: It has been said that there's not a crocodile attack every week or a closing of the beach every week. It was said by way of interjection, and it has also been in the northern papers. You think it's funny, but we don't particularly think it's funny when one of us is being taken and torn to pieces—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will not allege that I think anything is funny. I'm listening to him and I'm giving him more latitude—

Mr KATTER: I present photo representation of a much loved pet being taken by a crocodile a few weeks ago—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy has made his point. He will resume his seat.

COMMITTEES

Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation

Report

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (15:21): On behalf of the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, I present the committee's report entitled *Issues paper* together with the minutes of proceedings. I seek leave to make a short statement in connection with the report.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER (15:21): Just before you do that, there was a statement I wanted to make to the House that is just a few lines long. I think I'll do that now. This morning I made a statement to the House on a matter of privilege. In the statement I referred to the ministerial statement of ethics. This should've been the Statement of Ministerial Standards, and I've asked for the *Hansard* and *Votes and Proceedings* to be corrected. Just for the information of members.

Is leave granted for the member for Groom?

Leave granted.

COMMITTEES

Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation

Report

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (15:22): The Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation's *Issues paper* fulfils the committee's requirement to present an issues paper to the House on region development and decentralisation as set out in the committee's resolution of appointment. The committee's inquiry is an exciting opportunity for government and non-government members of this chamber to work together in the best interests of regional Australia. In particular, it presents an opportunity for members to examine how we can develop and maintain prosperous and sustainable regions, capitalising on the strengths and local resources we know our regions offer.
So much of Australia's economic success rests in the resources and hard work of our regional towns and cities. The select committee has been asked to inquire into and report on best practice approaches to regional development, the decentralisation of Commonwealth entities and supporting corporate decentralisation as well. This issues paper sets out the committee's preliminary research and thinking on these matters. It discusses broad themes such as the history of decentralisation in Australia, place-based approaches to developing our nation's regions, the advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation policy, the role of technology in connecting and diversifying nonmetropolitan areas and the role of public and private investment in supporting and growing Australia's regional and rural towns.

There are lots of rural and regional towns doing great things across the country to foster economic and social development in their communities. Even in the infancy of this inquiry, the committee has consistently heard that rural and regional towns are unique and have different strengths and capacity. These areas will require local, place-based strategies to ensure their development and growth. In my own electorate of Groom, we are meeting rural and regional challenges with significant corporate investment, cooperation among regional councils and capacity to support major infrastructure projects. The committee is looking forward to visiting this and other regional and rural towns to learn more about the strategies used in these areas to support population growth, employment and a viable future.

Decentralisation of Commonwealth departments has received a great deal of attention. Indeed, there is much enthusiasm and capacity in rural and regional Australia to house Commonwealth departments. The committee is mindful that decentralisation is not an end in itself. Regional growth, long-term employment opportunities and sustainability must be the driving factors, along with the improvement of government services.

The key focus for this committee will be on measuring the success of recent decentralisation policy—that is, determining the net benefit of moving government entities from one location to another. In addition to the economic impact of decentralisation policy, the committee plans to examine the family, social and community impact of this approach. The committee will also examine more closely the issue of corporate decentralisation. In particular, the committee is keen to explore how the actions or policies of the Commonwealth can encourage corporate entities to relocate to non-metropolitan areas. For example, what are some of the barriers to relocation? What can be done to remove them?

The committee has identified some examples of private companies establishing a presence in regional Australia and hopes to learn more about the experiences of these companies. The committee is also interested in corporations that have established a base in regional areas only to withdraw at a later date. The committee plans to consult widely during its inquiry and will conduct public hearings in a range of non-metropolitan locations across Australia. To assist the inquiry, the committee is drawing on a number of Australian experts, who will be available as an informal panel to discuss broad issues related to the terms of reference. We look forward to an ongoing conversation with the members of this panel.

I am a passionate supporter of regional Australia and I believe Australia's regions will remain the key to unlocking our growth and our future growth potential as a nation. The work of this select committee can help shape the vision for the future of regional Australia. The committee's issues paper has been designed to provide more information about the matters in the terms of reference. It aims to stimulate thinking and generate ideas about future regional
development. The committee hopes that this issues paper will encourage interested people and organisations to make a submission to our inquiry. I commend this issues paper to the House.

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (15:27): by leave—I rise today to speak on the issues paper that has been released on regional development and decentralisation. It is an honour to serve as deputy chair of this House of Representatives select committee with the chair, the member for Groom, Dr John McVeigh. From the start, our broad brief has been to explore ways to increase the growth and prosperity of rural and regional Australia. This is a matter that sits at the heart of the wellbeing and fortunes of the people of Paterson, which spans wine country in the west, industry, coalfields, the booming regional city of Maitland, the Williamstown RAAF base and aerospace park, and the blue water wonderland of Port Stephens.

Much of my electorate is in a state of flux and transition as the industrial landscape changes, but now, more than ever, our economic success rests with the skills that can be captured and the work that can be obtained. One line of thought is simply to relocate government departments from Canberra to the regions. But decentralisation isn't an economic plan in and of itself, and there are a multitude of factors that determine the success of decentralisation. This was noted in the 2015 Regional Australia Institute discussion paper, *The Future of Regional Australia: Change on Our Terms*, which made the key finding that government has diminishing control over the factors that shape Australia's regions.

For a stark example of ill-thought-out decentralisation, we need look no further than the Deputy Prime Minister's controversial and ultimately failed decision to move a government crop and veterinary chemical agency to his own electorate. The agency shed jobs, employees were not happy with the forced move, and some workers had to work out of a local McDonald's because their new office wasn't ready.

The fallout from the agriculture minister's grand decentralisation vision was, I believe, pivotal in sparking this select committee investigation. If nothing else, we learnt that this was not the platform for an arbitrary decision. It requires investigation and it requires consultation, analysis and, crucially, planning. As such, our brief as a committee has been to inquire into and report on best practice approaches to regional development and the decentralisation of Commonwealth entities and ways to support corporate decentralisation. In some cases, that may mean enabling towns to provide their citizens with infrastructure that every community needs to thrive—things like roads, rail, bridges, schools, public transport, educational opportunities, health care and support across different life stages.

Beyond that, the committee will travel to hear firsthand about what towns and cities believe they need to succeed. I have publicly encouraged every council in my electorate to put forward a submission, explaining how their LGA is suited to and can meet the need of government functions. On the flipside, the inquiry has asked all government departments to indicate whether or not they are suitable to move at all or in part some of their operations to the regions. If, indeed, they feel their operations are unsuitable, they have been asked to quantify that as well.

I'm broadly supportive of decentralisation and the concept of sharing the wealth across our wide, brown land. I was born and bred in the Hunter Valley coalfields and have long fought for families and friends in my regional community to reap the same benefits of health, education, transport and services as their city cousins. Of course, we want more people in our
towns, more customers in our shops, more volunteers for our local firefighting brigades and more kids to play in sporting teams and to attend school.

As federal parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to make sure regional and rural areas and their communities are not left out of our nation's planning. I am loath, however, to uproot families and shift them to the country or expect an existing community to simply assimilate a great chunk of potentially disgruntled neighbours into their tight-knit communities because one government minister thinks a pork barrel might be good. This is not a one-size-fits-all situation and we impose our will on others at our peril. I eagerly await the interim report in December and the final report in February of next year. We can then move towards a plan to boost our regions in a sensible and productive way, and I am pleased and committed to work with this committee.

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (15:32): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (15:32): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

BILLS
Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all the 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:

(1) the Government's lack of national energy policy, which is causing an investment strike in new electricity generation; and

(2) the government's failure to ensure an adequate and affordable gas supply for Australian industry while Australia becomes the world's largest LNG exporter."

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Minister for Small Business) (15:33): I thank all members for their contribution to the debate on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2017. This bill will enable the Australian government to continue to work towards its goal of compliance with the International Energy Agency's requirement that Australia holds 90 days of oil stockholdings by authorising the Australian government to enter into oil stockholding contracts. The initial purchase of oil tickets equivalent to around three million barrels of the oil in the financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20 play an important role in Australia's return to compliance. In the event that the International Energy Agency calls on its members to assist in alleviating a major global oil supply disruption in a collective action, Australia will be able
to utilise this ticketed stock. This bill will help to enhance global and regional oil security and allows for the continuing effective operation of Australia's liquid fuel market and its robust oil supply chains. The bill demonstrates the Australian government's ongoing commitment to complying with our International Energy Agency treaty obligations.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Port Adelaide has moved as an amendment that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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**Third Reading**

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina—Minister for Small Business) (15:35): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

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**Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016**

**Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr GOSLING** (Solomon) (15:36): I rise in support of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. As it's in continuation, and as a reminder to honourable members, this bill goes to the consolidation under the responsibility of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs of all current veterans, which makes a lot of sense.

Veterans should not be confronted with a bureaucratic maze when attempting to seek assistance. It's hard enough when you're suffering from anxiety, depression or some ailment stemming from your service to our country without unnecessary and confusing red tape becoming an obstacle to getting the support that you need. We should attempt in every possible way to minimise the amount of red tape and obstructions that prevent veterans from seeking the help that they need.

Pensions, compensation, rehabilitation, treatment and other benefits for veterans, members of the Defence Force and their families are currently provided under three separate acts: the VEA; the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the MRCA; and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the SRCA. This bill will remove the applicability of the SRCA and create the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016, the DRCA, which will only cover Defence Force members and their families. The implementation of this proposed DRCA will provide for a complete separation of the legislative framework for Defence related claims from the Comcare scheme.
under the SRCA and will provide the Minister for Veterans' Affairs with the responsibility for all three separate compensation acts which cover veterans and Defence.

Veterans, former ADF personnel and their families have unique needs that would be better served by a dedicated minister. The last time that I spoke, in the last sittings, we all encouraged the minister to rededicate himself to the service of our people through the better running of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and better consultation with the ex-services community. Rather than having the different acts under different ministers, all pieces of legislation will now be under the one minister, as I mentioned. This makes a lot of sense.

However, I do note that this bill attracted some scrutiny from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, and want to briefly comment on some of that scrutiny. That committee noted that there was a perception that there is an adversarial relationship between DVA and veterans groups and veterans advocates. I know this myself from speaking with colleagues about their experiences with the department, but I must stress: there are excellent people working in the department; it's just that the processes in the department—and perhaps some of the culture in the department—need review.

A mate that I served with who has gone through this process has just received confirmation of the claim process after three years. During those three years, he was going through an incredibly difficult time personally in terms of not only his mental health but his identity, coming out of his career in Defence and losing a bit of purpose. At the same time, he was coming up against the obstacles in this claim process. I've held forums in my electorate where I have had feedback from veterans and ex-service people along the same lines. So it is concerning, but it is also consistent with feedback we've got from around the country.

I hope that DVA can pursue a more mutually accommodating relationship with its stakeholders. We all hope for that. Another main theme that the committee noted was that there was a need for improvements in those DVA consultation processes. While we on this side of the House acknowledge that DVA itself has undertaken to review its own processes, we encourage it to complete this as soon as possible to ensure that effective consultation with all relevant stakeholders is able to occur. As everyone knows, generally speaking mutually beneficial outcomes occur for not only DVA clients and the future clients but also the stakeholders involved when all sides are consulted. This simply makes sense. It's the best way to get great outcomes for those who have served our country.

We have so many organisations across the country. I think a review was recently done that said that there were around 3,000 ex-service type organisations in Australia. So the process of consultation with those groups is more important than ever. When I reflect on the situation for ex-service people and veterans in my own electorate, we have thousands of ex-service people, whether they served overseas on active service or not, living in our community. Some of those members were injured or are suffering from events that may have occurred when they were in uniform, whether it be in Australia during training or whether it be when overseas. Those service people, those fine Australians, need more support. It's proper that the veterans' affairs minister is now responsible for all of them and that's what this bill is all about.

Currently, in my electorate we're recruiting for a level 3 advocate. For those who are not aware, an advocate is someone who works with the ex-Defence member who has served us. The advocate helps them through the process of getting some assistance in a claims process through Veterans' Affairs, but can also help in many other ways in an individual's transition
from the military to civilian life, as it's called when you're inside the military. That role is yet to be filled. Without turning my contribution into an ad, I want to put it out there nationally that Darwin is looking for a level 3 advocate to work with our service men and women who are seeking assistance to make claims through the department.

Most jurisdictions, most capital cities, all over Australia have these level 3 advocates. At level 3 they have the desired amount of experience with the acts, including the one that we're discussing today, to help the ex-service member through the claims process to get the desired outcomes. Anyone interested in applying for that role can look at seek.com.au. That advocate position will also coordinate the services of the level 1 and level 2 advocates as well.

These are volunteers working in our community. All members of this place will know how vital those volunteers are, but they need to be coordinated. Case management is important, because you can't let anyone fall through the cracks. With successive advocates that we've had, our experience has been that you've got a volunteer person, who may already be working through their own issues to do with their own service, and then, on top of that, they take on this huge weight of responsibility to help Australians facing anxieties and difficult challenges—be they physical ill health or mental ill health—through that process whilst also dealing with their own stuff and doing the best they can to case manage that claims process through the DVA. As I said, the staff of the DVA do the best possible job, but we really need that level 3 advocate in the Top End.

There are a number of organisations in my electorate, and I want to acknowledge a couple of them for their fine work. The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia NT branch will soon do something that hasn't happened anywhere in Australia, and that is change their name. There'll be a vote to change their name to Veterans Australia NT. They are considering dropping 'Vietnam' out of their name because they want to make sure that young veterans feel like they can come to Veterans Australia NT and have a home where they belong. I think the Vietnam veterans are right in thinking that having their name as the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia NT meant that younger veterans who may have served in places like Rwanda, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste maybe didn't think that that group was for them. I can assure those ex-service people in the Territory that, even though the name change won't be voted on for a couple of weeks, they are welcome in that organisation, and I know the executive committee want to reach out in every possible way. I want to acknowledge Bob Shewring, who is the president of that organisation, for his leadership on the issue and also the vice-president, Ray Palmer, who lost his son fighting for our country in Afghanistan.

We have RSLs in Palmerston and Darwin. Those RSLs are working to coordinate more with the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia in order to make sure that ex-serving people in our electorate don't fall through the gaps, and I congratulate them for the work that they're doing.

Next week we hope to have one of our Korean veterans come down to Canberra for the opening of the Peacekeeping Memorial on Anzac Parade. We are hoping that we can get Jack Myatt, who served with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, peacekeeping along the DMZ on the border between North Korea and South Korea in that transition period post hostilities, to come down and be awarded by the South Korean government the peace medal that they have struck to acknowledge those members of the forces from Commonwealth and
other countries who were committed to securing the demilitarised zone from any further aggression at the cessation of hostilities in the 1950s when there were continuing border infringements. It's great to talk with Jack about that time, and it's very apt not only that he will be acknowledged by the South Korean government but also that he will there for the unveiling of the Peacekeeping Memorial on Anzac Parade.

So many Australian men and women have served our country in peacekeeping roles—including, in my own family, two of my brothers. In peacekeeping roles, as in more full armed conflict, as we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan over the years, our members can see and be a part of very difficult and challenging circumstances. They have very difficult experiences, see people killed and see things that are very confronting. We want to make sure that all of those people—like everyone who represents our country overseas—who are affected by their service have the best level of service possible through the department, and it's great all that legislation will be under the Minister for Veterans' Affairs from here on in.

Mr HART (Bass) (15:50): I think it's appropriate that I call to the attention of the House the service of the member for Solomon. He served this country with distinction. The one person's service that he left out in his speech was his own service. I'd also like to comment on the fact that, over many years in legal practice, it was an honour and a privilege for me to represent the veterans community. Many years ago, I took on a practice of acting in Administrative Appeals Tribunal matters with veterans' affairs matters, with a cohort of veterans that were the leftovers from the Second World War—in particular, the prisoners of war. If you act for any group of veterans and if you're acting for the prisoners of war, and you get to experience the privations that those ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen suffered, you really need to understand the place that our veterans should hold in our hearts and minds.

Having said that, I rise today to speak on the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. This bill enacts the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 as a military-specific statute, directed towards the payment of compensation for injuries arising out of or in the course of employment in the Defence Force between 1 December 1988 and 1 July 2004. As it currently stands, Defence Force members and their dependants are covered under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the SRCA, which applies to all Commonwealth employees. The bill currently before the House will create two separate acts—the SRCA, which will apply to Commonwealth employees, and the DRCA, which will only apply to members of the Defence Force and their dependants. This is a good thing. Removing the Defence Force section from the SRCA and creating its own act will place all current veterans legislation under the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. This is a much more suitable arrangement than we currently have, with the Minister for Employment responsible for all employees covered by the SRCA, including defence personnel.

The implementation of the proposed DRCA will provide for a complete separation of the legislative framework for defence-related claims from the Comcare scheme under the SRCA and will provide the Minister for Veterans' Affairs with the responsibility for all three of the compensation acts that cover veterans and Defence Force members. Further, the DRCA will provide defence members with access to military-specific compensation and rehabilitation schemes and will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, the MRCC, to bring the newly enacted DRCA into closer alignment with the MRCA.
Recently, I co-hosted a veterans forum with the member for Kingston in her role as the shadow minister for veterans' affairs. Hearing firsthand of the experiences with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and struggles with obtaining suitable compensation for defence personnel and veterans from the Launceston community highlighted for me personally—and amplified my experience of—the importance of giving particular attention to the veterans community.

This approach has been recommended as a consequence of reviews into the operation of the legislation which presently applies to members and ex-members of the Australian Defence Force. It goes without saying that, irrespective of the views of experts who have reviewed those schemes—including the Tanzer and Campbell reviews, which I'll refer to later in this address—there is a sense of abiding frustration within the veterans community, associated with that legislation. It is legislation which has previously sought to cover Defence Force personnel and veterans which may have different operations depending upon the person's service and, in particular, their dates of service.

I recently had the opportunity to speak in connection with the visit of the last Korean veterans to Korea. At that time, I reflected upon our obligation—that is, our community's obligation, our collective obligation—to veterans of our armed services. I suggested at that time that more needs to be done to address the unique requirements of the veterans community and, in particular, the pain and sacrifice reflected in the suicide rate of our veteran community, which I will refer to later in this speech.

Pension and compensation entitlements for ex-servicemen and ex-service women are complex. Again, based upon my experience, these provisions are unnecessarily complex. There are multiple considerations which may impact upon the course of a claim to compensation and/or pension, including interaction with a number of pieces of legislation, some of which are not Defence-specific. There is no doubt in my mind that our veterans deserve to have compensation schemes for personal injuries and workers compensation with respect to injuries in the workplace which are Defence-specific. Currently, a member of the Defence Force may be required to engage with the SRCA, the legislation which administers the Comcare scheme, but the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the MRCA, may also apply. This legislation applies to members of the permanent forces; members of the reserve forces; cadets and officers, including instructors of cadets; persons who hold honorary rank or appointment in the ADF; and certain other classes of persons who are connected with Defence services—all with respect to service on or after 1 July 2004.

The MRCA is designed to cover the whole spectrum of military service. However, there are inconsistencies between the Veterans' Entitlements Act, the Comcare legislation and the MRCA. There are different benefits available to claimants—in the main due to the history of each of the acts—different rates of payment, different circumstances which give rise to an entitlement, and numerous other very frustrating inconsistencies. For example, it remains incredibly frustrating for advocates, and no doubt claimants, that a member or veteran must satisfy for the purposes of one piece of legislation the necessary preconditions to receive the payment of a benefit, but that evidence or, more properly, that determination made by the ADF is not necessarily capable of being relied upon in a claim under one of the other pieces of beneficial legislation.
Unfortunately, that frustration is not addressed by this legislation and it is unlikely to be addressed in the near term. But, in a practical sense, the likelihood that a former member might be required to navigate multiple pieces of legislation in order to advance the claim for compensation is reduced by this legislation, given that this legislation proposes to clone the provisions of the Comcare legislation so as to establish a separate Defence compensation system.

The reference to cloning of the Comcare legislation is entirely appropriate. This legislation is intended to re-enact the SRCA in order to create the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988. I'm indebted to the Parliamentary Library for bringing to my attention comments as to the unique nature of military service comprised within the Tanzer review, which was the review of the military compensation scheme of March 1999. That review said:

The role of the ADF [Australian Defence Force] is to protect Australia and its interests. To meet this role, the ADF is required to maintain an operationally capable force, which displays a high level of fitness, commitment, efficiency and discipline among its members. To achieve this, certain inherent requirements apply to those personnel serving in the ADF. These requirements will, to varying degrees, impact on the lifestyle of each ADF member. Such conditions are ... specific to military life and would not normally apply to the majority of those in civilian employment.

The difficulty that many face in returning to civilian life is illustrated by a disturbing set of statistics. Mental health issues within our veteran population are a growing concern to me, as I stated in a speech earlier this year. Whilst we lost 41 soldiers on active duty between 2001 and 2014, we lost 291 veterans to suicide in the same time period. I note with cautious approval the recent announcement by the minister that certain conditions—in particular, mental health conditions—will be accepted and eligible for treatment irrespective of the length of service and any issue of causation. This is a very good start and I want to see how this will work in practice.

Since Australia's involvement in the First World War, there have been successive programs to provide compensation and support to veterans and their dependents. I digress slightly at this stage to refer to a delightful piece of historic research recently provided to me, which concerns Defence housing constructed in the David Street and Mary Street area of East Launceston following the First World War. Whilst obviously not concerning military compensation, I'll use this example to illustrate that the obligations created by service—and the expectations of the public, and service personnel—extended to the creation of compensation, housing, and pension schemes with varying degrees of success and regrettably, it seems, failure. The book Home From War by local historian Kim Simpson details stories from the Newstead War Services Homes, a project set up by the federal government in 1918 to provide homes for returned service personnel. The government at the time wanted to assist returning service personnel return as best as they could to a relatively normal life, despite the toll that going to war for their country had taken upon them. All returning service personnel who returned from overseas service were entitled to apply to the scheme. This was extended to war widows and to service personnel returning with mental health issues. The book goes on to explain that, unfortunately, in the period of the 1920s and going up to the Great Depression, most of those service personnel in fact lost their houses because they were unable to keep up even with the payment of the rates to the municipal corporation. It is sad to see that the best intentions to provide housing for veterans were unable to be followed through.
In 2009, the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs announced a review of military compensation arrangements, which was conducted by a steering committee chaired by Mr Ian Campbell PSM. This review, the Campbell review, focused on the operation of the MRCA. Nevertheless, the review called for—amongst other things—a review of the legislative schemes that govern military compensation for service before 1 July 2004, and the identification of any anomalies that existed. The Campbell review was strongly in favour of a military-specific compensation scheme, in line with the recognition that military service is different from civilian employment. This, of course, is not the first attempt to differentiate between service personnel and Defence members of Comcare.

The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Improving the Comcare Scheme) Bill 2015 was introduced into the House on 25 March 2015. That bill sought to make significant changes to the Comcare scheme by amending the SRCA to make the scheme sustainable over time. The effect of this would have been to reduce the types of injuries that were compensable, reducing the cost of the scheme, and creating a regime to suspend and/or cancel payments to injured employees. It is very important to note that the bill was intended to operate so that the amendments made by the other schedules to the bill, with some exceptions, would not apply to Defence-related claims. The bill lapsed when the parliament was prorogued on 15 April 2016.

This bill makes good the government's promise to carve out the workers compensation entitlements of Defence Force members from the SRCA. Due to a number of concerns within the veterans community, the present bill was sent to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. This was supported by Labor. A number of concerns were raised before the committee in relation to the consultation process undertaken by the department. This is something that Labor takes very seriously. One of the issues which appears to arise with respect to the consultative process is the extent to which ex-service organisations have the resources to assess legislative proposals and provide informed feedback. The committee also highlighted a perception that the Department of Veterans' Affairs has an adversarial relationship with some veterans' advocates, veterans advocacy groups, and lawyers acting on behalf of veterans. The committee stated that, in their view, DVA should be seeking out and actively engaging with those persons who are best informed and capable of providing analysis of proposed legislation.

There were also a number of detailed concerns raised with respect to the drafting of legislation. This is due in part to the fact that the SRCA is a comprehensive act which has been amended by 68 different acts. Some of these acts included application, transitional and savings provisions which will continue to be applicable for the purposes of the DRCA. Due to this complexity, a so-called Henry VIII clause has been incorporated to provide for a remedy for any adverse unforeseen consequences which might arise from the unique manner in which the present legislation was enacted.

The Australian Government Solicitor has recommended that the regulations to modify the operation of the DRCA could only be made under the clause if the minister certified to the Governor-General that he or she is satisfied that such modification is necessary or desirable to ensure a re-enactment of the DRCA does not place any person other than the government at a disadvantage. The regulations would be introduced as disallowable instruments, which would be subject to the usual parliamentary processes. Labor senators provided additional comments
which proposed amending this clause to place an obligation on the minister to conduct consultation with relevant ex-service organisations and the veterans community, and released the full text of the proposed regulations publicly. This is important to ensure that the veterans community would be consulted on regulatory changes. In summary, this legislation is a positive development. It is important that we introduce Defence-specific legislation. Labor supports this legislation. I commend the legislation to the House.

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (16:05): I speak today in support of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. This bill, as many have explained before, will create the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act, the DRCA; and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the SRCA. The DRCA will apply only to Defence Force members and their families, while the SRCA will continue to apply to other Commonwealth employees.

Let's look for a moment at what this change means for those who are affected by it. In effect, this bill will place all current veterans legislation with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and this makes sense. Defence Force members' needs are already covered by two acts, the Veterans' Entitlements Act and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. However, Defence Force members, for the purposes of compensation, rehabilitation and treatment, are broadly dealt with by the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act when their matter occurred prior to 1 July 2004. This SRCA provides compensation, rehab. and treatment to a range of Commonwealth employees.

Our Defence Force members serve the country in roles that are unlike any others held by most, if not all, Commonwealth employees. As was stated in the Tanzer review of 1999, when referring to the requirements placed on Defence Force personnel in order for them to do their job:

Such conditions are generally specific to military life and would not normally apply to the majority of those in civilian employment.

Therefore, a targeted approach to those members' needs, especially in the sensitive area of compensation, rehabilitation and treatment, is a positive move. The DRCA will continue to confer the same rights on Defence Force members that are currently provided for under the SRCA, but the DRCA will be enacted as a military-specific statute and will not be subject to any further amendments to the SRCA should they occur. The DRCA will apply in relation to an injury, disease, death, loss or damage that related to certain employment in the Defence Force that occurred before the commencement of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act on 1 July 2004. The DRCA's enactment will allow the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to bring the DRCA into closer alignment with the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act as part of future amendments.

This bill seeks to remove all Defence Force specific legislation and all reference to Defence Force members from the SRCA in creating this DRCA. Defence-related claims will no longer be dealt with under the Comcare scheme, as is the case at the moment. By removing all Defence Force specific legislation from the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs will be provided with responsibility for all three compensation acts covering veterans and Defence Force members.

As I've previously mentioned in this chamber—quite often—my electorate is home to the largest naval base in the Royal Australian Navy. HMAS Stirling, located on Garden Island,
just off the coast of Rockingham in the electorate of Brand, is the workplace of more than 2,300 service personnel and hundreds of civilians working in Defence roles. The base plays a critical role in the defence of Australia, hosting multiple Defence assets, including Anzac class frigates, the Collins class submarines and more than 70 other naval units. But HMAS Stirling is more than a military asset; it's an integral part of the community and, in turn, serving Defence members, former members and their families are all supported by this community.

Throughout our community, across the suburbs of Rockingham and Kwinana, there are RSL clubs, social clubs, sports clubs and family assistance groups that all support and engage current and former Defence members and their families. On this past Anzac Day, I had the absolute pleasure in attending the unveiling of a 5.5 metre replica two-man Chariot human torpedo submarine on the very day when we commemorate all those service women and men who have served our country. This World War II replica submarine has been built to scale, weighing almost a tonne. This labour of love took Laurie Drage and his son Cory six months to construct from recycled scrap metal in Laurie's Kalgoorlie workshop. Laurie Drage, a Vietnam veteran from Port Kennedy in my electorate, donated the submarine replica to the Totally and Partially Disabled Veterans of WA club in Baldivis in gratitude for the support the organisation gives to veterans and to him personally. The club's enthusiasm and commitment to this project, its defence comrades and the wider community is to be commended. The support and help the club gives to veterans is to be commended as well.

Defence families make their homes in our local suburbs. Their children attend our local schools. These schools hold Anzac Day ceremonies, with defence members attending and participating on the day. I was lucky enough to attend services at Baldivis Primary School, Gilmore College and Comet Bay High School this year, and other services in and around Kwinana and Rockingham. The pride in the community for our past and present servicewomen and servicemen, our neighbours and colleagues, is always palpable. Schools across the electorate support defence children through the Defence School Transition Aide Program, helping kids settle into school and supporting them when their parents are deployed all around this country. Defence partners and spouses also work in local businesses, as do members when they leave the service.

Recently, I attended HMAS Stirling to welcome home the HMAS Arunta as she and her crew returned from a successful nine-month deployment to the Middle East to undertake Operation Manitou—part of Australia's contribution to the NATO-led Operation Resolute Support to ensure Afghanistan grows and prospers peacefully into the future. HMAS Arunta was very successful. The crew can be very proud of their work intercepting illicit drugs, trade and goods that would have been otherwise destined to provide financial support for terrorist and extremist activities in the Middle East. On a wet weather Sunday in July, the crew was welcomed by their friends and family and the top brass of the Royal Australian Navy. Days such as these are filled with joy and joyous tears as people are reunited with their loved ones after a lengthy separation. On these days, we see the best of our armed services and their friends and families.

On these happy days of reunification when the Navy band plays, the service wraps everything up in a sense of belonging to a shared mission in the service of the nation. But this can't happen every day. Sometimes, the return to home life is difficult. It is even more so...
when a sailor, a soldier, an airwoman or an airman returns home after their last day in the Australian Defence Force. The days, months and years after discharge from the services can be very challenging. Building a new life and career post-service can be difficult for many veterans and ex-service personnel. We haven't been the best at helping those who have served with a difficult transition into civilian life. We need to do better at this. We must do more to help veterans, ex-service personnel and their families. We need to ensure the families of veterans are supported as they support the veteran in their lives.

Most veterans and service members transition very successfully into civilian life and continue to serve the community and contribute for many years in many capacities. Their defence experience is invaluable and it is valued by the community. But this is not necessarily the case for all. For those veterans who do find the transition to civilian life difficult, we need to ensure that these veterans receive the support they need. There are many elements to transitioning to civilian life—secure housing, social support, health and fulfilling employment. These pieces all need to fit together to solve the puzzle of a successful transition to civilian life. We must do our utmost to help our veterans with these challenges.

We have to acknowledge also that many veterans have taken their own lives upon leaving the service of this nation. As a community, we need to ensure that this stops and that we do all that we can to ensure that veterans don't reach that most grim of conclusion that ending it is the only way through. We know veterans are at a higher risk of suicide compared to the Australian community, especially among men aged 18 to 24. The recently tabled Senate inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex-service personnel received an overwhelming amount of evidence. The inquiry helped to shine a light on the issues of suicide and mental illness in this very important community. I thank the senators involved for all their work looking into this most grave of issues, but I particularly would like to thank all the veterans, former service personnel, veterans organisations and families who contributed to this important inquiry.

Labor has recognised the gaps in support available to veterans and former service personnel and is committed to developing a family engagement and support strategy for defence personnel and veterans to provide greater support to our military families.

Most people across the electorate of Brand, across Rockingham and Kwinana, know someone who has served in the Australian Defence Force or who is a veteran of armed conflict, and many of them themselves are current ADF personnel, former service personnel or veterans who have witnessed things most of us never will and never want to. To these people in my electorate: I want to let you know that I am committed to helping the Labor Defence team develop and implement the family engagement and support strategy for defence personnel so that, when you need support and help, it will be there for you and for your family. It is the least we can do for those who serve this nation.

As I was reflecting earlier, we have many community organisations which support serving and former defence personnel in this electorate. As the community does, it makes sense that we, in this place, best support defence personnel in this case by delivering legislation that best protects and assists their needs.

I will look again briefly at what this bill aims to achieve. The proposed DRCA will provide a complete separation of the legislative framework for Defence-related claims from the nonmilitary Comcare scheme. It will provide the Minister for Veterans' Affairs with the responsibility for all three of the separate compensation acts, which cover veterans and
Defence Force members. It means the DRCA will apply in instances where injury, disease, death, loss or damage that relates to certain employment positions in the ADF occurred before the commencement of the MRCA.

The new bill will more closely align with the MRCA by providing defence personnel with access to military-specific compensation and rehab. schemes as part of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission and place all current veterans acts with the minister. Whilst this is welcome news to my constituents in Brand who are affected by these changes, there are a number of concerns with the bill in relation to the areas of consultation that need to be considered. These concerns were voiced at the recent Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into suicides by vets and ex-service personnel as I mentioned earlier. Concerns were raised with the committee about the Department of Veterans Affairs consultation and engagement practices regarding proposed legislative changes.

The committee's final report looked at the difficulty ex-service organisations faced in assessing legislative proposals—a problem due at least in part to limited resources. This lack of resources hindered ex-service organisations in both assessing legislative proposals and providing their informed feedback on these proposals. The committee considered these issues as impacting on the relationship between the organisations and the DVA, and considered the department as best placed to improve these relationships. Unfortunately, it's led to a perception of an adversarial relationship between DVA and some veteran stakeholder groups. Therefore it was recommended that the Department of Veterans' Affairs review its consultation and engagement practices so it can receive informed critical feedback on proposed legislative amendments, rapidly respond to concerns raised in the veteran community and increase the understanding of proposed legislative changes in that community.

I believe this is the best way in which to deal with these matters of sensitivity and importance, which can impact on so many people's lives, especially in my electorate of Brand. It is pleasing, especially when dealing with legislation that can affect the Defence community, to see that some concerns that key elements of the SRCA that were absent from the DRCA have been resolved. The committee raised concerns, and the department responded, resolving the majority of issues.

Because there are no practical changes to the DSCA, no veteran or ADF member will be financially worse off due to the creation of this bill. The reason for creating it is to enact a bill, which is Defence-specific, which applies only to Defence members and their dependents. As I have said before, it makes sense to place veterans legislation with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. It makes sense that the minister is responsible for matters concerning veterans, especially in the sensitive area of compensation, rehabilitation and treatment.

Military service places unique demands on members' lives—demands which can be difficult for civilians to understand or appreciate. These demands were highlighted in the report into suicide and self-harm prevention services available to current and former serving ADF members and their families. It also highlighted the fact that veterans and ex-service personnel are more likely to be affected by suicide than other members of the community, especially younger men.
This review encouraged continuous improvement to services and systems that support current and former service men and women. There are lessons that can be applied outside of this particular review's parameters. I am confident that this bill, in creating the SRCA and the DRCA, is going towards improving the processes and systems that apply to Defence Force members. I would like again to mention the work of the Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and their very important inquiry into suicide in the military and among veterans and ex-service personnel. I also acknowledge the Department of Veterans' Affairs for their very hard work on this legislation. I note the cooperation involved by all to achieve the best outcome for those affected by this bill.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (16:20): It gives me great pleasure to be able to make a contribution to this debate on the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. I want to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Brand. Serving veterans as well as past veterans is an important element of her electorate. She has shown a commitment over a long period of time to their welfare and the welfare of their families, and I thought her contribution was right on the money.

I also noted the contribution of the member for Solomon, who, as a veteran himself, has a unique perspective for this parliament. There are only a small number of current parliamentarians who have served in uniform for this country, and each of them, in their own way, brings different and important insights into service—what service means and how veterans react as a result of their service. It is very important that we acknowledge their contributions most particularly.

I want to talk about the comments made by the member for Solomon, particularly around the changing nature in the Northern Territory of the ex-service community, and the work of Bob Shewring and Ray Palmer. There is no doubt that they have moved significantly towards addressing the needs of current serving veterans and recent veterans—that is, people who have separated from the Defence Force over recent years. That is very important. And of course Ray brings a unique insight as the father of a young man who was killed in action.

I come from Alice Springs, and one of the tragedies that have happened in Alice Springs in recent months has been the effective demise, at least in the short term, of the RSL in our town, largely not because of anything that happened in our RSL itself but because of the relationship it had with the South Australian RSL and the South Australian RSL's own administrative difficulties. Thankfully, while the RSL club is closed, the RSL services will continue. The club is, I'm told, forming a relationship with the Alice Springs Golf Club. That of itself is important, but what is most important is that its services and its advocacy for former defence personnel and current serving veterans be available to anyone who requires them, and that will continue.

As a former Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I strongly support the intent of this legislation. I believe that it is important for rationalising the way in which we provide support for our veterans in the serving community. I am indebted, as always, to the Parliamentary Library for their Bills Digest. On the issue about which we're speaking, I want to reinforce, most particularly, why it is important that we treat our veterans community and our serving personnel appropriately. They are not like any other Australians. They are unique. The Bills Digest reminds us of the words of a review of the Military Compensation Scheme that was
conducted in March 1999 by Noel Tanzer. It is known as the Tanzer review. In it, these comments were made—and I quote from the Bills Digest:

The role of the ADF [Australian Defence Force] is to protect Australia and its interests. To meet this role, the ADF is required to maintain an operationally capable force, which displays a high level of fitness, commitment, efficiency and discipline among its members. To achieve this, certain inherent requirements apply to those personnel serving in the ADF. These requirements will, to varying degrees, impact on the lifestyle of each ADF member. Such conditions are generally specific to military life and would not normally apply to the majority of those in civilian employment.

That is really true. It is a very apt description of the men and women in uniform who serve this country as members of the Australian Defence Force.

We need to understand that, when someone puts on that uniform, they are effectively saying that they're prepared to die for their country. They are required to act under instruction and order and do things that most other Australians would never be required to do. When we see the unique nature of military service, we ought to acknowledge and make sure that, in providing for our veterans—both serving and those who are no longer in the Defence Force—their needs are being properly met. I think this piece of legislation is significant in that regard.

As the Bills Digest reminds us, since the First World War, successive Australian governments have had a high priority to 'provide compensation and related support to veterans and their dependants'. As highlighted by this document:

Compensation for members of the Australian Defence Force who suffer injury or disease has been the subject of numerous changes since that time.

As a result, members are covered by a number of different pieces of legislation: the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, SRCA, which we've heard about; the Veterans Entitlements Act, which applies to service before 1 July 2004; and the Military, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004, or MRCA, which works for those who served on or after 1 July 2004.

The MRCA was the first piece of legislation designed to cover the whole spectrum of military service, but, as you can imagine, given the time between these various pieces of legislation, there are inconsistencies between the VEA, the SRCA and the MRCA. They provide for different benefits, significantly because of their own histories. They have different rates of payment and give different circumstances which give rise to entitlement. That's something which is particularly untenable, really. We need to make sure there's a uniform way of dealing with our veteran community.

When Alan Griffin was the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, he commissioned the then secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Ian Campbell—as part of a steering committee chaired by Ian Campbell—to do a review of the military compensation arrangements. While the terms of reference focused on the operation of MRCA, the Campbell view was strongly in favour of a military-specific compensation scheme that recognises that military service is different from civilian employment—and it is, and we should all acknowledge that fact.

I know, from my own experience, that it is very different. We only need to talk to members of the veterans community, whether they're older members who survived the Second World War or the Korean War or the Vietnam War, or whether they are more recent veterans who had experience in Africa, Somalia, the Middle East, Afghanistan or Timor-Leste. We know
that their experiences have, in many cases, given them either injuries or illnesses that will last for the rest of their lives. That has an impact not only on them but, of course, on their families, most significantly. We need to make sure that we're doing everything we possibly can to properly address their needs and their requirements.

I note that the member for Brand talked about the Senate inquiry into the suicide issue. What that Senate inquiry made very clear is that this is really a young person's thing—the majority of these suicides happen to young serving members, or ex-serving members, who are young men, primarily; they're not even in their mid-20s. We send people to do things and, when they do those things, they experience situations which none of us who haven't been there could even contemplate. Not only are they putting their lives on the line; they are also, potentially, suffering the impacts of observing incidents, which will have a lasting effect. One of the issues which arises out of that is that, too often, younger veterans, when they separate from the Defence Force, lose contact with their comrades and have no affiliation with the RSL or any other Defence organisation, and, as a result, they often get lost. When it's time for them to be treated because an injury, which they received during their service, has become apparent and is affecting the way they live or when they develop mental health issues as a result of their service, sometimes they are very alone. It's these young people that we've got to be most concerned about because, as that committee report tells us, they are the ones who have suffered the most.

I am pleased to be able to support this legislation. Others have gone through the intricacies of it, and I don't intend to do that, other than to say that this bill makes good the government's promise—and I commend the government for doing this—to carve out the workers compensation entitlements of Defence Force members from SRCA. It will effectively quarantine Defence Force members from the effects of any future amendments of the SRC Act, and, most particularly and importantly, it will place all current veterans acts with the civil minister, in this case the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, which is as it should be.

It's important that we see the current minister as also responsible for defence personnel issues, as I was when I was a minister, so he gets a good look across both the Defence department—current serving men and women in uniform—and veterans—those who are current serving veterans or people who have separated from the Defence Force—and is able to bring those two departmental agencies a lot closer and, hopefully, get a lot more clarity and understanding for veterans and veterans organisations. I do think this is an important piece of legislation, and I commend it to the House.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:33): Being a part of the Australian Defence Force, protecting our nation, protecting our national interests, is one of the great sacrifices made by so many Australians—150,000 Australians each year. I have said many, many times in this chamber that there is no higher calling than military service. To be a fine member of the Australian Defence Force member, you need to display a high level of fitness, commitment, discipline, trust, integrity, courage and loyalty.

Comments made in the Tanzer review of March 1999 still apply today in much the same way that they did at the turn of the millennium. As the Tanzer review said:

To achieve this, certain inherent requirements apply to those personnel serving in the ADF. These requirements will, to varying degrees, impact on the lifestyle of each ADF member. Such conditions are
generally specific to military life and would not normally apply to the majority of those in civilian employment.

That's why when members transition out of uniform we need to provide them with the adequate resources and the adequate support to successfully help them make that transition into civilian life and we need to make sure that the processes are as seamless as possible.

The processes in terms of the transition from the military into DVA have been the subject of countless inquiries, and even now I still get complaints that they are not as seamless as they can be. We need to ensure that members going from the ADF do not go into a huge abyss when they enter civilian life and that their transition into civilian life is as smooth as possible not just in terms of the DVA processes but also in terms of educational processes and emotional support processes—and financial support goes without saying. When transitioning, one minute you are in the ADF and you've got a house provided for you on a base and the next minute you're off base and you're looking for a rental somewhere—and quite often it's the case that it has been a long time since you've actually been in the private rental market. We need to provide these support services and these systems to our ADF members who are making that transition to civilian life.

We also need to provide the appropriate support systems and services to those who've been damaged in serving our country—those who have experienced trauma in serving our nation, those who have come back with PTSD from Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere and those who've come back from peacekeeping missions who have undergone significant trauma. We need to provide the appropriate support services and systems to ensure that those people are supported. We need to ensure that those people who have made that significant contribution to our nation are supported in their hour of need. It's vitally important.

That is why it was terrific to attend, for the fourth time, the Soldier On fundraiser that was held just recently here in Canberra. It was the national fundraiser. As I said, I've been to all four of them over the years. I remember when Soldier On started. I think it was back in 2012. It started with just a glimmer of an idea from John Bale and some of his mates in respect for some of the mates that they'd lost in Afghanistan. They started with no money; just a big idea, big dreams, and the absolute determination to support veterans, or ADF members, coming back from serving their nation overseas, who had experienced significant trauma and were doing it tough as a result of PTSD and the trauma of what they'd witnessed overseas on deployments. They were determined to come up with a mechanism to support those people. This vision—this glimmer of an idea, this glimmer of a vision—began in a tent that was pitched at the site where the returned services club had once stood down in Griffith. It was there that this vision, this grand idea, of Soldier On was born. It was over a few glasses of cheap wine. Were you there, Deputy Speaker Irons? From memory, it was pretty cold.

**Ms Rowland:** He's a cheap wine kind of guy.

**Ms BROTOHMANN:** We were in that tent, and we all contributed as far as possible to getting that dream up and running. The member for Lingiari was there and, from memory, the member from Eden-Monaro was there as well. We had no idea what sort of an event we were going to. We just got an invitation for an event run by Soldier On. No-one knew what Soldier On was about. No-one knew what the mission was or why they felt the need to create Soldier On.
From those very humble beginnings, from those little seeds, big trees grow. We are talking about only five or six years. Soldier On has grown from a tent on a lot of land in Griffith to being not an empire but a very well-respected service that provides a range of facilities and support mechanisms to ADF members who have come back and are going through tough times. They now have a fantastic facility, which is the old CSIRO facility, over at Crace. There they offer financial counselling and workplace transition. They do a lot of therapy work through physical exercise, craft, art and painting. They have education programs and music programs. The beauty of that facility is that it's large—it has a historic connection with Canberra as well—and that provides them with an opportunity to have those diverse learning experiences, support experiences, counselling experiences and psychological support experiences. It's all at that place in Crace, which is terrific.

This fundraiser, as always, was well attended by Canberrans. Again I thank Canberra for supporting Soldier On. You've been with Soldier On from its very humble beginnings. You've always been out in full force to support the national fundraising efforts by Soldier On. They're always wonderful nights. We always hear from very powerful speakers. At the evening there were a series of speakers talking about their transition from trauma to being well, their journey from trauma to now being healthy. We had the opportunity to hear from a number of speakers on that front. It was a really worthwhile event, and I hope it raised lots of money for Soldier On because it does provide great services.

I am pre-empting a bit of what Soldier On is going to be announcing. I got only a little taste of it. I hope I'm not letting the cat out of the bag too early, but I understand that Soldier On this month is going to be making an announcement about incorporating first responders—a number of paramedics and others—into the significant safety net, the parachute, that is offered by Soldier On in terms of its services. Unfortunately, I won't be able to get to that event, because we're sitting, but I wish Soldier On all the best. I think it's terrific that it is expanding those services to not just deal with ADF members but also first responders, because we all know that those first responders quite often do experience significant trauma and there are just not the support systems that are there currently for ADF members.

While I am speaking of veterans and those who have served their country and have suffered trauma and been physically or emotionally damaged in the process, I want to mention that I also had the great pleasure just last week of taking part in Legacy fundraising efforts. Legacy, as we know, supports the families and children of ADF members who either were very badly injured or, unfortunately, died in their service for our country. Again there was a terrific response from Canberra. I again thank Canberra for buying teddy bears, pens, bracelets and pins or just making donations to Legacy.

Legacy provide services for I think about 70,000 families throughout Australia. They provide a terrific service and they've been providing that since World War I. Essentially, the concept of Legacy was born at the hideous battle at Pozieres, where we lost thousands and thousands and thousands of Australians in one day, amongst the rain, mud and constant bombardment, when a dying digger turned to his mate and said, 'Look after the missus and the kids when you get home,' Every 20 seconds, artillery was firing over. It would have sent anyone mad. It was a hideous, hideous day in Australian history. Thousands and thousands of young men from all over our country were killed that day in those dreadful circumstances. For those who weren't killed, anyone would have gone mad in that process. As I said, artillery
bombs were dropping every 20 seconds. It would drive anyone mad. It was a very dark day in our history—Pozieres. Even though there is a memorial on the windmill site, I do think that there's more that we can do to honour those who died in Pozieres and those who survived. How anyone could survive that hideous battle, I don't know. But I think that there is more that we need to be doing to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice at Pozieres. As I said, the memorial on the windmill is modest. It is beautiful in its modesty, but I do think that there's more that we need to be doing on Pozieres—the recognition of that. I note that we've got Polygon Wood commemorations coming up shortly. It was equally tragic.

Just going back to Legacy, I had the great privilege of attending Legacy's national launch. At that launch, there were a number of Junior Legatees who played a number of roles in the event. One of them was a Junior Legatee named Mark MacInnes. His speech was really powerful. I want to read it into the Hansard. It was very personal. It was very powerful in that it was so personal. It was also very raw. It was very brave and courageous of this young man to share his journey with Legacy. In fact, he was originally sceptical of Legacy and, as he said, it caught him 'mid-fall'. In his speech he said, 'Legacy caught me mid-fall' when he was highly sceptical of it. I would like to read briefly some of the contribution that Mark MacInnes, a Junior Legatee, made to the national launch here in Canberra a week ago. He said:

I was thirteen when my father, Andrew, a dedicated ADF member passed away suddenly, my sister Kate, was only a month past the age of twelve. That day, my mother lost a husband, and both of her kids lost a figure of guidance, support, and most of all, unconditional love. It was as if a once blue sky became black, dark and full of those storm clouds that unnerve you even before the lightning comes crashing down. Although the path of loss is something all of us will have to tread, it's always difficult. For myself, I felt as though nobody I had closest to me would understand how I feel, I felt isolated, unable to turn anywhere. My school friends hadn't had this happen to them, my teachers could say all the pleasantries they liked, to me, it wouldn't help ... I would have been about 16 to 17 when my sister and I first properly immersed ourselves in the Legacy community, throwing away youthful bravado and pride to finally see why this organisation thought us to be worthy of their support.

How gorgeous is that—'thought us to be worthy of their support'?

I'm not someone who likes to admit they are wrong, to those who know me the best, I'm way too stubborn to willingly do it, but with Legacy, I'll happily swallow that pride I keep and happily accept that I was foolish.

This was in terms of turning Legacy away.

You see, Legacy, once upon a time to me, was just the occasional Christmas voucher …

But, now, Mark MacInnes, as a Junior Legatee, saw Legacy as, basically, catching him mid-fall. It protected him, it nurtured him and it provided him with emotional and financial support.

I commend Legacy for the work that they do in supporting our widowers and the children of ADF members who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:49): I'm pleased to follow the member for Canberra in speaking on this legislation, the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. I speak in support of this legislation and welcome the creation of a department that will be focused on Defence Force safety and rehabilitation. Over the years, there have been too many events where defence personnel were poorly supported or even
ignored after they suffered health problems that arose from their defence service of this
country. Even worse, critical service records have often disappeared or been made difficult to
retrieve for injured veterans who needed the records to prove their case and prove their injury.

The recent legislation relating to the British atomic testing that was debated in this House
only a few weeks ago and the legislation relating to the atomic testing that took place in
Australia in the 1950s and '60s is a good example of the denial of truth and, with it, the denial
of justice for so many defence veterans and civilians. Every bit of government recognition
and limited support conceded had to be fought for over decades against governments that
showed less respect for the people affected than perhaps enemy forces may have shown; in
turn, adding to the psychological trauma endured by those affected. There would be little else
more demoralising to a veteran than denial of justice by the government in a country where a
soldier had served. Over the years, I have personally raised several matters relating to
individuals who were seeking compensation or recognition of their war service with the
government—sometimes with some success, other times with very limited success.

Another example I refer to is the effect of the Vietnam War on soldiers. There are few, if
any, Vietnam veterans that I know who have not been left physically or emotionally affected
by their experiences. Only those who have confronted the horrors of war would ever
understand the effect on a person's life, and Vietnam had its own unique characteristics. Each
year, I attend the Vietnam veterans services, as I did again this year on 18 August, to
remember Australia's Vietnam veterans and to commemorate the Battle of Long Tan. This
year's service was again organised by the City of Salisbury and the northern branch of the
Vietnam Veterans Association, and once again held at Henderson Square at the Montague
Farm Estate in Pooraka, where several years ago a permanent Vietnam War memorial was
established. I've often visited the northern branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association in
Adelaide and spoken with and met many of the members and looked at how they support one
another. In many cases, were it not for the support that they give each other, some of them
would find life very difficult after having served in Vietnam. I understand that over 500
Australians lost their lives in the Vietnam War, and 58 of those were from South Australia.

The keynote speaker at this year's service was Gaynor Tilley, who served as a nurse in
Vietnam. She provided a personal insight into her time there, including some horrific stories.
Just listening to her on the day of the service and hearing her very personal account of some
of her experiences not only brought back the reality of the war to many of the veterans who
were there; for those of us who did not serve in Vietnam, it gave a clear insight into what
some of them must have endured as they served our country. Stories about events similar to
those that Gaynor referred to will be forever etched in the minds of those who were there and
they will never forget them—events which I suspect every person who ever served in
Vietnam would have similar experiences of and, in turn, similar memories about.

One person who not only experienced the Vietnam War but has since extensively
researched, written and spoken about the war, particularly its aftereffects on veterans, is Dr
Glen Edwards. Glen Edwards was one of the first to recognise the psychological injury that
Vietnam veterans live with every day on returning from service. He publicly shared his
insight from his research in the two books that he wrote about the Vietnam War. The first,
*Vietnam: The War Within*, was published in 1992, and in more recent years was *Beyond Dark
Clouds*, which is a collection of personal stories from Vietnam veterans from Australia, the
US and New Zealand who speak openly about the effect of the war on themselves, their partners and their families. Glen served in the Army as a national serviceman and then as a regular soldier serving as a medic in Vietnam. He saw firsthand what it was like to be there and the events that so many of his fellow soldiers had to go through. Glen went on to study in South Australia at the Sturt College of Advanced Education and then at Flinders University. He did further studies at the University of West Florida in the US and then studied again at Kobe University Graduate School of Medicine in Japan. His studies and his work have focused on research, clinical work, lecturing and helping people, predominantly but not exclusively veterans, with post-traumatic stress syndrome. Glen has worked for both the Australian and US governments and the World Health Organization. He volunteered and was contracted to help in Japan and China following the east Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011 and after the Sichuan province earthquake in China. Glen also worked extensively in the US with veterans and native veterans and was adopted by two Sioux tribes.

I want to quote from Glen's introductory comments to his book, *Beyond Dark Clouds*. He says:

With each unfolding story we see veterans and their families clearly exposing the fragility and inner conflicts we all harbour at times throughout our lives. The emotional and psychological challenges are often faced alone and in silence, because of the prejudice and stigma associated with mental health, along with the fear of being judged as weak or crazy.

Partners and children did not go to Vietnam but may have been irreversibly scarred by Vietnam, as well. And again, going on to Glen's comments, he says:

Equally unfairly, the partner and children have for a long period of time silently borne the burden of society for the veteran. Much of their pain and suffering has been locked away deep within their hearts and minds, shared only in secret or not at all.

Those comments, I believe, sum it up beautifully. Glen talks about how, for so many of them, they carry the burden and the pain with them and never say very much at all. The only ones who understand it, who perhaps share in it, are quite often partners and other family members, who also have to not only share it but in reality live through whatever the former veteran is living through.

I recently met with Dr Glen Edwards. He is a person I've known for some years, but I recently met with him, and he told me again about some of the work he continues to do overseas, particularly in Japan and China, and he also travels frequently back to the US. I take this opportunity to commend him for being one of the first people to apply himself to helping war veterans, particularly with their psychological health concerns. I can commend him for sharing his work so widely, not only through the writing of his books but also through the ongoing work that he continues to do each and every day. As a result of his experience, he is quite often called in to help people who are suffering psychological problems in other areas of society, because it's understood that he has the experience. And, as I referred to earlier, whether it's trauma that has arisen from a natural disaster or through service, whether it's police forces or the ambulance services or the like, it's that understanding of what those people may be living through each and every day that enables the person trying to help to do so.

On 14 August, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs made a ministerial statement in the House about veterans and their families. I noted some of the statistics from the statement, and I want
to quote some. Firstly, there are currently 58,000 men and women in the ADF, and, in 2016-17, 5,200 left the service, of which about 1,400 separated involuntarily. The average serving time is eight and a half years. There are about 320,000 veterans in Australia, of whom 165,800 are DVA clients. Between 2001 and 2015, there were 325 certified suicide deaths of ADF members, with 51 per cent of those from amongst ex-service members. At least 45,000 veterans live with a mental health service-related disability, and more two-thirds of them have post-traumatic stress disorder. All of those figures give rise to several questions. Firstly, how do those statistics compare with the statistics of other comparable countries? Why are suicide rates and mental health problems so high amongst veterans? Why are 1,400 serving ADF personnel discharged involuntarily each year?

Military service is unique, and only our defence personnel can speak about the personal sacrifices, risks and harsh conditions that they endure. It's particularly the case if they're then called to active duty, which I have little doubt takes its toll not only in terms of them being away from home but also in being at risk every day of their life and seeing the horrors of war right before their eyes. It is my understanding that only a person who has ever been in that situation could truly come to terms with it. The truth is that, in coming to terms with it, many of them find they cannot cope. I have spoken to some veterans who have returned and, in more recent times, with a veteran who served in the Middle East. He was trying to set up a support group for his colleagues, because he understood not only what he went through and how it affected his life and that of his partner, who was also a defence person, but also how they might be able to use their experience to support others. It was a wonderful gesture on his part that he showed that level of concern.

The truth is that, if we have all of those statistics, it may be that our ADF personnel are either not well enough prepared before they enlist and go into a military conflict or perhaps they are not well enough supported when they come home. I don't know, and I'm not in any way making any suggestions. I simply ask the question: are we providing them with the adequate support at the time of enlistment, during their training period and at the time they return home? Maybe if we did and we were able to improve that level of support then particularly the level of psychological health problems could be lowered.

I understand that the Department of Veterans' Affairs spends some $4.9 billion per annum on health services for our 291,000 Australians. From my quick calculations—and I stand to be corrected—that is much, much higher per capita than for the rest of Australia. Yes, I accept that they are a unique category of Australians, but it seems to me that, if we were able to give the veterans some additional support, it would not only be in the nation's economic interests but also in the social interests of our community to do so, and it would be the right thing to do.

The last thing I want to mention is that our defence personnel and our veterans obviously span decades. The truth of the matter is that we're now dealing with defence personnel who enlisted predominantly since World War II. The reality is that most of those who enlisted before that have since passed away. I frequently associate with them and I have a strong defence network in my community. Indeed, on Sunday, I'll be attending the charter lunch of the National Servicemen's Association, Para District Branch, in South Australia, which I attend every year. I speak firsthand on a regular basis with veterans in my electorate, and one thing that they continuously raise with me that they would like to see improved is the support
that they get from government with respect to a number of the needs that they have. I believe that this legislation, by focusing on our defence personnel, goes some way towards doing that, and I hope it will be an improvement on what is presently available to them.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (17:04): I rise to speak on the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Bill 2016. The purpose of this bill is to create the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act—or the DRC Act, for ease of reference—which will be a re-enacted version of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, or the SRCA. The DRC Act will be a military-specific statute that will provide for the payment of compensation for injuries arising out of or in the course of employment in the Defence Force for personnel employed after 1 December 1998 and before 1 July 2004.

Before I focus on the aspects of the legislation, I just want to touch on the experience I had as part of the parliamentary placement program, which is a great opportunity for members of parliament to engage with members of the ADF in the Air Force, the Army and the Navy, and a chance for politicians to gain a better insight into what goes on. I know that every member of parliament, every MP and every senator who has participated in that program has always learnt a great deal and been nothing but impressed with the professionalism of our ADF personnel.

Recently, I was able to have a look at the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program, the AACAP, in Toomelah in northern New South Wales in Deputy Speaker Coulton’s electorate. I was nothing but impressed with what the commanding officer, Major Venz, and his team of engineers were doing in Toomelah—incredible.

With the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program, which has been running for 21 years, we're able to combine expertise for the engineers so they're practising what they will need to do in times of war—hopefully, not something that they will call on—or maybe in times of disaster by working in Indigenous communities around Australia. This program is a collaboration between the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in its capacity of running the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs department and the Army, with the Army providing the personnel, equipment and resources. In this case, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet made a contribution of $7 million, and the community of Toomelah, about 20 or 30 kays south of Goondiwindi, will end up with an incredible piece of infrastructure—a great community centre, a new multipurpose facility. They're also doing some repairs to the local roads, local community roads and refurbishing the local church and also the football oval. They are working on a greater investment, I guess, by investing in the people of Toomelah, providing some training—some hospitality training, some business administration, first-aid skills, strapping; all sorts of investments—which hopefully will pay off for years and years to come, and I hope will result in recruitment to the ADF of people from the Toomelah community.

I want to congratulate and thank Commanding Officer Venz and all of the engineers and people who showed me around on my visit to the Toomelah Aboriginal community. They even let me drive a grader, which'd be something my grandfather TJ Morris might have been a bit horrified by. It was quite an experience to be up on top of the roof of this new facility, having a look at what they do.
But those are people who are in the ADF right now. The legislation before us—to return to the DRC Act—will not confer any new rights. It mirrors the current provisions of the SRCA. The review of the Military Compensation Scheme conducted in 1999, the Tanzer review, noted the specific conditions that exist in military life and the impact on ADF members.

The MRCA was introduced following the Tanzer review and, consistent with the recommendations from that review, it implemented a more integrated approach to military compensation for those who served on or after 1 July 2004. It covers all members of the permanent forces, all members of the reserve forces—and, just in case a particular activist gets animated, I do declare I have some interest in that. But before there is any concern about section 44 of the Constitution being breached in terms of profiting under the Crown, I can confirm that I’ve only ever done unpaid service in that capacity. It also covers cadets and officers, including instructors of cadets; persons who hold an honorary rank or appointment in the ADF and who perform acts at the request or direction of the Defence Force; and persons who perform acts at the request or direction of the Defence Force as an accredited representative of a registered charity.

The MRCA legislation was designed to cover all elements of military service. In 2009, the Campbell review recommended a military-specific compensation scheme. It called for a review of the legislative schemes that governed military compensation for service before 1 July 2004. This bill will carve out from the SRCA the workers compensation entitlements of Defence Force members who served before 1 July 2004. It will ensure that Defence Force members will not be impacted by any amendments to the SRCA.

It's important that this parliament and all Australians recognise the unique nature of military service. We know that it is challenging; we know that it causes extra stress. And it is important that Defence Force personnel are compensated for any injuries incurred in the course of their employment. They deserve no less. The work that our defence personnel do is important and dangerous work, whether it be in Toomelah or on foreign postings. We should not be complacent about our defence forces and those who are called to serve. We need to look after them while they're serving and, obviously, we need to look after them when they return.

Similarly, I'd like to mention our Returned and Services League and associated entities and the great work they do in supporting both current and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force and their families. I have five RSL clubs in Moreton: Sherwood-Indooroopilly, Salisbury, Stephens, Sunnybank and Yeronga-Dutton Park. I've spent quite a bit of time with these clubs and worked closely with them in recent years, particularly on their ceremonies for the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings and a few other community projects. The RSL has a very proud tradition. It is one of our oldest and most respected national organisations, first founded in 1916. As well as supporting and serving our ex-service men and women, the RSL promotes a secure, stable and progressive Australia. We're indebted to them for the services that they continue to provide, not only directly to the returned service men and women but indirectly through the community work they do.

In particular, I have to mention the Sunnybank RSL and their work with the local Chinese community. As the make-up of my community changed, they decided to create a memorial for all the people of Chinese heritage who have served Australia in past wars. The memorial recognises soldiers like Billy Sing and Caleb Shang, who fought in World War I, and Jack
Wong Sue, who served for Australia in World War II, to name but a few. Often these people were shot at and put in harm's way but weren't able to vote in the country they called home.

There are many other great stories of courage and bravery from the Chinese Australian diaspora, and they have been commemorated by this memorial. One of these stories is of Private Billy Sing, who was a sniper with the 5th Australian Light Horse Regiment. He was a kangaroo shooter from northern Queensland originally, but he went over to Gallipoli and was conservatively credited with more than 150 kills in Gallipoli. He was known to his fellow soldiers as 'the assassin' and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry as a sniper at ANZAC. To this day, the Australian Army snipers recognise the skill of Billy Sing.

The physical memorial was a labour of love for the Chinese community, and it has contributed to stronger links between that community and the local RSL. It's a continuing reminder of the diversity, cooperation, understanding and friendship that exists on Brisbane's south side and also goes a long way to recognising some of the sleights and the racisms that existed 100 years ago, when people were allowed to fight and die for their country but not allowed to own land because they were seen to be not Australian, because they looked Chinese. Whilst there is a physical memorial, there is also an ongoing series of bursaries, where local school students enter into an essay competition, so they own the story and they can tell the story as well as be recognised every year on Anzac Day and the like.

I also point out that the success of the Chinese war memorial has inspired commemoration contributions from other communities, and now the Indian community has a project underway to erect a memorial for the Indian-Australian service men and women who have contributed to Australia's war efforts in the past and are doing so now. In fact, there was a fundraising dinner that I attended with the member for Bonner, who was representing the minister at the table. He spoke about the winning design for this memorial for the Indian community. We saw a mock-up of the winning design. The RSL was present, as were 11 students from Griffith University, who turned up for the dinner. I think it's going to be a great project. I look forward to working with the Indian-Australian community and seeing that memorial completed in due course. Like the Chinese memorial, there will also be bursaries associated with the memorial so that there will be a physical memorial in the grounds of the RSL, but there'll also be a living bursary where students from local high schools will do the research and tell these stories over and over again, which is the way to keep the Anzac tradition alive. It is important, obviously, wherever we can, to show our respect for all Australian servicemen and women.

These memorials, that I mentioned, the Chinese and Indian war memorials, will be a permanent show of respect for these brave Australians. Sadly, some of these men and women may not have been shown the respect they deserved when they were alive and when they were wearing the uniform of the nation that they called home. We have only had protections in our laws from being offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated on the basis of our race for the last 20 years. It is a reality, but we need to make sure that we work with our RSLs wherever we can to make sure that they are strong, vibrant service organisations that reach out and connect with the former ADF personnel and make sure they have strong connections with their communities.
I wanted to particularly mention the Sunnybank RSL and commend Hugh Polson and his initiative to erect these memorials for the Chinese and Indian servicemen and women. These activities will create greater awareness of the role of all Australians in our history. And, as I said, it will counter some of the racist rhetoric that occasionally gets sprouted in some political quarters. All Australian servicemen and women deserve to be looked after when their service is completed and when they are serving this nation. They deserve to be respected, and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security and Minister for Defence Personnel) (17:16): I would like to thank all of the members who contributed to the debate on this bill and acknowledge the continued tradition of bipartisan support for the veteran community demonstrated by the opposition. This bill marks the largest reform of veterans legislation in decades. Its purpose is to bring all entitlements for Australian Defence Force members and former members with service prior to 1 July 2004 from the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, the SRCA, and duplicate that coverage under a standalone act which will be known as the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 2016. If passed, it will mean for the first time since 1988 all veterans’ entitlements will sit under the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs. This will acknowledge the unique nature of service and protect veterans and their families from any unintended legislation changes by other portfolios.

The government has acknowledged that this is a significant change and has been conservative in the proposed amendments. As a result, this bill simply replicates the SRCA. Eligibility and benefits under the act will be the same as those currently available to current and former ADF members under the existing SRCA. All case law and precedents will stand. The enactment provisions have been carefully drafted to ensure that eligibility and benefits under the DRCA will be the same as those that were available to serving and former Defence Force members under the SRCA at the time the injury or illness was sustained. In practical terms, this will mean that, when applying the DRCA to a compensation claim, it will be as if the DRCA existed at the time the injury or illness was sustained, as the DRCA incorporates all previous versions of the SRCA. There will be a large number of earlier versions of the DRCA as the SRCA had been amended by almost 70 acts since it was introduced. Of those acts, almost half made amendments which would have impacted on the SRCA, and now the DRCA, as it applied to Defence Force members.

To ensure that Defence Force members would not be adversely affected by the retrospective application of an earlier version of the SRCA as the DRCA, the DRCA includes a legal remedy that can be applied when the retrospective application results in an adverse outcome. A Henry VIII clause has been included in the bill. The Henry VIII clause enables the Governor-General to make regulations that modify the operation of the DRCA in the event that the minister is satisfied that it is necessary or desirable to make the regulations to ensure that no person, except the Commonwealth, is disadvantaged by the enactment of the bill. The regulation may then be applied to other members, or to a class of members in similar circumstances, which addresses any disadvantage to a person that the act may cause. All regulations made under the Henry VIII clause are required to be tabled in parliament and are subject to a disallowance period of 15 sitting days by either house of the parliament. This
provides transparency and scrutiny that any use of the Henry VIII clause will address disadvantage to a person caused by the act. The government also made the commitment that, should the Henry VIII clause ever need to be used for any veteran or group of veterans, the department will have processes to proactively communicate with the veterans community and to check to see if there are any other instances of veterans who might affected.

Arrangements and transitional rules currently in place for SRCA clients with eligibility under more than one act—that is, under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 and/or the Military Rehabilitation And Compensation Act 2004—are not impacted by the commencement of the DRCA. The development of what has become the DRCA was announced by government nearly two years ago, enabling comprehensive consultations on the progress and development of the DRCA, which was provided to ex-service representations and the departments of Defence and Employment. The enactment of the DRCA is a further example of the government's commitment to recognising and meeting the needs of current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families.

I would like to thank the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for their work on the inquiry into the bill. In particular, I would like to thank the former Chair, Dr Chris Back, and Deputy Chair, Senator Gallacher. The committee has recommended that the bill pass the parliament. I would like to acknowledge all the contributions to the debate on this bill that have been made by members, and I look forward to the contributions of senators. I would like to particularly acknowledge the cooperation of the opposition; in particular, the shadow minister, the member for Kingston, who has engaged with the development of the bill. I commend this bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security and Minister for Defence Personnel) (17:23): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill and seek leave to move government amendments (1) to (5) together.

Leave granted.

Mr TEHAN: I move government amendments (1) to (5):

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

2. Schedule 1, Part 1 The 28th day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 4), omit the table item.

(3) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 14), omit "Note 1", substitute "Note".

(4) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (lines 18 to 21), omit note 2.

(5) Schedule 1, Part 3, page 20 (line 1) to page 22 (line 6), omit the Part.
Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security and Minister for Defence Personnel) (17:24): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Urban Infrastructure) (17:25): I move:
That order of the day No. 3, government business, be postponed until the next sitting.
Question agreed to.

BILLS

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017

Second Reading

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

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (17:25): It is a pleasure to speak on the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017. I indicate that the opposition will support this bill, though I also foreshadow that I will be moving a second reading amendment at the conclusion of my remarks. This is a bill that seeks to abolish a review process that has been in place for some years around regulatory decisions made in relation to the National Electricity Market. For some time, affected parties—generally, network companies—have had the ability to seek a merits review of decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator, the AER, to the Australian Competition Tribunal. This bill seeks to remove that merits review that has been in place and seeks to ensure that the decisions made by the AER are also not subject to merits review by any other state or territory body. Arguably, it is unusual for there to be a merits review of regulatory decisions that have involved very extensive inquiry processes—public consultations, submissions by stakeholders and such like—and that point is rightly made by the government in the explanatory memorandum to this bill. For that reason, the merits review that has existed in the national electricity law has been limited, but broadly within this parliament has come to the end of its useful life.

The limited merits review was put in place some years ago, but when Labor was still in government was subject to a very substantial review in 2012 by an independent panel led to Professor George Yarrow. That review led to changes that were enacted in the final stages of our time in government with the agreement of state and territory governments covered by the NEM to ensure that there were improvements to timeliness and cost, but particularly to
refocus the limited merits review process, the LMR, on the long-term interests of consumers, who arguably were not getting a fair deal through the merits view that had been conducted up to the time of Professor Yarrow's review. Those changes were made and have been in place for the last few years. It is a case made by the government and broadly understood, I think, by stakeholders in the electricity sector that, since those improvements were made to the LMR process, it is still very clear that the electricity networks have had the inside running on the LMR process at the expense of consumers, businesses and households in the electricity system. The government rightly makes the point that 12 of the 20 AER regulatory decisions made in the post-2013 period—so post the Professor Yarrow reforms—have been reviewed. In business terms, the total benefit to network companies of those review decisions by the Australian Competition Tribunal amounts to some $7.3 billion that had been sought by electricity network companies, the vast bulk of which was granted to those companies through the LMR process.

So I think there has broadly been a view taken by stakeholders—perhaps not the network companies but by stakeholders—that the changes to the LMR process in 2013 that followed the Yarrow review did not do the job and have not balanced the interests of consumers with the interests of producers—or, in this case, network companies, in the electricity system. As a result, there was, I'm sure, a heated debate at the COAG Energy Council in 2016 about whether there would be further changes or, indeed, abolition of the LMR process altogether, given the experience that electricity consumers faced in the three years following the Yarrow review.

It's pretty clear that the loudest proponents of the abolition of LMR were Labor state governments in Victoria and South Australia and the New South Wales Labor opposition, led by Luke Foley. The strongest resistance to any abolition of LMR was from the New South Wales government, particularly while Mike Baird was the Premier of that government. But, in spite of that, or perhaps because of the inability of the COAG Energy Council to reach a consensus position on this, the Commonwealth government has decided to bring forward this bill. The opposition supports the bill and supports the abolition of LMR. That doesn't mean that there might not well have been some ability for a consensus to have been reached at the COAG Energy Council but, given the time that this has taken and the very clear evidence post-Yarrow of the degree to which this review process appears to be slanted in the interests of network companies rather than the interests of consumers, we support the abolition that is contained in this bill.

I do indicate, though, that, at the end of my remarks, I will be moving a second reading amendment to this bill, because, as was the case with some other legislation in the energy policy portfolio that the parliament or the House of Reps considered earlier today—although this is legislation that should be supported and will achieve some good things in the operation of the National Electricity Market—it again highlights the lack of a broad, holistic energy policy being able to be delivered by this government.

This bill, very rightly, is directed at relieving price pressure on consumers—households and businesses—in the National Electricity Market and, for that reason, we support it. But we also know that the principal driver of energy prices that have been going up and up and up under this government is the lack of policy certainty, the lack of a national investment framework, to pull through electricity generation investment that replaces the ageing
generation infrastructure that inevitably is closing, because it was built in the 1960s and the 1970s and has reached the end of its life.

As I said earlier today in this chamber in relation to another bill, this government, when led by the member for Warringah, had a very clear plan about dismantling and destroying the previous Labor government's climate and energy policies. Unfortunately, though, it devoted so much time to its ambition of dismantling and destruction, that it didn't put in place the intellectual work to ensure that there was a replacement investment framework that would guide investment decisions—very long-term investment decisions—being able to be made by electricity companies, whether they were some of the traditional large, thermal generator companies that are familiar to Australian households and businesses or some of the new clean energy companies that are also taking hold here in Australia.

It has been made clear time and time again—and most recently and most notably perhaps, in the report by the Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel—that, more than anything, this country needs clear energy policy investment frameworks to guide these long-term investment decisions over the coming years to set Australia's electricity infrastructure up for the coming decades. Because of that lack of policy certainty, being the principal driver of power prices going up, we have seen wholesale power prices double since this government was elected four years ago. They have doubled. Those wholesale power price increases are now starting to feed through into electricity bills for households. We saw, for example, in New South Wales household power bills go up by 20 per cent, on average, on 1 July this year. They are also feeding into business contracts, which might be multi-year contracts, that are now up for renegotiation. Business after business are reporting increases of 70, 80, 90 or even 100 per cent on their previous contract prices because of the concertinaed effect of the wholesale power price increases that have happened under this government. As I said, the overwhelming solution to this, according to all expert advice that the government and the opposition and others have received, is to deliver some policy certainty for Australian business and households into the future.

Perhaps the key reason for this government not being able to deliver that policy certainty is the deep philosophical divisions that exist within the coalition party room. This is a party room utterly divided, in a deep philosophical way, about how Australia's future energy system should be constructed. It is a party room obsessed about coal and its place in the future to a point that is quite irrational. It seems to ignore all expert advice, including from some of the biggest coal generators that operate here in Australia, that this is a legacy technology. It doesn't mean that there is not going to be coal-fired power in Australia for a very long time. Still, about 76 per cent, on the latest figures, of electricity in the National Electricity Market is generated from coal. That is not going to disappear any time soon. It is a level of penetration in the NEM that has to come down if we are going to have any chance of securing and discharging the commitments that this government made at the Paris climate conference in 2015. We have to get that figure down from 76 per cent.

Leaving aside those climate imperatives, even the Treasurer, who brought a lump of coal into parliament—in a pretty fatuous gesture that I suspect he now regrets deeply—said recently that anyone who thinks that new coal-fired power stations are either cheap or quick is deluded. New coal is not cheap. New coal will not attract investment dollars, because investors understand that there is a very serious carbon price risk and a regulatory risk to any
new coal-fired asset that will probably emerge in the first quarter or certainly the first half of the life of that asset. Yet still within the coalition party room they are unable to deliver, or unable to begin to deliver, on the most central of Alan Finkel's recommendations, and that is to deliver a clean energy target. The minister said, 'Oh, there's no rush. This will only start operating in 2020 anyway,' but we know that the Finkel panel said there was, in their words, an 'urgent need for a clear and early decision about a clean energy target'. That is for the reason that these investment decisions take time.

We know that AGL has decided to close the Liddell Power Station in 2022. That is only five years away, which is the blink of an eye in terms of investment and construction decisions in the electricity sector. We know that the Renewable Energy Target, which is a bipartisan piece of legislation in this parliament, is underpinning substantial investment in renewable energy right now, but that investment will drop off very quickly if there is no legislation that charts a path forward beyond the end of the Renewable Energy Target. Although the Renewable Energy Target finishes in 2020, in order to get through the door before the door closes, investment decisions need to be made by next year. If there isn't something in place beyond that date, we will experience the 'valley of death' that was talked about in one of the newspapers this morning. The coalition party room needs to have it out on this question. We on this side understand that there is a deep philosophical division. We are trying to give the coalition room to work through those processes so that there is the maximum chance of bipartisan agreement on a clean energy target that will give investors the confidence to start building the next generation of electricity infrastructure to start putting downward pressure on wholesale power prices for businesses and households.

While that hard work within the coalition party room is underway, the Prime Minister and the relevant minister have been trying to put forward pieces of legislation like this, have summits with big retailers and certainly give the semblance of frenetic activity to try to get down power prices for households and businesses. Well done to them for that. Good luck to them for that. If some behavioural change comes from the summits that the Prime Minister and the minister have had with retailers, we'll welcome that. But something deeper is needed around the retail market. There is something more structurally wrong with the retail market than simply getting the retailers in and asking them to write a letter to a few million customers, thinking that that will suddenly make it easier for those customers to navigate their way through an incredibly complex retail market in electricity.

Really—as far as I can find, at least—the only serious intellectual work that has been done on our retail market is the Thwaites inquiry that was commissioned by the Victorian state government. Unusually—jaw-droppingly so for this building—this was a bipartisan inquiry. You can't imagine this government commissioning an inquiry that would have Labor representation as well as Liberal or National Party representation. But the Victorian state government commissioned John Thwaites, a very highly respected former Labor minister, and Terry Mulder, a very highly respected Liberal minister in Victoria, who was once touted as a possible leader for the Liberal Party in Victoria, along with Patricia Faulkner, one of the leading public servants in Victoria, to conduct a very deep inquiry into what had happened since privatisation and deregulation to the Victorian retail market.

I think it was surprising reading for many, because what it demonstrated is that all of the promises out of deregulation, corporatisation and, ultimately, particularly in Victoria,
privatisation—all of the promises about relief and benefits for consumers—have all come to nought. There are obviously costs involved in competition, in the sense that all of those new companies, whether in superannuation or in electricity, need to advertise and need to boost their own case in a competitive market, but the case was made at the time that the swings and roundabouts would be that there were lower costs for consumers that more than compensated for the costs that retailers were incurring through advertising their wares in a competitive market, and that just hasn't happened.

There has been lots of innovation, it would appear, in competitive, privatised retail markets like Victoria and South Australia, which were really the vanguard of the privatisation push by the Liberal Party in the 1990s, but those innovations tend to be aimed at keeping customers for power companies—gentailers or retailers—and maximising the profit to retailers rather than delivering benefits to consumers. It is now a retail market that is incredibly difficult to navigate for most households, and for many businesses as well. I hope that the letter from the retailers that has been jimmed out of the hands of those retailers by the Prime Minister provides some help to customers. But this government needs to start to come to grips with the ideas from the hard intellectual work that Thwaites, Mulder and Faulkner were commissioned by the Victorian state government to do, and I don't see that on the horizon. For all that this bill and the letters might provide some relief to consumers, we need deep structural change in our retail market, as we do in all of the other areas of the National Electricity Market that, frankly, with increasing clarity, have let down too many consumers in Australia since the NEM was introduced in the 1990s.

In conclusion, although we support this legislation and we think that merits review has been given a chance to work in the interests of consumers—and, frankly, it hasn't—its time now is up and it should be abolished. That will not be supported by some in the electricity industry, but I think they have had a chance to make this thing work in the long-term interests of consumers. It hasn't, so its time is up and it should be abolished. We support any change that the government is able to make themselves or to engender through the behaviour of retailers that will provide some relief to consumers. But I make this point again: it is difficult for people to take seriously the Prime Minister's protestations of concern for consumers in the electricity market when at the same time he is pushing ahead with his plans to abolish the energy supplement for 400,000 aged pensioners, for 105,000 carers, for 109,000 disability support pensioners, for 138,000 single parents and many other income support recipients besides. This is a supplement whose sole purpose is to relieve the pressure from electricity bills on some of our most vulnerable members of the Australian community. It is very difficult for people to take seriously the Prime Minister and this minister seriously when they talk about the impact of power prices, while on the other hand literally hundreds of thousands of the lowest-income, most vulnerable Australians in the community are going to take a hit worth several hundred dollars every year for the future. We cannot support that decision.

So, with those remarks, I now seek to move a second reading amendment in the following terms:

That all the 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:

(1) the Government's lack of national energy policy, which is causing an investment strike in new electricity generation; and
(2) the Government’s failure to ensure a national energy policy to support the creation of new electricity generation and deliver affordable, reliable and clean energy for Australian households and businesses.”

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Is the amendment seconded?

Ms Kate Ellis: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (17:47): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I note your strong interest in the area of energy. It is quite fitting that you are sitting here today, as is the member for Melbourne, who is also in the committee that I chair, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy. I'm pleased he had time to FaceTime his children.

It is good to talk about this Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017, because this is really about one part of the energy power bill that people get that, that we don't often focus on. We talk a lot about generation, but we don't always talk a lot about distribution. Of course, up to nearly half of your power bill is the distribution. This bill seeks to limit the appeal process for those energy grid constructors and operators, who want to try to extract more money from what is a reasonably safe investment—building grid—and ensuring we try to keep the price down for consumers.

It pleases me that there's bipartisan support, and I guess that does show the Australian people that there is a level of bipartisanship about the key focus, which is about ensuring that Australians do have access to electricity. In the committee I have been fortunate enough to chair, we've been able to ascertain that there are some things that need to be done. Certainly, you do need a reliable electricity grid; you do need to ensure that things can be done. I do note that after the Black Saturday bushfires there was a royal commission held into the cause of those. The result of that has required some significant upgrading of the safety standards in the Victorian electricity grid, and that of course has added some cost onto household electricity bills.

I want to touch on electricity generally, because this is a great opportunity to broaden the discussion. I note the previous speaker did as well, so I think I can take a little bit of liberty from that. There are three forms of generation within our grid. There is the baseload, thermal generation, which has traditionally been coal—a large, spinning piece of metal, essentially, that creates electricity. There's the intermittent generation, which is predominantly wind and photovoltaic solar. That has been very welcome in my patch. We've had some of the best sun in Victoria. In the area where I live many people now have solar on their roof and there has recently been the installation of large-scale solar in paddocks. Then of course there is the peaking requirement of electricity, which is gas, pumped hydro and, to a lesser extent, batteries—I think batteries will come into the mix.

I think something has been lost in this debate. Shutting down coal-fired power stations without having built capacity to take up the slack from those coal-fired power stations has meant that we've had to have a greater reliance upon peaking generation, which has been gas. This has also coincided with the opening up of gas exports from the east coast of Australia. That has been a driving factor in why electricity generation has gone up substantially. The necessity to have some level of affordable gas in the mix is certainly something that needs to be worked on when thinking these things through. (Quorum formed)
I'm sure that was brought on by the Labor Party because they wanted everyone to hear the
great speech I was giving about energy. It shows that we are the party that is actually trying to
tackle this. My sense of bipartisanship has now gone slightly out of the window because of
my colleagues being disturbed from their evening dinner. The concentration of power
generation companies, the profit taking as a result of that and some gaming of the grid,
particularly by the Queensland government, have also been contributing factors to the
increase in our power prices. My committee certainly intends to hand down a report at the end
of the year that will give some future direction for ensuring that our grid remains viable and
flexible and is set up for the future.

But there is one thing that's been very interesting: globally, we have seen an increase in the
R&D that's gone into wind and solar, and, as a result, the cost of building wind and solar has
become cheaper and the power generated from those technologies has increased. I think the
member for Melbourne would agree with that. Of course, that then asks the question: do we
still need to subsidise those technologies? When I was over in Berlin recently, I learnt that
they've just commissioned a large wind power station that has zero subsidy. I think the next
challenge for us is to move our focus away from necessarily subsidising the generation source
and over to building the grid for the generation source to plug into.

If you think about it, we don't fund businesses but we do fund highways. We let a business
grow a product, and then they put the product on a road and transport it to the market. When
we construct our grid, we have to start thinking about moving away from subsidising our
renewable generation sources and allowing that subsidy to be moved across to building the
grid infrastructure that we should have for the future. Currently, we are subsidising renewable
energy to the tune of $2.6 billion a year. I believe that we could pretty much get rid of that
and put it into grid infrastructure. We could use it for greenfield sites where grids can be
constructed that would allow us to take the wind resources off the west coast of Tasmania and
the sun resources off Central Australia. This would give us an opportunity to have a more
diversified grid.

We also have to look at how we can reduce the price of gas, and I believe the government's
been taking steps in the right direction on that. I've always advocated for more of a reserve
policy, and I still think there's merit in that, but taking steps in the right direction to make
more gas available for Australian households and businesses, thereby reducing power costs, is
very relevant. I also think we have the opportunity to improve the efficiency of some of our
gas fired power stations. It was pointed out in the Finkel review that some of our gas fired
power stations are reasonably inefficient at creating electricity.

The challenge we've got is that the next political debate going on in this place is around a
clean energy target, and the fear I have is that it still does not create certainty for investment. I
think there will be opportunity for what I would call a 'set and lock' mechanism. Essentially,
what has been working overseas is having eight-year policy settings around energy, rather
than three-year policy settings. Any time you build something that requires large capital
investment, to attract investment you have to have certainty—political certainty and market
certainty. If you had a set and lock mechanism, where you set a level of emissions and then
lock that supply contract for an eight-year period, that would be a pathway forward to creating
certainty. That's something that hasn't been discussed in the parliament as yet.
I also think the Finkel review's recommendation around requiring solar and wind generation to have auxiliary services such as inertia and reliability is essential. You need to understand that there are three components to electricity generation: electrical energy, inertia and reliability. You have to have all three if you're going to have a functioning grid, and I commend the Prime Minister for announcing Snowy 2.0, which will work very effectively, as a large battery, in conjunction with renewable energy resources such as wind and solar.

There also needs to be a discussion about how we run the national electricity market. I don't believe the peaking price of $14,000 a megawatt hour is working. It's not attracting people to build peaking generation. You can't expect someone to build something on the off-chance that it's going to be high occasionally. That would be a speculative investment. We've seen that, in countries and areas that have taken up a capacity market, the capacity market has facilitated greater investment in more intermittent power station. So a capacity market would help facilitate the uptake of more renewables into the mix.

I think this legislation is a very welcome step. This shows the government is prepared to take the first steps. There is more work to be done. I'm actually excited about the future. I think coal will have a future. If you stand behind a 1964 Holden you will see the emissions that come out of the back, and if you stand behind a 2016 Holden—I won't say 'a 2017 Holden', because we don't make them here—the emissions that come out of that are substantially less, yet the power that you get out of that car is substantially more, and it's still burning petrol. I think that's a lesson for us. Let's not denigrate the resource; let's look at the technology we can put around the resource to ensure that we can be responsible.

The solar resources of Australia are immense. The wind resources of Australia are immense. The pumped hydro and hydro resources of Australia are immense. I think we can do it. Ultimately, the government will get there and restore some confidence back into the Australian people that there is a level of maturity in this place, that we're not going to play politics with energy, that our focus should always be on ensuring that the people who want to conduct business and rely on electricity can afford to do so, that the poorest in our society can afford to turn the heater on and that we can ensure that we have the electricity to give us the standard of living that we deserve as Australians. We will get there.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (18:01): There are two big things that you would say we have done wrong with our energy system over the last decade or two. One has been to ignore Australia's amazing advantages. We have so much sun and so much wind. We're surrounded by ocean. You would think that we could be the renewable energy world leader and that we could be providing clean, cheap energy to households. But, also, you would think that we could be the place that industry wants to come to for energy-intensive industry if they want a guaranteed source of clean, cheap energy in the region. There's absolutely no technological reason that we can't be a renewable energy superpower. It has just been that we have had governments who have been so enthralled with the legacy power of coal and gas that they went out of their way to find ways of subsidising and supporting that kind of energy and holding back the new kind of energy that would enable Australia to take its place on the world stage.

The second thing that we have done wrong is not treat energy as an essential service that needs to be managed for the public good and provided at the lowest possible cost, bringing down prices as well as pollution. We have turned the whole thing into a market—an artificial
market. Because electrons aren't goods that can be sold or traded like other goods at a supermarket, we have had to create all these laws and systems to pretend that electricity is a market like every other market. What we have found is that it has completely failed. It has driven up the cost of electricity, it has not brought on the investment that we need in new generation and it has not built the network that we need for the 21st century. The mantra of the Labor and Liberal parties for the last two decades has been to deregulate and privatise everything. If you work through the bits of the energy market—and I'll come to the bit that this bill focuses on in a moment—you can see the spectacular failure that privatisation and deregulation has meant for our electricity sector.

In the retail sector, when you think about what an electricity retailer actually does, they pay for a lot of billboards—you see ads for electricity retailers around the place all the time—but they don't actually produce anything. They just take the product—the electricity—that's been generated and transmitted to you down the transmission line and then sell it to you for an inflated profit. As a result, in Victoria, where there has been complete price deregulation, 30 per cent of the power bill for a household is just the retailer's profit margin. Thirty per cent is just the retailer's profit margin!

And when you look over to other states or territories, like the ACT or Tasmania, where they regulate their power prices, we see power prices have stayed substantially lower there. The difference between the regulated and deregulated states is so stark that for the same electricity you could be paying for $1,500 a year for a family in the ACT, where they've got a Greens energy minister and 100 per cent renewables, or up to $4,000 if you go over to South Australia. It's deregulation—allowing electricity retail sector to be treated as a market for profit rather than as an essential service—that has pushed up power bills to the point where many people can't afford them. That's on the retail side.

On the generation side—right at the other end, where our electricity comes from—we've seen this government, under the current Prime Minister and the previous Prime Minister, send such a shudder through the energy industry by repealing the carbon price that was put in place in the last parliament that wholesale electricity prices have doubled under this government's watch. There they were saying, 'Oh, my word, the carbon tax is so bad it might cost you an extra $500 a year.' And what they have done? They repealed it, put nothing in its place, and as a result the industry does not know what's going on and wholesale power prices doubled. They feign that it's somehow the fault of some state governments who are picking up the slack because the federal government is turning a blind eye to climate change. But the highest price rises in wholesale power were in New South Wales, where there were Liberal state governments and Liberal federal governments in power for the last few years. That's where the highest price rises in wholesale power generation have been. This government has done nothing more to the generation side other than push pollution up and push power prices up. These are undeniable facts. That's the retail end and the generation end.

This bill deals with some bits in the middle around the networks: the big lines out from the power stations to the substations, and then the distribution substations that happen in the cities and regional areas. What's been going on there? Because Labor and the Liberals have been so intent on treating what is essentially a natural monopoly that should be run for the public good as an artificial market, what has happened? We have seen enormous expenditure over the last few years in the networks, because the way the system has been set-up is that no-one is sitting
back planning the networks for the Australian public interest, saying, 'What lines do we need where?' The way the system is set-up is that it relies on these network companies—some of whom are registered in the Cayman Islands—to front up and say: 'We want to build project X. We'd like you to tick off on it.' And when the regulator ticks off on it, they get a guaranteed rate of return that could be six to 10 per cent, and they then pass that on to consumers. Over the last few years under this crazy faux-market system that Labor and the Liberals have developed, we've had $44 billion of new build between 2009 and 2014, simply because the companies have come along and said, 'We'd like to build it, please,' the regulator has ticked off on it and said, 'Yes, you can charge six to 10 per cent extra,' bearing in mind that if the government did it they could do it at the bond rate of around three per cent. But, no, never mind that. We ticked off on them getting this massive profit—a guaranteed risk-free profit—that then gets passed on to consumers.

And the more that people have dug into the detail you realise that, out of this $44 billion, on some estimates, $20 billion of it was totally unnecessary. That's the gold plating and the other extended overinvestments that we've heard about. And it's the investments that the Australian Energy Regulator told the House Economics Committee about where, over the last few years, they would say that a billion dollars a year has been spent just to deal with about three to five days of high demand, instead of looking at other alternatives like demand management—that is, saying to companies or households, 'Actually, if we paid you just not to turn the power on for a bit, or to run it at a lower rate, would you be prepared to take a payment for that?' The Australian Energy Regulator, when it fronted up and gave evidence at our committee, could not name one instance in which they'd knocked back an application to build new network infrastructure because demand management would have been a better alternative. So we've had this massive investment. Why have we had this massive investment? Well, let's look at who runs it: largely companies; some state-owned companies who have been bolstering their state government balance sheets through a form of indirect taxation but largely private companies.

Over the last four years, according to IBISWorld reports, the private companies that run the networks in this country have made $28 billion in profits—$7 billion a year in distribution and transmission, for these companies that are meant to be running the energy system for the public good. It is no wonder that power bills are so high! At every step of the way, from the generation—where there's an investment strike going on, because of this government—through to networks, through to transmission and distribution, where it's being run on a for-profit basis and we are building not the network that Australia needs, but the network that the power companies want. That's what we're building, and they're making $28 billion over the last four years, $7 billion a year—through to retail—where companies are making billions of dollars a year. At every stage, the energy system in this country is being run for profit and treated as an artificial market—and we're not getting the energy network that we need.

As a result, we have a system where—according to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation under the current rules—if you wanted to build a transmission line in Australia, not to a coal-fired power station, which is where most of them are, but out to where the sun is shining the brightest, you'd actually struggle—according to the evidence that they've given—to make the case under the existing regulatory investment test that it was worthwhile. In other words, if someone now said: 'We want to build a transmission line out to a place where the sun is
shining the brightest'—or where the wind is blowing the hardest, because that's where the new renewables would be—it might not pass the test. But what does pass the test is $20 billion worth of excess investment to gold-plate the system, which customers are ultimately going to be paying for. Because governments have handed everything over to the private sector and because the rules don't require pollution reduction to be taken into account, we're building an energy system, which consumers are paying for and which is actually driving pollution up.

This bill, the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017, addresses one small part of it. This bill says that, when the regulator knocks back some of those applications for funding or for new investment, then it truncates the circumstances in which there can be an appeal against that. What we have found so far is that it has really been a no-lose situation for the energy companies, because every time the regulator knocks it back—they appeal. If they lose the appeal, they still get to make a decent amount of money because the system is rigged in their favour. If they win the appeal, they get to make even more money. So it's a welcome move. But once you've stuck your hand up—as this government has—and said, 'There's a problem with the way that we fund our networks in this country, and there's a problem with the way that we plan them,' you have to take it through to its logical conclusion. And its logical conclusion is this: in a country like Australia, there is absolutely no reason that our transmission and distribution systems—the grid that forms the backbone of our electricity system, and is a natural monopoly—should be such that a company can front up and say, 'I want a guaranteed 6 per cent return'—or even a 5 per cent or a 4 per cent return—'on my money to build a piece of infrastructure, and I want the consumer to pay the difference', when it's essentially a risk-free investment. It is essentially consumers subsidising private companies to make even more profit, when it could be done much more cheaply if the government just treated it like it used to—as an essential service that is there for the public good.

What we ought to be doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, is going further than what's in this bill. We ought to be saying: 'We need to rewrite the rules according to which our energy network is built and funded.' If there's one good thing to come out of skyrocketing power prices, it is that it has forced people to lift the lid on how our energy system has been run for the last couple of decades and, when you lift the lid and look, it is not a pretty sight. There is a very, very good case, regardless of what you think about how generation should be dealt with—there are different views about that—and how retail should be dealt with. I think there's a very good case for full reregulation of the retail market. You just have to look at Victoria and compare it with the ACT to see what benefits you could gain from that. Regardless of what you think about those two ends, for the middle bit—the backbone, the grid, the transmission and distribution networks—there is a very good case for saying, 'We're going to run that as a public good.' As a public, let's build the backbone and then others can come and plonk their generation onto it, and others can sell it at the other end of it, but the natural monopoly that sits in the middle should not be an opportunity for obscene profiteering at the public's expense. Winding back the limited merits review—as this bill does, which is why it's useful and will be supported—is only the first step because, once you put your finger on the problem, you can't then pretend the rest of it doesn't exist.

For too long, big power companies have been getting away with financial murder. They've been getting away with murder by charging what they like to build what they like, even if it's
not in the public interest, and consumers have been paying through the nose. It's time to bring it back under public control so that we can bring down pollution, bring down prices and stop Australians having to pay through the nose for high electricity bills and network infrastructure and investment that they don't need. It's time to bring it back under public control because most people in this country think that electricity is an essential service. They don't want a million different power bills and offers; they just want one chance to pay cheap power bills so they can keep the lights on.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:16): For all of the many distractions, the smoke and mirrors of politics—and there has been a lot of that driven by the Leader of the Opposition—there are always defining issues that make clear the very real differences between those on this side of the chamber and those on the opposite side. The issue of tackling our high energy prices is a perfect example, and this bill illustrates the difference very clearly.

In Australia today, we have a very real and very urgent problem with the affordability of energy. A recent report by the ANU suggests that average electricity prices in my state of Queensland rose by as much as 136 per cent between 2006 and 2016. As many of my constituents know, prices have risen this year by as much as 20 per cent again. In my electorate of Fisher, I've recorded more than 500 constituents during my first year as a federal member of parliament who are concerned about the cost of living and electricity's contribution to it. It's also been raised during most of my 26 listening posts and a great many of my business visits throughout Fisher. I know that this problem is an urgent priority for the people of my electorate and I'm determined to help achieve a positive result for them.

The coalition's approach to tackling this problem has been tough and decisive, but it has also been informed and considered. The government sought to fully understand the energy market and the levers that drive our high prices. Through the COAG structure, we commissioned the Finkel review to ensure that we had fully informed policymaking. The government ascertained that there were issues driving up prices at three separate stages of supply: at the point of generation, in the networks which distribute electricity and in the interaction between retailers and their customers. We are acting to make a difference at each level of those three stages.

In the area of supply, we commissioned the Snowy Hydro 2.0 project, which will add 2,000 megawatts of power to the National Electricity Market—enough to power half a million homes. We are working with ARENA on further such projects in Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and my own state of Queensland. We also moved decisively to ensure the security of gas supply. The Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment and Energy acted fairly, giving gas suppliers the opportunity to ensure a greater supply themselves. However, when necessary, the government acted with tough new regulations to ensure Australians get priority access to the gas supplies that will help to bring down prices.

When it comes to the relationship between retailers and their customers, once again we got tough to make sure that Australians are getting the best deal possible. We directed the ACCC to review retail electricity prices to examine the behaviour of retailers and to ensure that customers are getting the benefit of competition in the market. However, we also went further. Last week, the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment and Energy called representatives of electricity retailers to Canberra and negotiated a commitment with them to help customers ensure that they are getting the best possible price.
This government secured promises from retailers that they will inform customers of how much they could save on a better deal, to supply simple fact sheets and to inform their customers when their discount benefits are about to expire. The government will continue to work closely with the industry going forward to ensure that families and businesses pay the best possible rate for their electricity. In contrast to this pragmatic and comprehensive coalition approach, tackling every part of the problem calmly and responsibly, what do we see from Labor? We see an unedifying race to see who can raise electricity prices faster through reckless environmental ideology. You could say that this is the true form of environmental vandalism.

Members opposite would deal with our energy crisis by introducing a 45 per cent emissions reduction target—one of the highest emissions reduction targets in the developed world. You know that such a policy can only be driven by ideology and not by the interests of the people that we, in this place, represent, because the Labor Party's own modelling tells them what a total disaster this policy would be for ordinary Australians. (Quorum formed)

When Labor were in government, their modelling told them that a 45 per cent emissions reduction target would increase wholesale electricity prices by 78 per cent, at a time when businesses were being driven to the wall and some of our constituents were going without heating because of high electricity prices.

The Business Council of Australia called such a move risky and unnecessary. It won't end there. The Weatherill Labor government in South Australia has shown what a Labor-Greens future would look like. Forty-five per cent was not enough for them. No, South Australian Labor insist that only a 50 per cent target will do for them. The results have been nothing less than devastating for South Australia. It comes as no surprise that South Australia has the highest power prices in the National Electricity Market, but that was only the beginning. Labor left 1.7 million South Australians in darkness in blackouts in December, January and February.

Mr Conroy: It's called a storm, you idiot!

Mr Buccholz: That's unparliamentary.

Mr WALLACE: It is unparliamentary, Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Yes.

Mr WALLACE: Millions of people spent days without electricity because the government had failed to ensure that there were enough generators of the right kind to provide it. The other leg of Labor's plan for electricity prices, in the words of its Climate Change Action Plan, is to kickstart the closure of coal-fired power plants. Labor intend to force the closure of our lowest cost, most reliable form of energy.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

Mr WALLACE: You guys can't quite make up your minds what you want to do. The effect on the electricity prices paid by our struggling businesses and consumers is well attested. In Victoria when the Hazelwood plant was forced to close, electricity prices immediately went up to $135. In South Australia, it has caused a 50 per cent jump in prices for the large industrial users on which the state relies.
We shouldn't be surprised by these policies. Labor's record on electricity prices is clear. During the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years, prices doubled—an increase of 101 per cent. When the coalition was returned in 2013, our immediate action brought a fall in prices of up to 12½ per cent. That is the difference—decisive and pragmatic action to reduce prices from the coalition; inflated, ideological, virtue signalling from Labor which costs jobs, wrecks businesses and raises prices for all Australians.

The bill before the House today demonstrates that difference once again and addresses the third part of the pressures that are causing high electricity prices for Australian consumers and businesses. Energy networks operate the physical infrastructure that delivers our electricity—the poles and wires. Within each state, these networks operate in a monopoly position, which unless properly controlled can substantially increase the price of electricity. Network costs already make up between 40 and 50 per cent of the price paid by consumers. If we can control that cost, we can make a big difference for all Australians and Australian businesses.

The necessary control exists in the form of the Australian Energy Regulator. But since 2008 the effectiveness of that regulator has been fatally undermined by the limited merits review process. Although set up with good intentions, this process has ended up acting solely and consistently as a means for networks to game the system and generate inflated, monopolised profits at the expense of ordinary Australians. Since 2008, the review process has been employed by networks to challenge 32 out of the 51 Australian energy regulated decisions that have been made. In a balanced and working review mechanism, one could expect that some decisions would favour the consumer and some decisions would favour the networks, but that is not what has happened with limited merits review. In nine years, not a single one of the 32 challenges has resulted in reduced costs for consumers. In fact, as a result of the limited merits review, Australian businesses and householders have paid $6.5 billion more for their electricity. We need to end this rort. The COAG Energy Council has acknowledged that this system is failing and is causing higher prices for consumers, yet COAG has been unable to agree to scrap it.

The price of electricity in Australia is risking people's future in our community today. There are small business owners who face the very real prospect of losing their long-cherished dreams and of having all that they have worked for and sacrificed destroyed by the outrageous cost of energy. The livelihoods of thousands of small business owners and the hundreds of thousands of Australians they employ are at risk unless we act soon. Worse, this energy crisis affects not only the prosperity of our people but, in some cases, their very lives. When there are vulnerable Australians who cannot turn on the heat on a subzero winter's night or who cannot cool their homes in a 40-degree heatwave, then lives are at stake and we have to act.

I know that the people of Fisher are deeply concerned about this issue. It's something that they tell me about every day. I'm pleased to see that this government is taking decisive action. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (18:31): I'm speaking in support of this bill, the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017, but for consumers in New South Wales this bill is too little too late. For those pensioners, households and small businesses that have faced a doubling of their electricity prices under the Abbott-Turnbull government, this reform is simply too little too late. That doubling of
electricity prices has occurred because of the uncertainty that has been created in the investment market for baseload electricity by this government, which can't make a decision about a clean energy target. When it comes to poles and wires, the overinvestment that has occurred because of outdated rules and regulations regarding investment in the sector—one of those being the limited merits review process—has led to the gold-plating of certain assets, particularly in New South Wales, and consumers have paid for it. Simply, the lack of investment and the lack of a pathway to a renewable energy future has meant that consumers have been worse off.

This bill, through schedule 1, seeks to amend the Competition and Consumer Act to prevent the Australian Competition Tribunal from reviewing certain decisions made under the national energy laws to ensure that decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator under those laws aren't subject to merits review by any other state or territory body. The limited merits review is typically used to challenge Australian Energy Regulator decisions on regulated electricity and gas prices and pipeline access prices and their increases by network companies in an attempt to secure higher prices and greater return on investment.

I have to say that particular governments have used this to fleece the Australian people. One of those governments that's been very good at fleecing the Australian people when it comes to increases in electricity prices is the New South Wales Liberal government. They used this specific rule earlier this year to stop electricity prices from being reduced for consumers in New South Wales. Through Endeavour Energy and through Ausgrid, they used a limited merits review process to argue for increases in electricity prices. That's right; the New South Wales Liberal government used this rule that is being abolished here today to argue for higher electricity prices in New South Wales.

Now that may be shocking to many consumers in our state. It's certainly shocking to the pensioners who are struggling during winter to put the heater on and keep themselves warm, to the young families who are struggling to make ends meet with electricity prices going through the roof and to the small businesses and, indeed, the large businesses that are struggling to make ends meet because of the increasing cost of wholesale electricity. But that is exactly what that New South Wales Liberal government did. They used this merits review to inflate electricity prices in New South Wales. Why did they do it? Because they wanted to fatten the cow prior to privatising it and selling it off. They wanted to make it more attractive in the market, to inflate their profits and to ensure that they got a higher sale price when they sold those pole and wire assets. That is exactly what the outcome was, and it is New South Wales consumers who have been worse off.

It is estimated that this costs consumers in the vicinity of $100 extra a year on their electricity bills. Because of the actions of the New South Wales government using this limited merits review process, $100 was added to your electricity bill. It was worth it for the New South Wales government, wasn't it, because they added $5 billion in profits for these two bodies that they sought to fatten up before they sold them, which made them much more attractive for privatisation in New South Wales? The result is that these important public assets are no longer owned by the people of New South Wales. They have been privatised and handed over to the private sector. As a result, consumers are worse off, and we are seeing the effects of that now. Pensioners, families and small businesses are struggling to make ends
meet when it comes to electricity prices because of this New South Wales Liberal government, and the private sector is not investing in new capacity.

So they sold off the assets. I distinctly remember former Premier of New South Wales Morris Iemma and former Treasurer Michael Costa saying to me when I was running the campaign against electricity privatisation in New South Wales—the New South Wales Labor Party at the time was attempting to have a go at it but, thankfully, didn't go ahead with it—'Don't worry. If we privatise, the private sector will always invest in baseload capacity.' Guess what? The New South Wales Liberal government privatised it and the private sector ain't investing. They're not investing in new baseload capacity in New South Wales, and why would you? Why would you when there's this complete uncertainty about where we're headed as a nation in respect of renewable energy and making that transition from dirty coal-fired power to clean energy?

This Turnbull government is in chaos and can't make a decision about the clean energy target. The Finkel review was handed to the government some months ago. We've had two iterations of it. The first one the right wing of the Liberal Party rejected. Malcolm Turnbull bowed to their needs and rejected it. The government said they would adopt 49 of the 50 recommendations of the second one, but they can't make a decision on the most important one—the clean energy target, which sets the target and the pathway to a renewables future. Because of that we're all paying more for our electricity. The Liberal government use of limited merits review to fatten the cow before selling, then privatising it and the Turnbull government's inability to make a decision about a clean energy target mean that we're all paying more for our electricity.

This bill does go some of the way to solving some of those problems because it gets rid of limited merits review. Since 2013, 12 of the AER's 20 decisions have been subject to applications by network businesses for review. When taken together these 12 network businesses asked the tribunal to increase their revenue by around $7.3 billion over a five-year period, and they have been successful to the tune of $6½ billion. Ordinarily, if the original decisions under the rules had applied, there would be about $6½ billion less of investment in some of these assets and $6½ billion less of that cost passed on to consumers.

The limited merits review regime was established in 2008 and reviewed in 2012 by an independent panel led by Professor George Yarrow. The review identified some serious shortcomings with the regime and led to reforms to improve timelines, reduce costs, increase consumer participation and refocus the process on the long-term interests of consumers. Another review was conducted in 2016 by the COAG Energy Council Senior Committee of Officials. That identified further significant regulatory failures, including: the LMR reviews of economic regulatory decisions, made a routine part of the regulatory process, involved significant cuts to all participants and continue to present barriers to meaningful consumer participation—this is something that has been identified by many, many parliamentary committees in this place; the way the rules are structured at the moment actually prohibits providing incentives for consumers to reduce their demand for electricity, and that has led to significant regulatory and price uncertainty; and a failure to demonstrate outcomes that serve the long-term interests of consumers.

Basically, the rules under which we're regulating, supplying and producing electricity in this country are hopelessly out of date and have been for some time. We need to put in place a
pathway to a renewable future whereby we reduce our dependence on coal-fired power but at the same time provide incentives for people to invest in renewable energy. Let's face it, over the longer term, we're all going to be better off because it cleans up our environment, which is better for the future of our kids. It also reduces the cost of producing electricity, because, once you've undertaken those initial establishment capital costs, the fuel is free. Sunlight and wind are free, and Australia, one of the sunniest and windiest places on the earth, should be doing more to incentivise that pathway to renewables. When we do, there needs to be a wholesale rewrite of the electricity market rules.

In this case, the government's taken too long to look at this issue, because they've been at sixes and sevens when it comes to a cogent electricity policy. It's been affecting Australian consumers. It's something that the Labor Party, independent experts who work in this field and those who have oversight of the management of our economy have been talking about for many, many years. Even the Reserve Bank governor, Philip Lowe, identified that this is a serious issue that is holding back economic growth in Australia. He said that the government's chaos when it comes to making a decision on this issue is 'crippling' household budgets. The RBA has further stated that uncertainty in the energy policy environment is delaying investment and affecting investment decisions in other parts of the economy. That's not my view; that's the view of the Reserve Bank governor, who has identified that this intransigence, the government's inability to make a decision on electricity policy and on a clean energy target, is holding back investment in that sector and in the broader Australian economy and is pushing up prices, and we're all paying for it.

Thankfully, the government's seen sense with this particular bill in abolishing the limited merits review. It's an outdated process under the rules that's seen consumers pay more. But, as I said at the beginning, for consumers in New South Wales, for pensioners who have been struggling, for families who have been struggling to pay their electricity bills, and for small and large businesses that simply can't invest and grow their businesses and are being held back by high electricity prices, this is too little, too late. For them, the horse has bolted. The evidence of that is in the fact that electricity prices have doubled. Wholesale electricity prices have doubled under this coalition government.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (18:44): It's a wonderful opportunity to able to rise to speak on the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017, because it fits as part of a glorious package being put forward by the Turnbull government in dealing directly with the challenge of electricity prices in our Commonwealth.

What we know is that, for the past decade or so, there have been fundamental problems with how electricity, the energy market and energy policy have been approached. Under the previous government in particular, they started this rot where you had policy approach from the bases of worrying about emissions cuts first, worrying about price second and worrying, ultimately, about reliability last. And what's happened as a consequence of a bad fundamental approach to dealing with electricity and making sure there is sufficient energy provided to the market is unsurprising. When you worry about emissions cuts first, you get a policy framework that focuses on that. So, introducing more and more unreliable power means it compromises the stability of the grid and, in addition to that, you just throw away any real concern about issues around prices.
What this government is doing is reorientating the discussion around electricity to where it belongs, mindful of making sure the system's reliable so that people actually have power when they switch on the lights at home; and making sure that industry has access to the electricity they need to be able to generate the jobs to provide for Australians so that people don't just go out there in the workplace and work successfully but earn an income so they can go home and also pay their electricity bills at home, so reliability is critical. Secondly, we are very concerned about price and acknowledge and recognise that people won't pay for electricity, if they can't afford it. But, more importantly, price plays a big role in making sure that all Australians get the energy they need.

In my electorate, there are many people who might own a home—they might have bought it many, many years ago—and it may have substantial value. They may be asset well-off—some people are asset well-off—but, increasingly, pensioners and those on fixed incomes are forced to live in smaller parts of their home during winter because they can't afford their electricity bills. We are mindful of this reality and are making sure policy reflects their needs.

Higher electricity prices always hit the less well-off the most and those who are on fixed incomes. It doesn't matter where you go in this great country, people are very mindful of their electricity bills and of the human consequences when bills go up. And that includes people, by the way, who sit in this House. It's no longer an issue that affects people simply based on their earning capacity or their income; electricity prices have become a hot topic across the nation, because people are facing real price pressure, and the Turnbull government is actually doing something about it.

Getting that organisation of policy focused on reliability first, price second and dealing with the environmental challenges so that people can have a reliable system and can afford their electricity means, not unsurprisingly, they care about the environmental consequences and are happy to work with the government and private investors to manage the change. But, if you don't have that, you're not going to be able to get it because people are rightly going to return and focus on making sure they have reliable and affordable power first.

This abolition of limited merits reviews sits as part of that framework, acknowledging that about $6.5 billion have been passed on to average Australians because of a bad policy framework that has led to contention around prices and that flow-on cost to consumers. This simple measure taken by the Turnbull government—let's be honest and acknowledge those opposite and those on the crossbenches who are prepared to stand up and support the government's efforts to reduce prices on households and thank them for it—to deal with some of these challenges is real. It doesn't sit in isolation. We know the major investment in Snowy Hydro to increase the potential is part of the package as well. Further measures will continue to be rolled out, and the intervention in the gas market is a direct consequence of what deals the previous government signed up to, knowing full well that there were going to be consequences for the domestic supply of gas and the price of gas. They are being tackled as well.

There will be further measures introduced over time to make sure that every lever that is available to the federal government—and many of them sit with the states—to make sure Australians can afford their electricity bills in the coming years in delivering reliable, affordable energy, while also dealing with some of the environmental consequences of energy production, will be addressed by this government. It is a position based on integrity and
understanding the nature of the problem rather than going off on grand idiotic and policy objectives set out by the more ideologically extreme parts of the opposition as we have seen in previous governments.

This doesn't mean that we don't recognise very directly the challenges that are faced across Australia. Recently, I had some lovely constituents come and see me who raised concerns they had, for instance, about the environmental effects of stationary energy—in particular, Dr Joan Corbert and Gillian King. They came along and presented me with a petition from constituents of the concerns they had. Their petition was principally signed out of St Peter's Church in Brighton in Were Street. It said:

This petition of concerned people of the electorate of Goldstein, draws to the attention of the House the severe and urgent threat that climate change poses to the health, well-being and security of all people around the world, particularly our poorest and most vulnerable neighbours.

The petition goes on to say:

We remind the House that Australia's greenhouse emissions are the highest per person among wealthy nations while our emissions reduction targets are among the weakest.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to protect communities in Australia and our region from the harmful impacts of climate change - such as more severe heat, extreme and unpredictable weather and rising seas - by:

- committing to deeper and more urgent reductions of our greenhouse emissions;
- developing a plan to ensure Australia achieves zero net greenhouse emissions well before 2050, and supporting families and communities affected by the transition towards renewable energy and more sustainable land use;
- providing additional assistance to help our poorest neighbours adapt to the harmful impacts of climate change.

This petition was signed by many people, and I will be providing it to parliament for consideration. When you sit down and talk to people like Gillian and Dr Corbet and have a mature dialogue about the important need to make sure we have reliable power, to protect the interests of the citizens that I have spoken about—particularly those on fixed incomes, or those less well off—they are mindful and aware of the situation. They are also mindful and aware of the fact you need a reliable and stable grid. So the measures in the Finkel Review are directly around making sure that there is battery storage for unreliable or inconsistent energy from renewable sources and play an important part in that discussion. That is what happens when you have a mature and sensible discussion around the consequences of reliable and affordable energy, while also making sure we minimise our environmental footprint: you can actually engage with people to take them on a journey and address the challenges that this country faces.

Unfortunately, that is not what we get from the opposition. Instead we get soundbites and ideological posturing by the Leader of the Opposition and many of his acolytes on the opposition benches. The consequences of the approach they take will only lead to higher prices and more unreliable energy. Increasingly there will be a diminishing in anything they are going to do around emission cuts, so you actually achieve nothing. That's why the Turnbull government approach is so rational and sensible and focuses directly on what we need to do as a nation to make sure that those who are concerned about the environment have their concerns addressed. It is making sure we don't have unnecessary and disproportionate
harm for those who can least afford the consequences of bad Labor policy. That is one of the
great challenges we face in driving energy policy forward.

There is a constant sovereign risk that sits over this policy in this country. It is called the
Australian Labor Party, in concert with the Marxist member for Melbourne. They see no
lesser opportunity to be able to nationalise parts of the electricity market. We heard that from
the Marxist member for Melbourne, only a few minutes ago, where he wanted to be able
nationalise parts of the grid, because he somehow has this delusion that if you just get
bureaucrats in a room, somehow they are always going to act in the best interests of the
people. The truth is, very clearly, we have seen across human history that that doesn't always
work and, in fact, it often has the complete reverse effect. And if you want to see that, just
look at the behaviour of the Queensland state government, where they have near complete
ownership of their energy generation assets, but it's not leading to massive cheaper prices. In
fact, the incentives are, perversely, in a different direction, and what they actually do is try to
find new ways to raise new revenue. By comparison, the great state of Victoria, which
privatised its assets many years ago and got a good price for them—and that was one of the
great achievements of the Kennett government—has consistently had much lower prices than
many other parts of the country, where it's been driven by public ownership. Drawing such
simple Marxist conclusions, as the member for Melbourne does, does a disservice to the
communities he is concerned about and does a disservice to the nation.

The other thing we need to be mindful of is to not just have a conversation with those
people who are concerned about the rises in greenhouse gas emissions—though we should be
mindful of that and we should work with them very successfully, which this policy is doing.
But it is actually addressing the real challenges that industry faces. One of the things about the
Goldstein electorate is that we are quite industry-light; there aren't many industrial parks;
there is one significant one around part of Sandringham, but as soon as you leave the
Goldstein electorate, in parts of Moorabbin and Braeside and Dandenong, there is more
industry. But although there isn't a large amount of industry, it is full of industrious people,
people who sacrifice, take risks and invest in the future, not just for their own gain but to
employ many Australians and provide the jobs that this nation seeks—the foundation of this
great country.

I was disturbed recently when one of the businesses came and spoke to me about the reality
they faced when coming up to renegotiate their power prices and bills. There are lots of
similar stories around this country. I'm not going to discount it by saying this is just isolated to
businesses based in the south-east of Melbourne. But I wish the member for Isaacs were here
because a lot of those businesses operate out of his electorate, even if they are owned or
operated by people within the Goldstein electorate. The consequences they face not only from
bad policy at a state level but also from previous federal governments not approaching energy
policy seriously are quite real. In fact, this small business—I won't mention who it is—is a
manufacturing company producing parts for things like vehicles. When the owners went to
market to ask what their energy prices are going to be on wholesale contracts, they saw a
dramatic increase over the next three years. The increase, estimated against all the competitive
scenarios for electricity prices, ranges from between 270 per cent all the way up to over 300
per cent.
When you see over many years the potential for a nearly 100 per cent increase year on year, the consequences for job creation, for employment, for people to continue to be able to operate their business in a way that delivers human outcomes for the owners and for the employees are very real. That's the situation that is being faced in the south-east of Melbourne right now. That is the situation being faced by many businesses that operate all across the country. We know the worst of it is being experienced by the great state of South Australia due to the legacy of many years of bad Labor governments, particularly their overinvestment in renewable power without any consideration or understanding of the consequences of the policy. It's true we need to provide an environment of market certainty. We need to get more businesses to invest capital, to take risks and to invest in the future building of this country. That is at the heart of what this Turnbull government policy is seeking to achieve.

There remains perpetually one big, fat risk in this country and it is called the prospect in the future of a Labor government. That is the risk. Every time any Australian wants to look at why their electricity prices are going up or why people say there is no investor certainty or confidence, it is because of the people who sit opposite. They will not get off their idiotic, ideological approach to energy policy. Particularly under their super shifty leader, Bill Shorten, they will sell out Australian households, Australian businesses and Australian jobs at any opportunity if they think they can appease voters, particularly in some electorates like that of the Marxist member for Melbourne.

It is time we as a nation grew up. It is time we as a nation realised the real energy challenges we face, and the only solutions are being provided on this side of the House by people like the member for Deakin, who is sitting at the table, like the member for Kooyong, Josh Frydenberg, and like the member for Wentworth, the Prime Minister. It is a measured, sensible, proportionate policy that is taking the country with us and is making sure we deliver the outcomes that this country needs. So, while mocking by those opposite may make them feel better at the moment, the legacy consequences will be felt by Australian households into the future. I'm proud to be part of this government because we are focusing on what we need to lower the household electricity prices that every Australian faces. We are making sure we provide the investor framework, opportunity and certainty to make sure we can not only increase supply to the market but also, more importantly, make sure we are mindful of the human consequences of bad policy decisions. We on this side are anchored in reality, we understand the market and we are making sure we deliver for every Australian.

**Mr CONROY** (Shortland) (18:59): I rise to speak on the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Abolition of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017. What a pathetic contribution from the member for Goldstein. It makes me yearn for the days of Andrew Robb; seriously, it does. I have some news for you, Sunshine: you have been in power for four years and you have done diddly squat. What is the sum total of the announcements of those opposite on energy policy? Study after study; hot air after hot air. I have news for you: the Snowy River announcement is a study, nothing more. You are not cutting rock; it's a study. On top of that, you have to sit down with some retailers; if you hit them over the head with a piece of wet lettuce, nothing changes. There have been four years of talk, but suddenly it's government by dictate.

Let's look at the facts: wholesale energy prices have doubled in the last four years, and that is flowing through to retail electricity prices. Why have wholesale energy prices doubled in...
the last four years? For two reasons. First, because there is a failure to invest in the next
generation of capacity in the market, the next electricity generation. Why aren't people
investing? Because there's massive uncertainty around energy and climate change policy
caused by this government's dillydallying and the ideological warfare within their own ranks
about what their climate change policy will be. This was the fatal flaw in the member for
Goldstein's contribution.

It's not about lower prices versus emissions policy. You can't lower prices until you have
clarity about emissions policy and you have a serious and credible pathway to reducing
emissions. The cost of uncertainty has been estimated by the Energy Council—the peak body
for all the generators in the country, not hippies and not mad greenies. This is Origin, AGL,
EnergyAustralia, Pacific Hydro, Snowy Hydro—all the big guys that produce the power this
country depends on. They've estimated that the cost of the uncertainty caused because the
government can't manage energy policy is equivalent to a $50 carbon price. That price hangs
around the necks of the minister for energy and the Prime Minister because they can't get the
dinosaurs in their party room to agree to a credible energy policy.

The second driver of electricity prices growing in this country is gas. Gas is the marginal
generator, so, if we see gas prices go up, we will see energy prices go up. This government
have done nothing for four years. Suddenly, they discovered a problem, called in the gas
companies and hit them over the wrist, but nothing has happened. Labor, on the other hand,
have had a policy around a national interest test for some time that will increase gas supply in
this country. All we get from this government is talk and review, not concrete action. There's
been one review that has made sense, the Finkel review, and they're whiffing the big
recommendation. The 49 other recommendations, like the ones that go to generator reliability
obligations and AEMO's role in planning, are really important and will make a contribution,
but they don't mean much without the central recommendation, which is about ending the
uncertainty about carbon pricing and climate change policy in this country—the Clean Energy
Target—and this government can't resolve it because they're fighting amongst themselves.

I'm convinced that Prime Minister Turnbull and the minister know where they need to go,
but they can't take their party room with them. We see the member for Hughes, the member
for Warringah and the member for Menzies driving this policy debate because they hold the
whip hand. We've got constant uncertainty that's impacting on generation right now. On top
of that, we've got more talk around the Snowy River scheme, an announcement that's already
blown up. The government promised that, if the study came forward with a recommendation,
it would be for a $2 billion investment. We had testimony from the department of energy in
estimates that it's actually going to be $4 billion, not $2 billion, so it's already doubled in cost
in six months, and the time lines have blown out from four years to seven years. So a study
came up with something decent to recommend and the time to implement has already blown
out from four years to seven years. It's no wonder this government can't manage a chook
raffle in a pub; they can't even manage to get a study right. What's the end result of all this?
My constituents suffer. With due respect to the member of Goldstein, I'm sure his electorate is
a lovely part of Melbourne, but it's very prosperous; it's very middle class. That's great, but
I've got the poorest town in all of New South Wales, Windale, in my electorate, and the
people of Windale suffer the most. Energy prices disproportionally hit working-class people
and pensioners. It's the people in my electorate who suffer the most. That's why urgent action is needed.

I will turn to the legislation, which is around the abolition of the limited merits review. We do need to look at how we treat the transmission and distribution networks in this country. It's undoubtedly true that gold-plating has occurred in the past, and the limited merits review needs to be looked at and abolished. But we've got deeper issues around the rules that govern investment by transmission and distribution companies—the networks, to use a shorthand term.

The rules disproportionately favour capital expenditure over operational expenditure. That's been demonstrated in testimony before the committee I'm deputy chair of, the House's Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy. The incentives are wrong. The incentives favour capital expenditure because it gives them a guaranteed rate of return that is practically risk free, whereas we can make real advancements around investment in operational expenditure using things like demand management to reduce the need for investment in new generation and new transmission infrastructure that will make a real impact in this country. But the rules aren't right for it, so that's why we need genuine review in this area. We do have to be careful in all this that it doesn't lead to policies that disproportionately impact the workers in that sector. We have to be very cognisant that things that tackle capital expenditure have real merit, but if we unintentionally affect operational expenditure that leads to cost cutting and reducing workers to below a safe ratio, that is of real concern. Investment in the transmission distribution network needs to be looked at with a hard eye.

If I can return to my main thesis that, if we're serious about tackling energy prices in this country, we need to solve the climate change and energy dilemma. We need to solve it. We need to put in place concrete policies that will drive the next wave of investment, because we need a new wave of investment. Our generation fleet in this country is very old. The average age of the power stations in Victoria is 44 years, and in my home state of New South Wales it's 35 years. This generation is old and needs to be replaced quite soon.

The Liddell Power Station in the Hunter Valley will close in 2022; Vales Point Power Station will reach its 50-year anniversary in 2028; Eraring Power Station—the biggest power station in the country, proudly on the shores of Lake Macquarie—is due to close, at the latest, in 2034; and Bayswater, up the Hunter Valley, in 2035. Fully a third of our coal fired power stations, which provide 9,000 megawatts of capacity—completely overshadowing the contribution Hazelwood was making in my region—are due to retire in the next 18 years.

The debate should not be whether we need to replace them—because we do need to replace that capacity—but what we replace it with. We can replace it with the most economical generation that also, quite fortunately, happens to be the least emissions intensive. We're actually in a happy position, if we get our policies right, where we can satisfy an environmental goal of decarbonising the energy sector and also get the cheapest possible generation. That's because the economics of the power sector have changed. They've changed over the last few years, and almost everyone recognises that except for the dinosaurs in the Liberal party room.

It is economic fact—and you just have to talk to the generators themselves or the energy analysts or Bloomberg New Energy Finance—and incontrovertible fact that renewable energy is now the cheapest source of new generation in the world, particularly in Australia. It's still
the cheapest source when you combine it with firming capacity, whether it's storage or gas-fired peakers. Even when combined with that additional investment, it is still cheaper than new coal-fired power. You can now get a wind farm with contracts being written for a levelised cost of energy at $55 a megawatt hour. Solar farms have been written for as cheaply as $75 to $80 a megawatt hour—and that's the unsubsidised cost of energy. ARENA has testified that you should add in about $20 a megawatt hour for storage to firm up that capacity. You can get new wind farms built in this country with matching storage or dispatchability for $75 a megawatt hour.

What will new coal cost? It will be $150 a megawatt hour. They're not my figures; they're the figures from the industry. Bloomberg New Energy Finance go out and talk to the financiers and say, 'How much will it cost you to build a new coal-fired power station in this country?' They're saying, '$150 a megawatt hour.'

Look at other more advanced technologies that, so far, aren't mature. For example, concentrated solar thermal, which is solar thermal that is purely dispatchable because it has storage with it. The South Australian government has written a contract for $78 a megawatt hour. It's unclear whether that's the true levelised cost of energy, but industry experts say it's not far off. If you're genuinely going use the concept of baseload and you're getting baseload solar for less than $100 a megawatt hour, coal can't compete with that at $150 a megawatt hour.

We need to have a fair dinkum debate in this country. We need to talk about what are the most economical sources of new generation in this country and we need to have an honest conversation with the Australian people. Those on the other side aren't having that conversation. The worst and most disrespectful thing you can do to workers is lie to them, and that is what the government is doing right now when it says, 'You don't have to change,' and that, somehow, the best way of getting cheaper electricity in this country is to build a new coal-fired power station in northern Queensland or in New South Wales. That is economic lunacy. That is not me talking as some sort of environmentalist; it is the market talking. The private sector is not interested in building a new coal-fired power station in this country, because it's not economical. The only reason anyone would even contemplate it would be if this government did something incredibly silly like provide billions of dollars of subsidies or indemnify against a carbon risk for 40 years—a whole list of economically irresponsible actions—to make coal competitive with renewable energy that can be made dispatchable.

What this debate should truly be about is what is the cheapest source of new power in this country. Happily, it is also the most environmentally responsible. I think it is a sad indictment of the modern Liberal Party that it is not embracing market mechanisms to decarbonise our economy and to get investment in this sector. That is what the clean energy target is, a market mechanism. It's not my preferred market mechanism. I would prefer an emissions intensity scheme or another form of emissions trading scheme because I believe, and I think most reputable economists would say, it's more economically efficient. But because the fossils in the Liberals' party room have stood over the Minister for the Environment and Energy and forced him to retreat within 12 hours—as we saw happen in December last year when the draft report of the Finkel review came down—we can't have an EIS and we have to go to a clean energy target. Nevertheless, it is a market mechanism that will help to decarbonise our
economy, which we need to do if we are to fulfil our Paris commitments and compete in the next industrial revolution, which will be around clean energy technologies.

But those on the other side just don't get it. They are really no longer the Liberal Party of Mr Menzies. They are truly the modern Democratic Labor Party. They are full of reactionaries who are completely suspicious of markets, who don't understand markets and who are opposed to markets. That is what they are. When they talk about massive new subsidies for coal, when they talk about using NAIF loans, they are about distorting the market. When they reject a carbon price, which internalises a negative environmental externality, which is what greenhouse gas emissions are, they are rejecting the market for Soviet-style command and control. That is truly what it is, and that is the great tragedy of the Liberal Party. It is no longer the Liberal Party; it is the DLP. BA Santamaria would be very proud of them; Bob Menzies would be ashamed of them.

That would be fine if this were an esoteric debate, but it's my constituents who suffer, it's the working class people of Windale who suffer and it's my energy workers at Vales Point Power Station and Eraring Power Station who suffer because of the false hope and the lack of reality that those on the opposite side peddle. That's why we need to have a rational debate in this parliament, but we're not getting it from the government. I am not the only one who is saying it. Every serious actor in the energy sector, if you talk to them, on or off the record, will say that this government is a disgrace and is failing the Australian people because it is chaotic and divided and those in it are interested only in looking after their own jobs.

**Mr CREWTHER** (Dunkley) (19:14): I rise today to speak on the Competition And Consumer Amendment (Abolition Of Limited Merits Review) Bill 2017. Power prices are excessively high, whether in my electorate of Dunkley in Victoria or elsewhere in Australia. The average person is suffering, particularly those who cannot afford to pay their power bills. It's one of the subjects that are most frequently raised by my constituents in Dunkley, and I know it's raised elsewhere across Australia. It is something that people expect us, the Turnbull Coalition government, to take action on. So the cost of living is a crucial focus of the coalition. It is a real issue that affects Australians every day. It is, indeed, crippling families, the elderly and businesses, particularly small businesses, who cannot afford to pay their bills, who are struggling to pay their bills or who are having reduced profit margins because of higher electricity prices. It is a focus of this government and has been an ongoing subject, particularly since late last year.

Electricity and gas are non-negotiable commodities and consumers have minimal bargaining power. They can be, for example, subject to monopoly rents. So we have a responsibility to do something to ensure that national regulators have real power and that Australians are not being ripped off. The extensive review and appeal system is racking up huge bills where costs are passed on to the consumer.

Let's look at this bill. This bill legislates to remove the ability of networks to appeal the merits of decisions of the Australian Energy Regulator. It also removes limited merits review. Currently, electricity and gas networks can appeal merits of decisions of the Australian Energy Regulator to the Australian Competition Tribunal. Indeed, 32 out of 51 Australian Energy Regulator decisions have been challenged since 2008. Never has an appeal by networks resulted in reduced costs for consumers and businesses. In fact, consumer bills have
increased by $6.5 billion and network costs have increased to 40 to 50 per cent of the overall household bill.

This bill is actually equaling the treatment of electricity and gas networks with telecommunications, water and postage services. Other sectors do not have access to merits review. With these changes providers will still have access to judicial review if they want to challenge the Australian Energy Regulator’s decisions, as with other sectors. Limited merits review was an appeal based on the merit of the decision whereas this is focusing more on the judicial grounds.

But this bill isn’t just removing the limited merits review; it’s also providing additional funding for the Australian Energy Regulator of $67.4 million. This ensures that they are fully equipped to address behaviour in the market that is resulting in higher than necessary electricity prices. It’s also a recommendation of the Finkel review. It is critical to consumer confidence in our electricity and gas markets. Recently I went to a business in Carrum Downs, which is just outside of my electorate. Pacific Urethanes employs a large number of people from my electorate. They’re an Australian owned company specialising in the development and production of polyurethane systems. (Quorum formed)

The opposition interrupted the speech because they want to continue playing games with our country. They don’t want to hear about the fact that we want to reduce electricity prices for Australian consumers. They don’t want to hear about companies in my electorate, like Pacific Urethanes, who are suffering in terms of their energy prices and who have reduced profits because of the electricity prices continuing to increase. This is why we are taking action and this is what I am talking about. It’s unfortunate that the opposition continues these games in this House.

As I was saying, Pacific Urethanes is an Australian-owned company specialising in the development and production of polyurethane systems for Australian and export markets. In my electorate in particular, there are 16,000 small businesses. The business that I'm talking about is one which employs a significant number of people in my electorate and contributes to those who are already employing from those small businesses in Dunkley. Last week, I met with a couple of the directors of Pacific Urethanes, Jim Hall and technical director Gerard Murray. They talked about the fact that they've had an increase in running costs due to an increase in energy prices, and an increase in the cost of doing business has therefore had a cost on jobs. This then directly impacts upon people's livelihoods. These are people who have been hit twice from poorly constructed energy policies: firstly, by the limited merits review, first implemented in 2008 under the former Labor government; and then by the failed reforms in 2013—not to mention the carbon tax in 2012. The big causes of price rises and decreased income reported to me by businesses in Dunkley arise from some of these policies.

The Turnbull government is working to support small business and to remove hurtful legislation which is damaging the cost of doing business in Australia and hurting our markets. The impact on businesses is significant. Not only do businesses have to deal with regulation, red tape and the cost of doing business; they have to deal with the regular increase of electricity prices, which feeds into their bottom line and their opportunity to create jobs and more outcomes in our community. It also feeds into the security of their investments not only in their business but in our wider community. And there are flow-on consequences, whether
it's for the local community organisations that they sponsor or for the sporting clubs and so forth.

I want to go now to some of the constituents in Dunkley. A gentleman called me up recently saying he couldn't afford to heat the house, so he only does so when his daughter comes to visit. A resident in Frankston signed up to an electricity and gas plan and contract that said they could expect a bill of $386.65 per quarter for a medium-sized family with 1,000 kilowatt hours per quarter. That excluded connection fees and pay-on-time discounts. Based on previous estimates, up to $193 of this constituent's quarterly bill could simply be network costs. Some providers don't let you choose the billing frequency, and this is a huge burden and cost to bear in one go if you have to pay a big bill up-front. Not only are consumers and residents in my electorate being hurt by electricity prices; they have had insult added to injury in that electricity and gas networks have two chances to appeal decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator.

Dunkley also has one of the largest retirement populations in Australia. I've had a number of the retirees and senior citizens of Dunkley come to me recently—for example, Brian of Seaford, Vera of Frankston, Duncan of Mount Eliza and Bill of Frankston South. They've all raised the issue of electricity prices and our energy policies with me. They also raised the fact that nearly everyone in their age group are raising energy and electricity prices as one of their key issues. So we do need to do something about this. It's not only an ethereal concept; the fact is heating in winter and cooling in summer are essential to the health of our elderly citizens. For example, they are much more sensitive to temperature changes than younger people.

In the wider Victorian context, power prices are already high. We have seen Hazelwood shut down at a time when we need energy security. Absolutely, we need to invest and increase our renewable energy sector but consumers are hurting from every angle. We need energy security at the same time as there is investment in renewable energy, and more than ever we need to act now. It is a critical time and we need to take action around power prices. We have seen the state Labor government in Victoria failing with the respect to their energy policies, not to mention their safety record. For example, the 2016 Safety performance report on Victorian electricity networks: 30 September 2016 highlighted a number of safety failures. For example, United Energy was one with a significant number of failures in their network, and action to correct this has not been properly taken by the Victorian state Labor government.

Why do we need this bill? We need this bill as previous attempts have shown us that reforms are not working, that the limited merits review regime needs to be completely abolished. I'm looking forward to bipartisan support to lessen the cost of living for all Australians—and I hope there'll be no more quorums or other things during this speech that will disrupt the details of the actions we are taking to help everyday Australians. It is inevitable that we must move towards renewable energy. Prices are currently high due to the cost of transition and the lack of energy security. Consumers cannot afford to be hit twice by the cost of their electricity and gas bills.

If this bill is not passed, we'll have further appeals of decisions by the Australian Energy Regulator, which will result in higher electricity and gas network revenues and higher prices for consumers. As I said earlier, not once has an appeal to the Australian Competition
Tribunal resulted in a reduction in costs for consumers. This bill removes the regulatory burden and provides greater regulatory certainty. It ensures the Australian Energy Regulator's decisions are respected whilst ensuring the right of access to judicial review. It removes the cost from consumers of $6.5 billion, including for residents in my electorate of Dunkley. Currently, consumers get to foot the bill for the electricity and gas networks' privilege of appealing the decisions of the Australian Energy Regulator. The Australian Energy Regulator is there for a reason and we need to make sure its decisions actually mean something and have outcomes that can be enforced and reinforced, and that benefit people in my electorate and across Australia.

To conclude, again I note that consumers in my electorate of Dunkley and elsewhere are being ripped off due to the right of electricity and gas suppliers to appeal decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator. Thirty-two out of 51 decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator have been appealed using the Australian Competition Tribunal, and not one has had a positive outcome for consumers. The Australian Competition Tribunal effectively has been a second regulator. Costs have been passed on to consumers, including in my electorate of Dunkley. The limited merits review process has resulted in increases to bills across the board of $6.5 billion. People everywhere are being hurt by the cost of energy, so we need to ensure that the Australian Energy Regulator can actually regulate the industry.

We have an obligation to the Australian people and I have an obligation to the constituents in Dunkley to make sure that their voices are heard. People are telling me they cannot afford this anymore, particularly the elderly residents of Dunkley. Prices are, in some cases, up to double the actual cost of electricity and gas due to network costs. It's the No. 1 issue that is coming across my desk in community surveys, through email campaigns, over the phone or in person. People in my electorate of Dunkley and across Australia expect me and the government to do something, and rightly so. People's health and household budgets are facing an impact because of the increases to electricity prices, and we must provide security for Australian families.

I know that those opposite recognise the need to act on this matter, but let's hope that they work to ensure positive results and lower electricity prices for consumers. I am proud to stand up for the Dunkley voices who have reached out to me and the Turnbull coalition government. The Turnbull coalition government are indeed listening and we will not let them down. We will act to ensure that Australian consumers have lower electricity prices into the future.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (19:30): I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Climate Change

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (19:30): I rise today to speak about climate change. Last week, I was presented with a petition by constituents of mine in the electorate of Hindmarsh: Susan Richardson, Dhar-mamodini Triratna and Scott de Lane. First of all, I'd like to thank this particular group for visiting me and getting in contact with my office regarding the urgent and deep issue of climate change. As some of you are likely to be aware, I have some of the most pristine beaches in Australia on the coastline of my electorate of Hindmarsh. My office
is located in the area of Glenelg Beach, a seaside destination of many overseas and interstate tourists.

I see myself as a custodian of this planet, as we all should. I'm not sure that the government shares this view, but I want to pass on an environment that is cleaner and better than when I arrived, and that should be the aim of all of us in this place. I couldn't imagine leaving a world to the next generation that is warmer, dirtier and deadlier than ever before. We need to only look at some of the weather extremes in our own country and around the world, where we see storms that are much bigger, floods that are more prevalent and bushfires that are more common. As a custodian of the planet and an elected federal member, I was reminded by my good constituents of a great quote highlighting that we need to act: 'Action on climate change will, or may, cost something, but it won't cost the earth.' Without action, that's where we're heading—where it will cost the earth.

I'm often surprised in the House. For example, I was absolutely surprised when I saw the Treasurer carry a lump of coal into the chamber. For me and millions of other Australians, it highlighted one thing, and that is that the government just doesn't get it. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has been silenced by the former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah, and a whole bunch of anti-climate-change colleagues. I call on some of the moderate members on the government side to speak up about this very important issue, because sitting on the backbench and doing nothing is not an option when it comes to climate change. I call on members opposite to challenge their party leadership and act. Make this a priority before it's too late. The economic loss from inaction will be insurmountable if we don't do something now. I see that young people in my electorate get it. Younger generations are trying to tell the parliament to act, but the government just isn't listening.

We need to invest more money into green job projects, just like the South Australian government is doing at the moment. We need to provide more money to local government for flood mitigation due to rising sea-levels. We need to help communities fund better fire protection for their local areas and their local communities. We also need to support our Pacific neighbours. They are facing climate change right now, so we shouldn't be cutting the budgets of agencies and organisations that are trying to come up with solutions—for example, our aid workers, our scientists and our NGOs working in this area.

The time for tolerance of climate deniers in this place, in this parliament, should be over. If the vast majority of Australians get it, we should get it in this place. For example, the Climate Institute says that 77 per cent of people believe climate change is occurring and 90 per cent believe the federal government has an absolute responsibility to act, so let's get on with it before it's too late. I worry about how future generations will look back at our generation. For example, I don't want my grandson or his kids and his grandkids to read this speech in the Hansard in the not-too-distant future only to say, 'Why didn't they do more?'

So let's act now. And, if the government doesn't want to act—if the government is still denying that there is climate change occurring and if it continues to tolerate the climate change deniers and other interest groups hijacking the Liberal Party—the people will act for you.

Labor is ready for the challenges of the future. We take climate change seriously and we are ready to act. It's not all doom and gloom. The next generation of green jobs that can be
exported overseas can be under a progressive, renewable energy policy. Yes, acting on climate change may cost something, but it won't cost the earth.

**Illegal Wildlife Trade**

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (19:35): I would like you to imagine a shady waterhole in Africa where groups of rhinos are drinking and resting after a day's penetrating heat. Imagine the horror of the rhinos when a poacher goes up behind a mother rhino, slices its ankles with a machete and then slashes its face off while still alive to take the rhino horn—and this can be with a young rhino nearby. I have actually seen videos of the aftermath of this, and it is truly shocking, distressing and disgusting. And now repeat this image over and over every day of the year.

As a result of aggressive poaching, one rhino dies every eight hours for its horns and there are now less than 27,000 rhinos left in the world. This animal has walked our planet for 40 million years but, unless urgent action is taken, it could be extinct within the next 10 years. I want to make it very clear that this problem is not caused by legal hunters; it is instead caused by the poachers, who are paid on average $A12,000 per rhino. So the incentives are huge. The poachers have a network of assistance to track down the rhinos. They can buy information from rangers who are employed to protect the animals, with the rangers receiving $2,000 to actually reveal their location to the poachers. The high value of the rhino horn means that even baby rhinos with very small horns are targeted and killed.

The problem is equally dire for elephants, which also face extinction due to the demand for ivory. One elephant dies every 15 minutes, which means that, just while parliament has been sitting today, nearly 40 more of these noble beasts have lost their lives purely for the value of their tusks. Some of the elephants are not shot but instead poisoned with cyanide, which results in a slow and excruciatingly painful death for the elephant and implications for the rest of the food chain that may come into contact with its carcass.

Australia is very definitely part of this problem, because a kilo of rhino horn sells here for up to $60,000 whilst ivory tusks sell for up to $8,000. Australians are importing ivory into Australia for personal use and we can still buy and sell ivory and rhino horn at auction houses et cetera. I congratulate Leonard Joel auction house for completely banning the sale of ivory and rhino horn in January this year. I believe that as a nation we need to completely close the markets for ivory and rhino horn. I congratulate the former minister, Greg Hunt, for introducing a ban on these products, so that products harvested after 1971 could not be introduced. But, alas, that has not been effective enough, because, in recent years, there have been 300 cases where elephant ivory has come into Australia and has been seized by officials. There are huge penalties for this—up to $250,000—but, sadly, there have been no prosecutions. It's the same for rhino horns. In recent years there have been 70 seizures and, again, there have been no prosecutions. The reason is that it is very difficult for Customs officers or law enforcement to carbon date ivory or rhino horn as being prior to 1975.

Domestic trade bans have already been enacted or will be enacted by China, the United States, France and India, and I believe that it is time for Australia to follow suit. African states, such as Zimbabwe, are now imposing very harsh penalties, with convicted poachers of rhino horn or elephant ivory in Zimbabwe routinely being sentenced to nine years jail. In recent years, at least 60 people have been convicted in that country alone. This illegal wildlife trade is the fourth most lucrative global crime after drugs, human trafficking and arms, and...
Australia is clearly part of the problem. All those people are bringing back what they think are knick-knacks into Australia—little items they may think would look nice on their mantelpiece—but, in actual fact, they've come from the death of a rhino or an elephant.

I would like to congratulate and thank Donalea Patman, the director of For the Love of Wildlife and Dr Lynn Johnson, the director of Breaking the Brand, who passed this information on to me. I am very keen to see a full ban in the same way the Turnbull government implemented a full ban of an importation of African lion hunt trophies and parts.

**Perth Electorate: Rosh Hashanah**

**Mr HAMMOND** (Perth) (19:40): In a couple of weeks, at sundown, on 20 September, the Jewish community in my electorate, and across the world, will celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It commences in the period of Yamim Noraim, or Days of Awe, in the lead up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is due this year at sundown, on 29 September. So I'm getting in early this year to wish Perth's Jewish community: shanah tovah, happy new year. I also take this opportunity to wish them very well for Yom Kippur: gmar hatima tova, and I wish you an easy fast.

On the border between my electorate and that of the honourable member for Stirling is Carmel School; Perth Hebrew Congregation; Maurice Zeffert aged care home; Kosher Meals on Wheels; the Dianella Shule; Temple David congregation; The Maccabean newspaper; and a host of other organisations and facilities that demonstrate the strength of spirit of the Jewish community in Perth.

I've only been the member for Perth for just over a year, but I have always been welcomed, unconditionally, with warm hearts wherever and whenever I have visited any of these Jewish community organisations. I'm sure the member for Stirling will forgive me when he sees me straying into his electorate for Jewish community events. I've even seen the member for Canning there every now and again, and certainly he'd forgive him. I saw him, quite a distance from his electorate, at the Yom Ha'atzmaut, the Israeli Independence Day, hosted by the State Zionist Council of Western Australia at the Jewish Centre in Yokine.

That holiday commemorates the declaration by Ben-Gurion of the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, a mere eight hours before the expiry of the British Mandate of Palestine. Like so many declarations of independence before it and since, conflict erupted almost immediately. Those first years of modern Israeli statehood were complicated. They were bloody, and for many across the world—particularly in the region—they remain controversial and contested. But the story doesn't start in 1948, nor does it start with the persecution and murder of European Jews in the 1930s or the Russian pogroms of the 19th century or even 1860, when Jews were allowed to live in Palestine, outside of Jerusalem's Old City walls.

The story begins with the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. And thence commences the millennia-long cycle of exile and restoration—the Philistines; Babylon; Persia; the Greeks; the Romans; Solomon's construction of the Temple, and its destruction, reconstruction and destruction again; Egypt (again); the Crusaders; the Saracens; Napoleon; and the British. Exiled, dispersed and fragmented, the Jews survived persecution, genocide, the Inquisition, pogroms, blood libel, the Holocaust.
It seems to me that, after all these thousands of years, the perseverance and tenacity of the people of Israel is what has kept them pulling together toward their goal, even when scattered across the globe. Israel today is the world's only Jewish state, surrounded by nations, some of whom fundamentally disagree with its right to exist. Amongst all of that, Israel remains a beacon of democracy and plurality in the Middle East. I had the pleasure of visiting Israel some time ago. What I heard there and what I saw there in the Holy Land was balanced and nuanced, but most of all it was incredibly complex. It is a nation, it seems to me, which remains acutely aware of the existential threats it faces on a day-to-day basis. But its citizens get on with their lives, with hope, optimism and perseverance.

The fact that the state of Israel exists is something that Perth's local Jewish community—really close to my home—can point to and say: 'Look! We now have what God promised to our forefathers long, long ago. After millennia of pain and persecution and suffering and exile, look at what we have now.' My message to my local Jewish community in Perth is this: there are many in this place who seek to understand what Israel means to you, who seek to acknowledge the longest story and the existential imperatives around these issues. Not only is my door always open but I will continue to come to you to support the strong community you have built. I know that I can say the same for your local state MLA, Simon Millman, and your local WA Labor senator, Glenn Sterle. I will end how I began: Shanah Tovah! I thank the House.

Local Government Elections: New South Wales

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (19:45): This coming Saturday, residents across many areas in Sydney will be voting in local government elections. I encourage local residents to ensure they participate in the elections of the four councils that have their homes in my electorate: Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, North Sydney and Willoughby. Voting is compulsory, but more importantly, it is the opportunity for residents to elect the councillors and mayors who will lead our local communities for the next four years. In Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill, the Liberal Party is supporting endorsed candidates. Lane Cove Council has been so ably led by Liberal mayor Deborah Hutchens, and the Liberal team on council has worked successfully to improve services and amenities in the municipality. In Hunter's Hill, the Liberal team is being led by Councillor Zac Miles. Councillor Miles brings both youthful energy and incredible experience, and I know he would make a fine mayor of one of Sydney's oldest municipalities.

The elections are occurring following what has been an extensive community debate about the shape of the councils in Sydney. I have always been opposed to forced council amalgamations. Councils serve as centres of our community, and their boundaries often reflect natural communities of interest. They provide democracy at a very local level. I therefore welcome the New South Wales government's decision not to proceed with further council amalgamations. In the lead-up to the council elections, I know there have been some who have been seeking to create mischief and to misrepresent the position of the New South Wales government. The fact is that the Berejiklian government has made clear that further forced amalgamations will not happen. It is a policy that is dead and buried, and possibly even cremated. Premier Berejiklian has made that clear as recently as Friday, when she said: 'There will be no more forced council amalgamations.'
The elections are very much focused on who will serve during the next term of our councils. Tonight, however, I want to spend a moment recording my appreciation to those councillors who are not recontesting. As a former North Sydney councillor, I understand the extraordinary commitment given by those who serve as councillors. The role is essentially voluntary, apart from a modest stipend. This is something many do not realise. Even mayors are not paid to work full-time. Yet good councillors effectively make themselves available seven days a week, assisting their constituents and attending the many meetings and community events that councillors are expected to participate in.

Across my four councils, 10 councillors are retiring. In Hunter's Hill, Richard Quinn, Meredith Sheil, Peter Astridge and Gary Bird are retiring. I pay tribute to their work on behalf of Hunter's Hill residents. I particularly want to acknowledge Richard Quinn, who retires as mayor. Councillor Quinn succeeded the legendary Sue Hoopman as mayor, and it has been a great pleasure to work closely with him through a range of community events and projects, from funding for sporting grounds through to the council's fight against amalgamations. Councillor Quinn has been a great advocate for Hunter's Hill and I wish him well for the future. In Lane Cove, two Liberal councillors are not seeking re-election: Soo-Tee Cheong and David Karpin. Both have been diligent councillors working to represent residents of their wards. They have contributed greatly to the success of council. In Willoughby, councillors John Hooper and Mandy Stevens are retiring. Councillor Hooper has been an active member of the Willoughby community for many years, and he has consistently worked to ensure the transparency and financial responsibility of council, and an improved planning system. Councillor Stevens has served on Willoughby City Council for an incredible 20 years, and is well known among the many communities she has supported. Her service was appropriately recognised by the New South Wales Local Government Association earlier this year, and I was honoured to be present at council for the presentation of her outstanding service award by the Mayor of Willoughby, Gail Giles-Gidney.

In North Sydney, Councillors Veronique Marchandeau and Virginia Bevan are concluding their terms. I had the pleasure of serving with both of them on council during a time when North Sydney councillors worked well together. Councillor Bevan was first elected in 2004 and she has been a forthright member of the council, never afraid to express her views or stand up for residents. She's gone through her own battle with breast cancer, and she turned adversity into action with her phenomenal effort to raise funds for the Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation.

Councillor Marchandeau has served on North Sydney Council for almost 20 years. It would be hard to find a councillor who has been more thorough and diligent in her work, both at council meetings or through the many committees of council on which she has served. I doubt, for example, any member of the traffic committee has her depth of experience. I wish all of the retiring councillors well and, on behalf of the broader community, I convey my appreciation for their service. They deserve our thanks.

**Australian Universities and China**

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (19:50): Australian campuses have become the front line in an ideological war with our great trading partner, China. Our universities will have to start reconciling their scholarly values with the political campaigning of their largest customer, China. Recently, President Xi Jinping started to try to return his country to the commanding
heights of Chinese education. He told teachers to educate and guide their students to love the motherland, love the people and love the Communist Party of China. Xi Jinping said:

Overseas Chinese have red-hot patriotic sentiment.

The Communist Party's war against liberal values in China and its growing international reach present Australia with a challenge we've not seen before. The challenge for the democratic world is that President Xi's deepening struggle against liberal values in China does not end at their borders. Most challenging for us is that Xi made it clear that his primary enemies are liberal values that undermine his own political system—that's the view of former adviser to Prime Minister Turnbull, John Garnaut, in this week's Financial Review.

How does it affect Australia? Garnaut's great insight is little understood by avaricious university bureaucrats who only want overseas fees from Beijing-approved students. Core institutions like the United Front Work Department are exporting this ideological battle around the world. As I quoted, President Xi said overseas Chinese have red-hot patriotic sentiment, and Beijing's ministry for education has issued new instructions to its councillors and diplomatic missions around the world:

Build a multidimensional contact network linking home and abroad—the motherland, embassies and consulates, overseas student groups, and a broad number of students.

As Garnaut argues—and the Lowy Institute has as well—there are great challenges in our Australian universities because of this. In recent months, we have seen denunciations of Australian university lecturers who have offended Beijing's patriotic sensibilities. A lecturer at the ANU was excoriated on Chinese language social media for insensitively displaying the warning: 'I will not tolerate students who cheat.' A lecturer at the University of Sydney was castigated for using an online map which, if you looked extremely closely, showed an Indian demarcation of the Himalayan border.

There can be no doubt of the pressure on universities to fill classrooms with full fee-paying students, generate private donations and rise up the research rankings. But, as Garnaut argues, to manage these risks, our universities will need to reach out to alienated students, fix the failures of integration and improve their products. They'll need a full spectrum of resilience strategies to shore up vulnerabilities and uphold the principles of open and critical inquiry upon which they are built. Most of all, they'll have to look at what the Beijing authorities are doing on their campuses, on our Australian campuses, and do a better job of hearing what they say.

Alex Joske, a student at the ANU, recently cemented what Mr Garnaut has said, saying that the Chinese Communist Party exploits this isolation of students that he met at the ANU. He said that dissenting students fear speaking out because of the further isolation they may face if their fellow Chinese students rule them persona non grata. It means they hardly come into contact with the ideas that underline the great democratic society of Australia. Some campus societies have a mentality that exacerbates the divide between students from the mainland and local students. It encourages them to consider anyone who deviates from the party line as the enemy.

Recently, we had a disgraceful national luxury car protest of Bentleys, Lamborghinis and Maseratis driving past an Indian Independence Day celebration with provocative slogans targeting Chinese patriotic sentiment, including the slogan: 'Anyone who threatens China will
be killed.' These kinds of sentiments are intolerable. We welcome overseas students to Australia. They've been on university campuses ever since I was at university—and that's a long time ago! We need to make sure that they can operate in freedom and that they are not overly arm-twisted by embassies or consulates.

We've also had the problem of donations—that was in the *Herald Sun*. When you overlay this with the purchase of nearly all of the Chinese language press in Australia and the funding of faux think-tanks, you can clearly see Beijing's wish to intervene in Australian foreign policy. This well-funded donation strategy, the campus strategy, shows a prolonged influence operation by Beijing. It's a distinct issue from how Australians should view Chinese investment by people and entities on the mainland in Australia. We should have a colour-blind attitude to Chinese investment. But we should have a separate and different debate on the various political influence operations in Australia.

**National Stroke Week**

**Mr ANDREWS** (Menzies) (19:55): I note to the House and those who are viewing or listening tonight that this is National Stroke Week. Every nine minutes, someone in Australia will suffer a stroke. That means that, in the course of this adjournment debate, which has gone for almost half an hour, three Australians, if not close to four, have suffered a stroke. By 2050, without further action, this number will increase to one stroke in every four minutes. In this year alone, Australians will suffer more than 56,000 strokes. Many of those will be experienced by people living in regional Australia. In fact, regional Australians are 19 per cent more likely to suffer a stroke than those living in metropolitan areas.

Advancements in stroke treatment and care mean that a stroke is no longer a death sentence for many. However, for more than 470,000 stroke survivors and their families living in our community, the impacts are far-reaching. Patient outcomes from stroke vary widely depending on where you live and your access to a stroke unit. If I can say, Mr Speaker, you and I personally have a former colleague in the previous member for Flinders, Peter Reith, who suffered a stroke. He's struggling with the outcome of that. He's just one of the former members of this place who have suffered this insidious condition and are now—and he and his family are—living with the outcome of it.

This week, the Stroke Foundation published a new document. If you'll allow me to breach standing orders for a moment, Mr Speaker, I will show it. The document *No postcode untouched: stroke in Australia 2017* demonstrates the impact of stroke on millions of lives in suburbs like ours and, indeed, in cities and villages right across the nation, and into the future. It highlights the increasing burden of stroke, particularly in regional and rural Australia. The challenge to our health system is very significant. I say this because, even though I now represent a suburban electorate, as you do, Mr Speaker, I grew up in rural-regional Australia. What this document shows is that the incidence of stroke and, therefore, I suspect, the ability of people in those areas to be able to avail themselves of appropriate medical treatment, care and preventive measures may well be different to those who live in the major urban areas of Australia.

This latest report provides analysis of statistics and estimations, by federal electorate, on the incidence of stroke, the number of stroke survivors living in the community and the leading risk factors for preventable stroke. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, atrial fibrillation—that's an irregular heartbeat—and physical inactivity. Using
population health and research data, the Stroke Foundation also estimated the number of new strokes in Australia over next 30 years.

I represent a middle-class, urban electorate in Melbourne. I was interested to delve into the document because, for five or six out of the risk factors, two of which were high cholesterol levels and physical inactivity, my electorate is in the top 15 electorates on the tables. For example, for high cholesterol, Menzies is at No. 14 out of the top 15 of the 150 electorates in Australia. The number of constituents with high cholesterol in my electorate is 39,598, representing 27.3 per cent of the electorate. That's a very high number of people. Then, for the top electorates in terms of physical inactivity—and I pride myself on physical activity, but, obviously, my constituents don't always follow my example!—12 out of the top 15 electorates in this regard were in Victoria. The number of people physically inactive in Menzies is 68,827, which represents 47.4 per cent of the electorate.

All I can say to my constituents is: I encourage you to get out and walk, run, cycle, swim—whatever—and check your cholesterol.

House adjourned at 20:00
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Brand Electorate: Schools

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (10:30): I rise today to recognise the outstanding commitment to education shown by the many teaching and support staff in schools in my electorate and to say just a few words about them. On Friday just gone, I was invited to speak at the inaugural Warnbro cell excellence in education awards, held at the Mary Davies Library and Community Centre, in Baldivis. These awards recognise the outstanding contributions made by both teaching and support staff in the network of the Warnbro cell schools. Local primary schools, education support centres and a high school comprise this cell of schools, which is responsible for educating hundreds of young people in my electorate.

I’d like to mention one of the special guests at the awards, Jodie Schicker, the 2016 WA Premier's Primary School Teacher of the Year. During the non-sitting weeks, I had the pleasure of being a guest in one of Ms Schicker's science classes. She is an inspiration in the classroom. She is a passionate local teacher. Ms Schicker is the head of science at Bungaree Primary School, in Rockingham, and she's committed to engaging children in science, tech, engineering and maths subjects through innovative teaching methods.

Like Ms Schicker, the school staff recognised in the excellence in education awards are also making outstanding contributions to education. The awards took a comprehensive look at the staff and schools responsible for ensuring that our schools are places of educational excellence for pupils: teachers, education assistants, gardeners, library officers, cleaners, school officers and corporate service managers—the list is long. Without the contributions and dedication of the whole school community, a quality education will not be possible. All those who received an award on Friday were chosen by their colleagues, and this makes their awards even more special. There's nothing like peer recognition.

The Warnbro cell of schools comprises Rockingham Lakes Primary School, Peel Language Development School, Warnbro Community High School, Warnbro Community High School Education Support Centre, Endeavour Primary School, Endeavour Education Support Centre, Koorana Primary School, Warnbro Primary School and Port Kennedy Primary School. I'd like to congratulate all award winners on their passion for excellence in education and congratulate those who organised the awards. We know that a good education opens up a world of possibilities and opportunities for children. A good education, it has been said, is the passport to the future. Thanks to the good work of the school staff, the future of the children of Warnbro is bright and full of potential. Educators work hard and do an important job, and it was fantastic to see just some of these dedicated people being recognised for all their work. Again I congratulate all award recipients. Thanks to those who put on this great event, and I look forward to going to the second Warnbro cell awards next year.
Ullin, Mr Claude, AM

Higgins Community Service Awards

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (10:33): I rise to pay tribute to the former Mayor of the City of Stonnington, Claude Ullin AM, who, sadly, passed away this month. Claude served as a councillor in our local area for more than 25 years, including four times as mayor. Claude's hard work and dedication have truly enriched our community. His strength of character, sense of humour and commitment to our local area were immeasurable. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to his adult children, Sophie, Nicholas and Emmie-Lou, and their families.

Claude was a deserving recipient in the 2017 Queen's Birthday honours, appointed a Member of the Order of Australia—a timely and well-deserved acknowledgement of his vast contribution. It was an absolute privilege to work alongside Claude. His achievements at this year's Higgins Community Service Awards were a much-overdue reminder of his significant contribution.

It was also a privilege to say thank you to many of our other wonderful local volunteers on that awards night. The Higgins Community Service Awards enable community groups, clubs or other organisations that engage volunteers in Higgins to nominate a recipient who is worthy of recognition. Around 300 people attended this year's awards night alongside the guest of honour, the Governor of Victoria, Linda Dessau.

Volunteers play a vital role across the country, with more than six million people volunteering in some capacity in Australia. Volunteers perform a range of important work each and every day, from emergency services and sports to environmental conservation to helping in our local schools. Thank you to each and every volunteer in Higgins who generously gives their time and energy for the benefit of others. We truly appreciate your contribution.

I would particularly like to acknowledge this year's recipients. Congratulations to Beth Ashwood, Joe Battista, Anne Bishop, Ray Blythe, Joanna Brownell, Noel Buckley, Katharine Burroughs, Kylie Da Fonte, Ken Davis, Maria Demaio, Cushla DeMuth, Margaret Dynan, Barbara Dick, Sandra Dorse, Peter Duncan, Michael Feeney, Barry Fenton, Rod Fielden, Nick Foster, Rita Gelman, Periklis Giannopoulos, Nik Hadaway, Dot Haskin, Bella Horton, Caleb Hounihan, Robert Jackson, Graeme Kenny, Silvana Kerrin, Vivienne Kilfoyle, Herman Koppens, Jim Lewis, Ga Lin, Matthew Linden, Phil McCabe, Sam McKay, Tim McQueen, Francy Ordenes, Marie Plozza, Udo Polzin, Stuart Redman, Alice Ritchie, Shane Rogerson, Lorraine Sage, Anne Short, Emma Sigley, Ray Sneddon, Margaret Snyder, Peter Stacey, Lisa Steven, Glenys Stevens, Mardi Swann, Vincent Tan, Lyndel Walker, Sally Wallis, Robert Wetherall and Siew Wilson. All of you have enriched the Higgins community. We thank you for your incredible service, and we honour all of the volunteers who make our lives better.

Local Council Elections: New South Wales

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (10:36): I rise to talk about the local government elections occurring in my home region this weekend, particularly those for the Central Coast Council and the city of Newcastle. I want to draw the attention of the House to two key issues that voters should be concerned about: firstly, the ongoing problem of illegal donations from
prohibited donors, which has tainted our region over the last few years, and candidates running as so-called Independents who are in fact a front for the Liberal Party.

On the Central Coast, conservatives are in disarray. There was a damaging preselection process that saw controversial councillor Doug Eaton unable to win Liberal Party endorsement in two wards, and he is now running as an Independent. And one of his close colleagues and mates, Greg Best, is running in the Budgewoi ward. These men do not represent the interests of the local community, and it would not be in the interests of my constituents if they were to be elected.

The people of the city of Newcastle are being offered the opportunity to vote for a new group called the Newcastle Independents. I want to state on the record that this group is not independent at all. Its candidates are closely aligned with the Liberal Party and the disgraced former mayor Jeff McCloy, who was forced to resign after appearing twice before ICAC because of his illegal donations to the Liberal Party. One of the leading candidates for the so-called Independents is John Church, who was the Liberal candidate for Shortland in the 2013 election. These so-called Independents have been referred to the New South Wales Electoral Commission for allegedly receiving in-kind donations from Mr McCloy, who was a prohibited donor. Indeed, Mr McCloy has acknowledged that he provided office space for the group to meet and discuss tactics for the election. In recent years, both the Central Coast and Newcastle have not been well served by these so-called Independents, who are too scared to run under the Liberal banner because it is such a toxic brand in the Hunter and Central Coast after their ICAC appearances.

Some people may say that a federal representative should not be intervening in local council elections. I disagree entirely with this view. It is my job as a federal member to work with all levels of government, and I want to be working with the honest representatives of local communities.

The ratepayers of the Central Coast and Newcastle deserve decent and trustworthy representatives of their local communities who are very clear about who they represent. If the people in Newcastle and the Central Coast want to elect Liberal councillors, that is fine; that is their democratic right. And I say good luck to them. But let those candidates proudly say that they represent the Liberal Party. They take money from people associated with the Liberal Party. They take resources from people associated with the Liberal Party. Many of them are former candidates from the Liberal Party, and many have resigned from the Liberal Party as recently as last month. Let's be honest about this. Let them be proud of their political orientation and run under those banners. The people of my region deserve nothing less than that honesty.

Steel Industry

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:39): Sometimes I'm asked why I'm in parliament and asked: 'What do you achieve?' Last Friday was a graphic example of what can be done when people work together, and that is the handover of the Arrium assets to Liberty House—GFG Alliance—and one Sanjeev Gupta, a British citizen.

So in Whyalla we had a wonderful day last Friday. We gathered in Wilson Park for some speeches and some loud cheering from the crowd, I must say. Then we marched the two kilometres or more to Ada Ryan Gardens, where we had basically a union rally. Let me say
that the unions have much to be proud of over their cooperation in making sure that the Whyalla steelworks survive. They have much to celebrate, and I was very pleased to celebrate with them.

I first met Sanjeev Gupta back in November last year on his first visit to Australia to cast his eye over the Whyalla assets or the Arrium assets in general. I was very impressed—very impressed indeed. He's a very focused gentleman. He really knows what he wants, and I think he knows how to go about getting it. He has a great track record in reviving broken-down, disused steel plants. I think he brings all that expertise to Whyalla. He intends to invest $1.3 billion in the near term, and he's also looking at the possibility of expanding Whyalla to a new plant and a four- or five-million-tonnes-a-year plant. Mr Gupta plans to invest in cogeneration—we already have co-generation at the plant, but it's aged and could be much more efficient—eventually virtually taking it off the grid, and in rail-head-hardening facilities. There are a wide range of things that he will be investing in.

One of the most important things is that the blast furnace has a place label of about 1.3 to 1.4 million tonnes a year. It's been running at about 900,000 or 950,000, which is enough to supply the Australian market. But he's going to turn it right up. We're going to get the maximum out of it. Mr Gupta is going to take the extra steel in billet form back to Scotland, where he has presses to turn it into flat steel. He said it may even come back to Australia then. At the moment, Mr Gupta is buying that steel from Russia. He said it makes sense for him to take it from Australia. He has a very good long-term investment plan.

I'm very pleased that we had good state and federal cooperation on this and very pleased with my role in bringing the federal government on board, I must say. Over $130 million has been invested by the federal government already. I led an inquiry in the last parliament into circumvention of antidumping rulings. We've seen some very good action out of the Anti-Dumping Commissioner.

I'd like to thank Greg Hunt, Scott Morrison, Arthur Sinodinos and, most importantly, the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, who, from the very moment he stood in Whyalla and announced the buy of the Tarcoola railway line, knew what had to be done. I thank him for that support.

**Broadband**

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (10:42): The residents of Melbourne Ports and its businesses, big and small, were promised access to the NBN by the end of 2016 by the Turnbull government. Now that we are in the latter half of 2017, my constituents, as well as millions of others around the country, are still waiting for the government to deliver on that broken promise.

At the end of December 2016, when NBN access was promised by this government, of 70,000 homes in Melbourne Ports, only 17,355 had access. That left 75 per cent of our residents with no access—hardly a success story. In fact, according to the NBN's own website, many in my electorate will have quite a wait. Elwood, which is the suburb I live in, which has more than 10,000 people, has to wait until 2019. I don't know whether that's a particular punishment or not. Many in St Kilda and Balaclava have to wait until 2018, and many in Port Melbourne and Southbank have to wait until 2019 as well. Some in these areas have access, but they're a minority, and it's usually newer buildings where the wiring has been
included with the premises that have just been built. My office receives complaints about poor performance and about people being forced outside the NBN all the time. Last night, Annabel Crabb in a tweet said:

When people complained about the NBN, I used to think privately "Surely it can't be that bad." I hereby apologise to those people.

It seems she's having the same experience as people in my electorate—that's for sure.

This government commenced the National Broadband Network. It was to bring our communications ability into this century with fibre to the home. The government ensured its poor performance by only delivering fibre to the node, a technology reliant on old, deteriorating copper that is unreliable or less reliable and slower than fibre. The residents of Melbourne Ports don't live in a node; they live in homes and apartments, and they expected something better, especially from people who talk about innovation.

After breaking the promise to deliver the NBN by the end of 2016—instead the government would deliver it by 2020—the Prime Minister's promised to pass 2.6 million hybrid fibre-coaxial premises by the end of 2016. He's only achieved 160,000. That is seven per cent of his target. He is Mr Seven Per Cent.

Delivery of the NBN to Melbourne Ports has been extremely unsatisfactory. Many people in our wider economy, particularly in my electorate, who are the very people who need fast broadband network, haven't got it.

Banks Electorate

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (10:45): On 30 August, I met with the St George Creative Art and Craft Centre to meet the group's new president, Maria Kokkoris, and treasurer, Debbie Bourke. It was great to meet them and talk about the activities of the St George Creative Art and Craft Centre in Penshurst. The centre has been at that location since the seventies. It is a great meeting place for local artists, and particularly for kids in our region to learn artistic skills: painting, sculpting, needlework, drawing and a range of other things. Every year, the St George Creative Art and Craft Centre holds two major exhibitions, which are always very well attended and a highlight of the calendar in our community. I'd like to congratulate Maria and Debbie and the new executive committee of the St George Creative Art and Craft Centre on all of their efforts at the centre, and I look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

I also attended recently Bankstown Art Society, on 23 August. I had a great visit, which was organised by the secretary, Joyce Williams, and met with a drawing class which was being given by Richard Porter. Bankstown Art Society has been around since 1958, and currently has over 200 members who come together to learn about art. There are lots of different classes and also a number of very successful exhibitions each year. Bankstown Art Society has over the years held many successful classes for kids, some of whom go back to the Art Society as teachers later on in life. Thank you to Bankstown Art Society for everything you do in our community.

On 29 August, I visited Panania Public School to speak with the kids from years 5 and 6 about government—they've got an upcoming visit to Parliament House. Unfortunately, I won't be here on that day, but I wanted to go along and have a chat with them about what they're learning and about our representative democracy. I'd like to thank their teachers,
Rebecca Walker and Trisha Ambrose, who organised the day, and the kids for their fantastic questions. I'm sure you'd know, Deputy Speaker Buchholz, that year 5 and 6 kids, as they learn about democracy, often come up with some very interesting and challenging questions. We had a really good discussion at the school. Panania Public School is one of the larger primary schools in my electorate, with over 460 kids, and is very ably led by its principal, Sandra Palmer. It was great to visit the school, as it always is, and I look forward to continuing to work with it in the future.

**Geelong**

**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (10:48): Geelong is a pretty resilient place. It's a city that has faced its fair share of challenges over the last decade. When I was first elected, 10 years ago, we knew that we had a Labor government that had our back. That Labor government established funding for the Epworth, delivering better health outcomes for Geelong and the regions. It delivered the Geelong Ring Road. It established the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, which generated businesses and jobs throughout Geelong. It supported local science with a $3 million commitment to the Geelong Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases. Labor secured the NDIS headquarters for Geelong, delivered a $37 million funding boost for Deakin University's carbon fibre research centre as part of a full 50 per cent in the growth of Deakin during the term of that Labor government and created the Northern Community Hub, with Diversitat, to help the northern suburbs, which had been hit hardest by the closure of Ford and Alcoa.

Labor has always believed in Geelong, and we match our belief with investment in the city and its people. Bill Shorten visited Geelong and Torquay last Friday and met with leaders of our city to understand what we're on about and what we need in order to thrive going forward. Bill Shorten and Labor understand just how critical federal government support can be to ensuring that Geelong prospers.

Sadly, the end of the Labor government signalled an end to any support for Geelong. It signalled an end to big thinking and an end to projects that helped our city grow. We need to see Simonds Stadium finished. We need a convention centre in the heart of our city to unleash our booming tourism and dining industries. We need to bring manufacturing jobs back to Geelong by investing and planning for the future of re-industrialised and connected northern suburbs so that we can re-skill and grow our local economy. Bill Shorten's visit last week is just the beginning. I can tell you, a future Labor government will deliver for Geelong.

We have seen the current government move from being neglectful of our town to attacking it. We learn today from the *Geelong Advertiser*, our nation's paper of record, that the Deputy Prime Minister last Thursday said:

This facility at Berrimah will help replace some of the work we're currently doing in Geelong …

So we're moving jobs and work from Melbourne to Darwin, that's a good outcome for the North.

That is a remarkable statement. It is the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia crowing about the fact that his government has facilitated the removal of jobs from Geelong. If the decentralisation of government is to mean anything, the government should actually be trying to facilitate the movement of jobs to Geelong, but we have a Deputy Prime Minister who is crowing about the fact that his government has taken jobs from our city. He's got form on this.
He also conflated Geelong with Melbourne. This is a government that does not care about Geelong, and it needs to be removed.

**St John's College, Woodlawn**

Bellman-Sharpe, Mr Liam

Mr Hogan (Page) (10:51): I would like to congratulate the First 13 from St John's College, Woodlawn, from Lismore, which recently won the prestigious 2017 GIO Trophy. To be a contender for the GIO Trophy, the Woodlawn team had first to win the Country Rugby League cup in which they played schools from country areas and then their city school rivals. In the GIO Trophy final, Woodlawn's First 13 defeated Patrician Brothers, Fairfield, 36-26. The win means that Woodlawn has the best open schoolboy rugby league team in NSW, excluding Sydney's 16 elite sport schools.

With every good team there are good coaches and trainers behind the scenes. I would like to acknowledge the coach, Simon Andrews; the trainers, Bernie McDonald, Nic Jones and Peter Jeffery; and the sports coordinator, Brian Battese. There are some pretty handy ex-players in that lot, too.

Coach Simon Andrews said it was an amazing match, with the entire team playing exceptionally well after a slow start that left the team down 10 points to nil within the first six minutes. But the Woodlawn First 13 showed grim determination to fight their way back with some terrific team work and a few individual standout performances. Dane Pratt's excellent running from dummy half, attacking play and goal kicking saw him receive the man of the match award. Kel Sheather was exceptional in attack and very physical in defence. The Kennedy twins, Aidan and Lachlan, were pillars of strength in the middle, while Justin Bleakley and Jordan Sly added a touch of class on the left edge. Well done to all the boys. You've made your school and our community proud. The team consisted of Jake Petty, Guy Wolton, Jordan Sly, Jordan Lee, Ethan Mumford, Matthew Buttenshaw, Kel Sheather, Jess Gibson, Dane Pratt, Aidan Kennedy, Matt Doyle, Justin Bleakley, Matt Bentley, Angus Spencer, James Durheim, Lachlan Kennedy, Liam Bleakley, Jack Doulgas-Brown, Jared Roder and Mitch Brown. Great effort, boys. Well done.

There is no doubt about the depth of artistic talent in my community, and you need look no further than 25-year-old Lismore local Liam Bellman-Sharpe for evidence of that. Liam has just been accepted into the master of fine arts program at the prestigious Ivy League university Yale University in the United States. What makes this even more amazing is that, out of an international pool of applicants, Liam was the only student selected from outside of the United States. Liam completed his HSC at Trinity Catholic College in Lismore, where he was schooled by some of the best music teachers on the North Coast. During this time, Liam also learnt from Northern Rivers Conservatorium teacher Jeremy White. The musical gene runs in Liam's family. His mother, Anita Bellman, is the Director of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium, and a proud mum she is. Well done and good luck, Liam.

**Lyons Electorate**

Newitt, Miss Phoenix

Mr Brian Mitchell (Lyons) (10:54): A lot has happened in my electorate of Lyons over the past week, some of it good and some of it bad. First I would like to offer my formal thanks to Triabunna District School students Declan Draper and Jayden Silver, along with
their mate Dan, whose quick thinking last Tuesday saved 85-year-old Jim McCrary from an uncertain end. The boys had been on the town's wharf when they saw Mr McCrary's car drive off the wharf and into the water. Mr McCrary had been attempting a U-turn but had hit the accelerator instead of the brake. Declan and Jayden hopped into a dinghy and headed out to the half-submerged vehicle. Dan, meanwhile, got onto the roof of the car and put a rope around Mr McCrary, and then the boys pulled him onto the boat.

It turns out that Declan, who's 15, is an old hand at rescue. He previously received a bravery award for saving someone from drowning at Lake Leake, further up the east coast and also in my electorate. The boys and Mr McCrary caught up the next morning for a photo and to see the car being winched out of the water. It was a lovely photo by Tasmania Police and captured the spirit of the youth of Tasmania alongside a member of the older generation. I'm sure I speak for all here when I say thank you to Declan, Jayden and Dan, who are handy boys to have around, and wish Mr McCrary all the best. We look forward to his next visit to Triabunna being a little bit warmer and a little bit drier.

Now we come to a less happy story. I won't say too much as the issue is before the courts, but I would like to express in this place my sadness, my regret and my anger at a shooting that took place in Deloraine which injured 11-year-old Phoenix Newitt. The prayers and thoughts of all Tasmanians are with Phoenix as she recovers in the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, where she is being treated after having suffered injuries to her face, neck, skull and heart. I am pleased to be able to report to the House that Phoenix emerged from her five-day coma early yesterday morning and immediately asked for her mother, Sarah, who is with her. I am led to understand that Phoenix may suffer some hearing loss, but fears of brain injury and loss of balance have receded.

But the fact is that Phoenix is an 11-year-old child who was grievously wounded due to no fault of her own and due to the actions of an adult who made a decision to discharge a weapon in her vicinity. These are facts not in dispute. Phoenix had been sitting in the back seat of a car with her four-year-old cousin while her mother and uncle were in the front seat. A 25-year-old man has been charged, so I won't say more about the alleged circumstances, but I do look forward to justice taking its course.

After being shot, Phoenix was initially taken to the Deloraine Medical Centre and then Launceston General Hospital, but it was decided her best hopes lay with specialists in Melbourne. I would like to thank all emergency services personnel and police for the magnificent efforts they have made for her ongoing care. Phoenix, we wish you all the best and we look forward to seeing you home soon.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): On behalf of the House, could you pass on our appreciation to Declan, Jayden and Dan for their great contribution.

Workplace Relations

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (10:58): There was an interesting gem of information today courtesy of Courier-Mail reporter Renee Viellaris in relation to Sunday penalty rates and entitled 'Weekend penalty rates of Bunnings, KFC and Coles Liquor workers slashed'. The report illuminates a shameful situation that sacrifices casual workers—young folk who are working their guts out, often just starting out in the workforce and doing their darnedest to make things work on not a lot of coin. The story reveals deals struck by the Australian
Workers' Union—and I acknowledge the influence of the Leader of the Opposition on that union and vice versa—with the now defunct Masters, Coles Liquor Group, KFC and Bunnings. These gave weekday workers a marginal pay rise at the expense of weekend workers. The Masters agreement cut the Sunday hourly rate by more than $5 an hour, from $38.88 to $33.27. The Coles agreement cut the Sunday rate by $7.09. KFC cut it by $7.99 and Bunnings by $1.55.

According to Renee's piece, Labor insiders say unions are willing to do this—to sacrifice the rates of casual weekend workers—because those workers are less likely to join a union. That to me is a compelling demonstration of wrongness and the conflict of interests that exists between the Labor Party and the unions. We have heard often other evidence of this conflict here in this House, but, reading the story, I had another epiphany. Here between the lines of Renee's story was the Labor Party's policy on workers and the businesses that employ them: support business by backing them to slash the pay of those that devote their time to business success; cut company overheads by cutting workers' pay. I'm not going to mention the history of kickbacks, but that seems the most dumbed-down, simplistic and mean-spirited path to choose. There are many roads that lead to business success and longevity as well as to worker satisfaction and prosperity.

I'm proud that the coalition government does not cut corners, that it does not engage in these underhanded negotiations and that it is building a secure and prosperous future. Our strategy is not to rob from workers to pay business; instead, we are cutting taxes on small business so they can grow and employ more Australians. We are growing the economy and generating jobs. More than 239,000 jobs have been created in the last 12 months alone. By contrast, Labor doesn't believe in growing the economy. The opposition leader and his union mates are showing nothing short of hypocrisy when it comes to penalty rates. He has been betraying workers for years—doing deals and trading away penalty rates at the expense of workers—and it's shameful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Aged Care

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (11:01): I move:

(1) acknowledges the significant contribution of the previous Labor Government's Living Longer Living Better reforms that were designed to deliver:
(a) more support and care at home;
(b) additional home and residential care places;
(c) a focus on greater consumer choice and control; and
(d) greater recognition of diversity and support to carers;
(2) notes:
(a) the growing number of:
(i) older Australians who would like to remain living in their own home for as long as possible;
carers who work hard to ensure their loved one is able to remain at home for as long as possible;

(b) that older Australians need adequate, flexible and responsive care options to ensure that they remain safe and healthy; and

(c) that many older Australians are experiencing long delays in accessing the necessary care they need, and are having to make do with lower levels of care than they were assessed for; and

3 calls on the Government to:

(a) ensure that older Australians receive home care assistance when they need it and at a level they need in order to allow them to remain living in their own home safely and independently for as long as possible; and

(b) release the number of people waiting for each level of the package.

As I've already raised in this place and as we've heard on multiple occasions, constituents of mine and others around the country are waiting up to 12 months and more for home-care packages. These are elderly people that require assistance to remain in their homes. When I visit many people in my electorate of Hindmarsh or when they come to see me in Adelaide's west, I hear directly from people waiting for packages for their loved ones or for themselves in order to be able to stay at home and receive the care that they require. I hear complaints from constituents and their families about waiting periods for these packages.

As my electorate has one of the oldest constituencies in the country, I've made this an absolute priority issue for me. The uncertainty around this clearly isn't good enough. This is all about priorities. It's about prioritising, as governments, what is important to the nation. I certainly feel that, for people who have worked all their lives and who have paid their taxes—some have fought in wars—this is an absolute priority for us to ensure that those people live out the remainder of their lives with dignity. Unfortunately, due to this government's lack of action in allocating more packages, some of these people are waiting far too long to access a package. I'm often asked, by people who have been waiting, 'How do we get action on this?'

After countless letters, speeches in this place and media awareness about the government's shortcomings from this side of the House, the elderly and their families are coming to the same conclusion—that the only way to get this fixed is under a Labor government.

We on this side are still waiting to hear from this government about how many people, according to the government, are waiting for packages across the country. If the government doesn't have those lists and if it doesn't know how many people are waiting for packages, how can it plan and prepare for the future or know what is around the corner in terms of care that's required for these elderly people? We saw the date for the announcement of how many people are waiting for packages pushed forward to August at one stage, and here we are now in September, still without any figures. So we need the minister and the government to come out with these figures; otherwise people are just going to assume that they're hiding something.

The hardest thing for aged-care advocates to swallow is that this is a crisis that has been wholly manufactured by the government. If adequate resources were made available to the sector, the problem wouldn't exist. Despite protests from this side of the chamber, the waiting list keeps on getting longer, we suspect. Consumers are not able to tell how long their wait will be or where they are in a queue. It is really important to know exactly where you stand in the queue and how long you're going to be waiting for, to make adequate adjustments and arrangements. It's unacceptable that many older Australians are being forced to wait many...
months to access any support after they have been approved for care. This is why, as the member for Hindmarsh, I will not stop fighting for my constituents, as well as for others around the country. The pressure will remain on this government to improve the allocation of packages and reduce those waiting times for people who have been waiting for ages to get the care that's required.

Through this motion, I want to highlight that a growing number of older Australians would like to remain in their homes. We know that they wish to remain in their homes. A growing number of carers work hard to ensure that their loved ones are able to remain in their homes for as long as possible. We know that that is the best outcome for someone. We also know that carers need adequate, flexible and responsive care options to ensure that they remain safe and healthy in a good environment.

We need to highlight, also, that many Australians are experiencing long delays—far too long—in accessing the necessary care they need, and are having to make do with lower levels of care. We know that people who have been listed for level 4 packages are receiving, perhaps, level 2 packages and being told there are no level 4 packages for them. The level 2 package is a start, but it's not good enough if they require level 4 packages. I call on the government to ensure that older Australians are receiving home care assistance when they need it, and in an adequate and timely manner that ensures their dignity and allows them to remain safely independent for as long as possible. We know that, when people have the care that's required, they can stay in their own environment, which gives them a better lifestyle and ensures they're closer to their community. I call on the government to do these things.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): I thank the honourable member for his contribution. Is there a seconder for the motion?

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

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (11:07): I thank the member for Hindmarsh for proposing this motion and for giving us the opportunity to debate this very important policy area. I don't doubt that the intentions behind the last government's reforms were good. I know that members on both sides of the House have earnestly sought solutions to the growing challenge of an ageing population. However, the approach behind that policy—that is, the policy of the previous government, the Labor government—was flawed and failed to reflect the real change in the lifestyles and expectations of contemporary Australians.

Australians retiring now have worked to create the information age, and they've come to expect products and services that are tailored to them as individuals. They expect to make their own decisions about their aged care, just as they have made their own choices about the services they receive throughout their adult lives. The coalition government listened to older Australians, respected those expectations, and has responded with policies to increase choice. The government created increased choice in home care reforms, which allows older Australians to direct funding to the aged-care provider of their choice. We've ensured that a person's home care package moves with them, and allows users to change providers if they are unhappy. We developed the My Aged Care online portal to provide a real marketplace, where providers advertise and consumers can find the providers that they're looking for.

However, I know that the rollout of this policy has not been without challenges. I know that in my own electorate of Fisher there are individuals who are waiting too long to get
access to the packages that they need. I'm actively engaged in pursuing the cases of 10 constituents who've contacted me to ask for my help. One of these, Mrs Julie Penlington, has done a great deal in our local community to highlight the importance of this issue and to help others to come forward and get in touch with me. I take this opportunity to thank Julie for her determined efforts in this area. To the constituents and their families who've contacted me, I assure you I am working closely with the government and doing all I can to assist you. I've asked the minister here in the House about their cases and I've met with the minister on several occasions. I thank the minister for the time that he has made to meet with me and to follow up on behalf of those constituents.

I recognise that the minister is working hard to bed down a new system in a challenging fiscal environment. I understand that ACAT assessment waiting times are unusually long in my home state of Queensland. The assessments are conducted by Queensland Health, and unfortunately it appears that in this policy area, as in so many others, the Queensland state Labor government are dragging their feet. There are challenges with ACAT assessments across the country, but it should come as no surprise to anyone that, faced with an obligation shared by all state and territory governments, the Queensland state Labor government perform particularly poorly in this respect. It is unfortunately the case in aged-care-package assessment, just as it is in infrastructure, job creation, tackling high energy prices and so much more. Once again: for my constituents suffering the consequences of the Labor state government's failures in this area, please know that the federal Minister for Aged Care is actively discussing this problem with the Queensland health minister, Cameron Dick, and trying to find ways to improve the situation.

I want to take this opportunity to pass on, again, to my constituents in Fisher two important facts to bear in mind. I want to reassure my constituents that, if their condition worsens and they are hospitalised while awaiting assessment, in hospital they can be assessed within 24 to 48 hours. Secondly, I want to reiterate that while awaiting the delivery of their packages, if offered, people should accept the offer of a lesser interim package to help them during this transition period. These smaller packages are there to help, and accepting them will not extend the time an individual has to wait for their higher-needs package in any way.

There are undoubtedly challenges to overcome in the execution of the government's new aged-care policy—a policy on which this government is spending in excess of $90 billion over the forward estimates. But, whenever a government seeks to introduce a radical reform and to update a universal system, there will always be a number of teething issues.

Ms Ryan (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:12): I, too, would acknowledge the member for Hindmarsh's putting forward of this motion today and the important debate that we're having. And I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Fisher, a government member, today. But I would take note of a few things that were included in the member for Fisher's contribution. One of those was the notion that this is a question of the states slowing down this system.

We all know that aged care, or looking after our seniors and our elderly, is critically important. It's a test of who we are as a society: how we create policies that will support people. When Labor was in government, the Living Longer Living Better reforms were designed to deliver choice. They were designed to deliver packages that would allow people to stay independently in their homes for longer. There are lots of reasons for that, not least of
which is the dignity, of course, of all of our seniors and about them having control of their lives and independence. That was a critical element.

But another critical element around this policy area is that we know that if people are supported appropriately at home then there will be less time spent in hospitals. That's important for the individuals because, of course, hospital stays can be traumatic. I know from speaking to constituents and family friends that a hospital stay can leave some of our elderly citizens disoriented on their return to home. It can be quite disruptive and can put them back in terms of the way they live their lives. So it was really important that we came up with a model that would support people in staying at home. Most importantly, the member for Fisher referenced constrained fiscal environments. Well, these are preventative measures that were designed specifically to make sure people had dignity but also created less cost on the health system in terms of people spending time in hospital. That was a really important issue.

The system works so that the assessments are done by the states. But what we have seen is that this government, since February, has refused to release the data around how long people are waiting after that assessment has been done. That is the critical point here. People are getting their assessments done, and then they are being told, 'We don't know how long you will be waiting to access your aged-care package,' particularly the level 3 and level 4, which of course are the higher end of the higher end packages. That is the issue here today. We can't live in this policy void where we don't know what those waiting lists are, and we certainly can't have elderly citizens and their families and carers in this space of uncertainty for elongated times. What we know from our electorates is that those times are, it seems, getting longer and longer.

In my electorate this weekend, on social media last night, a call went out from some concerned locals about an elderly person who is looking to be released from hospital after some very serious events. The family desperately want this person to come home, and a call has gone out in the community to raise funds to support that person going home. I know that, in my office today, somebody could well be, by now, responding to the families by trying to look at this case and sort out what the options are and where we're going. We just heard from the member for Fisher that he has 10 such people in his electorate who he is talking to the minister about.

This is not the way to run a system. We were promised in July that these figures would be released. We were promised in August that these figures would be released. It is now September, and it is past time that we were given access and transparency around this data so that we can get a good look at how this system is working. If it is the case that it needs to be rejigged then it will need to be rejigged. But, in that process, I cannot stand here and accept notions that we can't afford to look after people properly, and I certainly can't listen to those arguments when we know that these preventative measures are a cost-saving measure on top of creating dignity for older Australians and allowing them independence and a way to control all of their lives and stay at home longer.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (11:17): I rise today with great pleasure to speak on this private member's motion, particularly considering I spent a lot of my childhood in an aged-care facility, having been brought up in one in the little town of Chinchilla, the Illoura aged-care facility. The people who ran that—Col and Daph Taylor—gave more than 25 years of service to the community in establishing and running the Illoura aged-care facility. So I come
with some authority, having spent a lot of my time, when my mum and dad were away, staying in that facility and being brought up by Col and Daph Taylor and seeing what important institutions aged-care facilities are in regional and remote areas—particularly those parts that I represent—because a lot of people in rural and regional Australia don't want to move away from their family and friends. They want to be able to have the dignity and respect of being able to spend their twilight years in their home towns, where they have friends and family close to them.

So these types of institutions are quite important, but it's also important to provide choice to those people living in rural and remote as well as metropolitan areas, to allow them to make that dignified choice about whether they want to stay at home as long as they can. That is what we are trying to do. The legislation and the investment that we are making as a federal government into aged care are providing that dignity and respect to those in their twilight years, giving them the opportunity to stay at home and to stay in regional and rural communities. It is important. It's not just a social aspect that we're providing to these people in rural and regional areas as they get into their twilight years; it's also a significant industry and an economic driver within the economies of these small communities. So there is a two-pronged benefit to the rural and regional areas.

Only in February, the government announced the Increasing Choice in Home Care reforms. An important piece of that was that we are giving consumers the choice, not the providers. That's the important thing: we are empowering those that need to make the decision, not empowering those providers to make more money at the expense of the Australian taxpayer and those people that need to make that choice. That's a proud investment that this federal government has made, and it's hitting the ground—60,000 packages since February. That's 1,000 or 2,000 per week that we are rolling out, providing flexibility and allowing those elderly people to make the choice of whether, if they want to move, they can transfer with that package to another state. That's an important initiative. As our societies become more fluid and as our families move around the nation, it's important that we're able to give those elderly people the opportunity to do that.

But we've coupled that with a pragmatic approach around short-term restorative care. Around 475 places were announced in the last budget to ensure that those who are elderly, and particularly those who have been hit by illness or injury, are able to have the flexibility to stay in their own homes and not enter long-term aged-care facilities. That's an important measure to allow people to, again, have that choice. We're continuing to work to provide that flexibility, whether it be in metropolitan Australia or in rural and regional Australia.

Through the ACAR investment that we've made, in my electorate in the last couple of months we were able to announce 40 new beds in Warwick—20 were general, eight were set aside for disadvantaged older Australians, those disadvantaged Australians having trouble affording this type of care, and eight were set aside for dementia patients. As the son of a mother who has dementia and is coming to the pointy end, I am quite proudly able to say that the good people of Chinchilla will look after her at the Illoura aged-care facility. I know that the investment that we've made means that those high-care places will, importantly, be there to give her the dignity and respect that she deserves as she sees this insidious disease affect her significantly. But we've also gone into the smaller communities. In Killarney we have provided eight new beds, four of which are for those disadvantaged people in rural and
regional Australia. Their lives will be changed because of the investment we're making in rural and regional Australia. Allora received 25 new beds—five for general access, 10 for rural and remote Australians, and 10 for disadvantaged Australians. That shows a considerate government that cares about its elderly and cares about giving them the dignity and respect they deserve after years of contribution to this nation. It gives people not only the opportunity but the choice to move forward and enjoy the end of their long and illustrious lives.

I commend the member for Hindmarsh for bringing this motion before the chamber. It gives us an opportunity as a federal government to proudly state what we have achieved for elderly Australians and also for regional and remote Australia.

**Ms LAMB** (Longman) (11:22): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue and I commend the member for Hindmarsh for moving this motion. I'm incredibly proud to stand in the House and represent the people of my electorate, many of whom are transitioning from their homes into aged care and many of whom want to stay in their homes as long as they possibly can. But even more proudly do I stand in this House as a member of the Labor Party. I'm really proud of our history of reforms to make life better for people who helped build this country as they move out of their working lives into retirement and beyond. You can't deny the great work performed by Labor in crafting and delivering the Living Longer Living Better aged-care reforms. These reforms were driven by choice and independence, giving people those two really important parts of decision-making in their lives. They were landmark reforms which delivered the largest improvements to aged care and ageing policy in a generation. These policies delivered more support and care in the home. They delivered additional home and residential care places and they delivered greater recognition of diversity and support for carers as well as our seniors.

It's becoming more and more common for older Australians to want to remain living in their own homes—and who could blame them? There's a sense of comfort when you live in your own home. The effects of ageing can be quite stressful, let alone when you throw in a huge change like having to move from your home into an aged-care facility or retirement village. When you put that into the mix, it can be quite a stressful time. But I have to say that, unfortunately—and, more so, disappointingly—the government has failed to keep up with the increasing demand for in-home care, support and assistance for our older Australians. Despite the fact that aged-care services need to be timely and accessible, many of our seniors are experiencing long delays in accessing the services they need. Every day, through an email, through a phone call or through somebody walking into my office, I hear the frustration not just from seniors in our community but from their loved ones. They raise with me their anxiety about being able to have access to these services. Nobody should have to wait for care that they require. Nobody should have to miss out on the level of care that they need or that their health professionals have designated that they need.

Our seniors need and deserve to have a government that advocates for them to receive the in-home care assistance that they need, when they need it and at the level they need it. What we're finding is bureaucracy and political spin that's unacceptable. The question for this government really is: how many people are waiting? We talk about the number of packages that are delivered, and that is absolutely welcomed. But how many people are waiting? I'm a little perplexed why we can't find this data from the government. How many people are waiting? If we look at people anywhere from Burpengary to Bribie, how many people are
waiting for their package to be delivered? And what anxiety are they and their carers feeling as a result?

The other point I would like to raise is that, when we're talking about seniors, it is also those people in their fifties who are starting to think about retirement and moving into those retirement years. It is this government's intent to raise the pension age to 70. Could you imagine a bricklayer having to work until they're 70 years old? Outrageous! If you work in the Queensland sun and you're laying bricks for an occupation, that's a pretty hard job. Over 22 per cent of people who live in Longman are over 60 years of age. That's higher than the national figure. That's higher than Queensland's figure. I don't think it's right that these people should be ignored by our government. I don't think it's right that people, whether they live in Morayfield, Woodford or Caboolture, aren't receiving the care they need. They're constantly worried about what sort of package they can get and how long they have to wait. They're living longer and living better with dignity in a community. They continue to contribute to that community—that is incredibly important. They deserve the very, very best.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (11:27): I thank the member for Hindmarsh for putting this motion up for debate, and all those who have contributed to it. It should be a matter of broad consensus that older Australians have the right to expect safe, secure, high-quality aged-care services, wherever those services are delivered—at home or in a residential facility. For quite a long time now, we've been talking in Australia about the future challenges of our ageing population. But when you speak with people who are directly involved in aged care they always press the point that that is not a prospective phenomenon, it is the reality here and now.

As a local member, I'm mindful of the changing composition of my own electorate. In the last 10 years, the percentage of people aged over 60 has continued to grow and now totals 18 per cent of the population—nearly one in five residents. Of course, it varies across my community. The proportion of residents over the age of 60 in suburbs like North Fremantle and Samson, for example, is 29 per cent. In Coogee, it's 26 per cent.

In 2016 there were 3.7 million people, or 15 per cent of all Australians, aged 65 and over. It's three times the number in 1976, which at the time was nine per cent of our population. We know that the number and proportion of older Australians is projected to keep growing. By 2056 it's estimated that it will be 22 per cent, or 8.7 million Australians. While it's wonderful that Australia's public health and safety measures are enabling people to live and stay active longer, we do need to adjust our economy and our social compact to meet those changes.

In May, I had the privilege of opening the new Hillerest centre, by Regis, in North Fremantle. It's a beautiful facility that's won awards for its sensitive reuse of a precious heritage building. Previously, I attended a sod turning for a Regis facility under construction by the sea in the suburb of Coogee. I'm glad that additional residential capacity is being developed in this way, but I'm conscious of the need for a wide range of residential options and for better services for those who want to remain in their home as long as possible.

One of the challenges in my community is the provision of culturally appropriate aged care. Italian Village and Villa Dalmacia are examples of care facilities that ensure residents from southern European backgrounds can be supported in an environment that makes them feel at home. These centres have only been made possible with considerable leadership and funding support from the local community, which I applaud. I've also enjoyed visiting the
Jean Willis Centre, in Hamilton Hill, which, in addition to its work supporting social inclusion and interaction for seniors in general, has a specific focus on cultural engagement with older Indigenous Australians.

Last week, the member for Port Adelaide was in Fremantle to launch his new book, *Climate Wars*, but it was as a result of his former ministerial role that he produced *Advanced Australia: The Politics of Ageing*. That book examines the ideas and analysis that underpinned Labor’s push towards a fairer and more flexible aged-care program through the Living Longer Living Better reforms. Those reforms included the provision of tailored care packages to people receiving home care; new funding for dementia care; $1.2 billion to improve the aged-care workforce, through a workforce compact and a workforce supplement; and a two-thirds increase to the number of home-care packages, from 60,000 to 100,000 such packages. By contrast, the Abbott-Turnbull government has removed $2 billion from aged-care funding at a time when client-to-carer ratios and specific high-care conditions like dementia are increasing.

Shortly after the election last year, I was grateful to meet with United Voice aged-care workplace delegates to hear some of their stories of a system under stress. I heard stories of carers being so rushed by high client-to-carer ratios that there was no time to help people wash their hair properly and of aged-care staff having to pitch in their own money to buy basic toiletries or linen. Needless to say, that shouldn’t happen. The United Voice submission to the 2016 legislated review opens with a quote from a care worker, who says:

“I am proud & honoured to help others … I am proud of the level & quality of care we provide to the community. Skilled & committed workers are needed in this industry, it’s not work if you love what you do. We have to remember that our aged-care workforce is itself getting older and includes a majority of women. As with so many vocational sectors with high levels of female participation, there is no doubt that the incredible commitment of aged-care staff is too often taken for granted and too often used consciously or unconsciously to hold down wages and conditions. That’s wrong. Like childhood education, aged care is a labour of love. The very young and the very old represent special and vulnerable groups in our community. Caring for them starts with caring for the people who work in those sectors.”

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz):** The time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made for the next sitting day.

**Cystic Fibrosis**

**Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (11:32):** I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Cystic Fibrosis is a condition that causes impairment of the lungs, airways and digestive system and leaves sufferers with an average life expectancy of 37 years;

(b) over 3,000 Australians live with Cystic Fibrosis and every four days an Australian child is born with the condition;

(c) over one million Australians are carriers of the gene that causes Cystic Fibrosis;
(d) there is currently an application before the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule Advisory Committee (PBSAC) for the drug known as Orkambi which is used to treat the most common mutation of Cystic Fibrosis; and

(e) if approved, Orkambi will be available to over 1,000 Australians aged 12 and over who are currently suffering from this life shortening condition; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) continue to support research into Cystic Fibrosis and its possible cure; and

(b) expedite the PBSAC review of the application to have Orkambi listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme so that over 1,000 Australians can have access to a potentially lifesaving drug.

I rise today to speak about a disease that affects over 3,000 Australian men, women and children: cystic fibrosis. Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening disease for which there is no cure, and it is the most common life-threatening disorder among Caucasians across the world. Over one million Australians carry the gene that causes cystic fibrosis. When a person is diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, they experience a life of frequent hospital stays and ongoing physiotherapy. This is a disease that affects young people: the average life span of patients is just 37 years. Cystic fibrosis causes glands to secrete large amounts of mucus, which obstructs the lungs. Bacteria then get trapped in the lungs, leading to repeated infections and blockages and causing irreversible lung damage. Lung transplants are a treatment measure, but they are not the cure. Cystic fibrosis exists in communities across Australia.

I want to share with you the story of a nine-year-old girl living in my electorate. Her name is Ellis. This week she has been in hospital, being treated for cystic fibrosis and related respiratory infections. Earlier this year, I was contacted by Ellis's grandfather, pleading for help for his granddaughter. Ellis has to undertake an hour and a half of physiotherapy every day and must take enzyme capsules with everything she eats. She takes antibiotics every day and spends around four weeks per year in the Adelaide Women's and Children's Hospital.

The drug known as Orkambi is a new treatment that is proven to improve lung function. Clinical trials have shown a reduction in lung damage by at least 40 per cent more than normal in sufferers of cystic fibrosis. It reduces incidents of chest infections and hospital stays. It treats symptoms of the disease and tackles the disease itself.

For a sufferer of cystic fibrosis, this drug can literally change their life. When I initially lodged this motion, the application to have Orkambi listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme was still being assessed. On Friday 18 August the PBS advisory committee handed down its recommendation that this treatment not be added to the PBS. I am not necessarily here today to criticise the PBS advisory committee. I believe that the correct and proper oversight for which medicines are subsidised by the Commonwealth government is fundamental to our country's health system. However, it is my understanding that the efficacy and safety of Orkambi have long been established and that the primary reason for the rejection of the latest application was due to the cost of the drug being too high.

I have read various media reports that place the blame at the foot of the manufacturer and others that place the blame on the government. We should not play the blame game with children across the country while they continue to battle this terrible disease and while we can do something meaningful to assist that suffering—and we can do it quite quickly. Orkambi has recently been approved in Canada for children aged between six and 11 years, and it has also been approved in the United States for children aged 12 and over. Patients in Ireland,
France, Germany, Greece and Italy all have access to the drug. I am hopeful that Australia will eventually join these countries in allowing patients affordable access to the drug, but I am frustrated that it is taking so long.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the federal Minister for Health in supporting the process that saw the drug known as Kalydeco being included on the PBS earlier this year. Like Orkambi, Kalydeco is a lifesaving drug for young children suffering from cystic fibrosis. At that time, Minister Hunt was quoted as saying:

… we've been able to deliver the right outcome with Kalydeco, and I am very hopeful that given time, … that we can make real progress on Orkambi.

I would encourage the minister to reflect on these words and on the lives of children like Ellis. Cystic fibrosis sufferers in Australia are calling for the minister to intervene and to begin negotiations with the pharmaceutical manufacturer, and today I lend my support to that call. I will continue to advocate on behalf of families across my electorate and across the country who live with this disease, and I urge our federal government to keep these children and young people at the forefront of their thoughts when making decisions so that a thousand Australians can have affordable access to this lifesaving medication. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Dick: I second the motion.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (11:37): In recent days, a little six-year-old girl from Mackay called Maddie said, 'Mummy, when I grow up I want to have 100,000 baby girls.' Now, that's an innocent remark—the aspiration of a child—but painful for her mother to hear, because Maddie has cystic fibrosis. Maddie may not be able to fall pregnant and, depending on the conditions of her lungs at the time, she may not be able to carry a child. The sad reality is that Maddie may not live long enough even to have a family of her own.

The guarantee undertaken by Maddie's parents, Gary and Penne Kaddatz, to keep their daughter healthy and functioning is one that we can scarcely comprehend. Another Mackay family, the Brazils, have a 12-year-old daughter, Ashlin, who battles the same debilitating genetic disorder. It affects the lungs and the digestive and reproductive systems. The Brazils have been through a very rough couple of months. Ashlin contracted an infection that significantly reduced her lung function and she spent a month in hospital.

For both of these families, the possible listing of the drug treatment Orkambi on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme represents a hope that they are too scared to believe in because it represents the possibility of relief from the daily battle and ongoing pain they endure to keep their girls alive and well. I rise today to give a voice to these two mothers—Penne Kaddatz and Michelle Brazil—and to their families to explain their struggles so that others can understand how important it is for them to be able to access an effective medication.

Six-year-old Maddie's daily treatment consists of the following, when she is healthy: 20-minute nebuliser sessions, morning and night, with different medications to loosen mucus; Ventolin twice daily to prevent irritation and inflammation; and vibration vest sessions for 20 minutes a day. She must take enzymes, probiotics, vitamins and salt replacement tablets, and have extra fat added to every meal because maintaining a healthy weight is a constant battle. Every day, Maddie's parents weigh her to see if she is on track. Every cough or sniff they hear...
from Maddie makes them fear that there might be a lung infection. Every cough from another person makes them want to run a mile to protect their child. They live with what seems to be a ticking time bomb which leaves them in a constant state of fear and panic. They are grateful that their daughter has fared well so far with the condition that she has, but the progressive reality of living with cystic fibrosis is that every infection leaves their child weakened, and sufferers have a life expectancy of 37 years.

They need only to look to the experience of their good friends, the Brazils, to see what life might be like for Maddie in a few years. Ashlin has experienced her worst year to date with cystic fibrosis. Recently, instead of enjoying school holidays, she spent a month in hospital in Mackay and then had to go down to Brisbane battling the condition. Ashlin undertakes airway clearance treatments for up to two hours every single day, and she takes 40 pills just to keep her system functioning. Think of it—40 different pills every day. Despite all she goes through, her mother, Michelle, said her daughter faces every day with pluck and resilience. She said, of children with cystic fibrosis: ‘They laugh louder. They hug harder. They play longer. They fight more than they should ever have to.’ Both parents hope for the day that a cure is found for cystic fibrosis. Until then, though, they must battle every day against infections which could leave their children with significant and irreversible lung damage. Most deaths from cystic fibrosis are from lung complications or lung failure.

If it were listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the drug Orkambi would be made available to 1,000 Australians aged 12 and over, and Ashlin is one of them. It has the potential to reduce the amount of medication she needs to take, and it could slow the deterioration of her lungs, which I am sad to say is already occurring. Maddie is too young to be included right now, but it would provide her parents with hope for the future. Even at her young age, her parents can see lung deterioration on the CT scans that they get for their daughter. It can improve the quality and quantity of the lives of these young girls. It could make the difference between life and death.

The current state of play is that the independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has asked for more information or further evidence of the effectiveness of Orkambi. I hope the company concerned can fulfil any and every requirement that the advisory committee has as soon as possible, because this government has a solid record of funding all drugs recommended by that body, and I call for parties involved to expedite the review. (Time expired)

Mr DICK (Oxley) (11:42): I rise to support the member for Mayo and, importantly, the need to continue research into cystic fibrosis and its possible cure. Cystic fibrosis affects thousands of Australians every day, and currently there is no cure. The average life expectancy of someone living with cystic fibrosis is just 37 years. It is a debilitating condition that affects many parts of the body, including the lungs, liver, pancreas, reproductive organs and sweat glands. A person born with cystic fibrosis undergoes constant medical treatment and physiotherapy for their entire life. Management and treatment of cystic fibrosis is lifelong, ongoing and relentless. A person with cystic fibrosis may consume up to 40 capsules daily to help digest food, and they may need to do up to three hours of airway clearance each day.

In Australia, one in 2,500 babies are born with cystic fibrosis—that is one every four days. It is the most common life-threatening, regressive, genetic condition affecting Australian
children. On average, one in 25 people carry the cystic fibrosis gene—most of whom are unaware they are carriers, with no symptoms apparent. Unfortunately, cases of cystic fibrosis are on the rise, with a 45 per cent increase of cases in Queenslanders over the past decade. In my own electorate of Oxley, there are currently 100 people who live every day with cystic fibrosis.

Unfortunately, figures revealed by the National Health and Medical Research Council showed that funding of research for cystic fibrosis is on the decline: from a peak of $4.6 million in 2014 down to just $2.4 million last year. We must do more to combat this growing disease. Today, I call on the health minister to increase funding so that research can continue, as it must. It is unacceptable that, whilst the rate of Australians living with cystic fibrosis continues to rise, the level of funding into research to find a cure is on the decline. We must ensure we are at least matching the pace at which cystic fibrosis is growing with funding to see that a cure is found.

As the member for Mayo outlined in her speech a short time ago, there is something else that we can do to help the thousands of people living with cystic fibrosis. Many sufferers and families have been calling for the drug Orkambi to be placed on the PBS. This is used to treat the most common mutation of cystic fibrosis and, if approved, Orkambi would be available to over 1,000 Australians aged 12 and over who are currently suffering from this life-shortening, cruel condition. It will principally treat those who are homozygous and have two copies of the mutation in the CFTR gene. This is the most common mutation in people with cystic fibrosis, with around half of cystic fibrosis patients in Australia being homozygous. The Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration observed in 2016 that patients who are homozygous 'have a high unmet medical need and none of the currently approved treatments for this population treat the underlying cause of cystic fibrosis'.

Orkambi aims to treat the underlying cause in these patients by increasing the amount and function of the defective CFTR protein. However, despite three attempts, most recently on 18 August this year, Orkambi is yet to receive approval and be placed on the PBS, due largely to the exorbitant asking price of the manufacturer and pharmaceutical company, Vertex. I note that the Labor shadow minister for health and member for Ballarat has already stated how extremely frustrating this is. Indeed, Labor have been encouraging the government to undertake work with the manufacturer to increase the likelihood of a positive PBAC recommendation and wrote to the government offering our full support on this. Even the chair of the PBAC, Professor Andrew Wilson, conceded this month that large drug companies are not coming to the table with fair offers to begin with. Earlier reports have suggested that the company is seeking nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars to list Orkambi on the PBS for around 1,000 patients. The fact is that, without listing on the PBS, Orkambi will cost sufferers $250,000 a year, or more than $20,000 a month, to access, putting it out of the reach of most of the sickest Australians. We must do all we can to assist people suffering from cystic fibrosis, but this does not mean succumbing to the outlandish demands of multinational drug companies with billion-dollar revenues. I call on the company and the government to continue negotiations and find a resolution as quickly as possible. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (11:47): This is an important debate which throws into the spotlight exactly how the PBAC system works. Cystic fibrosis obviously is the most common life-limiting autosomal recessive disease, certainly for those of European heritage. For a long
time there has been very little help available apart from supportive care. One hundred years ago, it was almost certainly a life sentence in the first few years of life, and now, thanks to medical advances, we have life-lengthening treatments like the ones we are debating today. We have a very proud PBAC system, which the rest of the world looks at with envy. We were the first developed economy to put a cost-benefit calculation on every new drug, comparing it explicitly not only to the nearest comparator but also to the dollar benefit achieved for each investment of the PBAC. This is a very broad but utterly fair intersectoral way of comparing new pharmaceuticals and their entry into the Australian system, which, while relatively small on a size basis, allows very rapid penetration and accessibility to the patient cohort once a drug is approved.

Whenever the PBAC considers a drug, it looks at all the evidence provided by the manufacturer and then makes a decision on the benefit to our Australian population as a result. As the previous speaker, the member for Oxley, said, we are increasingly seeing large-ambit, non-cost-benefit-related price claims being made by manufacturers. This causes a great deal of frustration for the general population, who think it is government being reluctant to fund as opposed to there being two parties, only one of whom is using an evidentiary base for deciding the price that we pay per patient—and that of course is the PBAC itself. There is nothing stopping a proponent from coming with a price per patient of one, two or any multiple of what has been decided on a cost-benefit analysis. But increasingly where a drug achieves a life-extending or life-saving ability, it does become more complicated because we are not considering a QALY, a quality-adjusted life year, but trying to measure life itself, and that is increasingly hard.

Up until now we have had million-dollar orphan drugs that were used in such rare circumstances, or biospecific drugs that were only used in particular patients, and we could contemplate these on a case-by-case arrangement. But increasingly we have moved from the 2000s and the era of the blockbuster drug, where you could euphemistically say that adding it to the water would benefit the population. It was almost impossible to measure the tiny gains in cardiovascular survival by giving a drug that appeared to help virtually everyone over the age of 40. Those drugs have come and gone and are in the system. We are seeing the new biospecific drugs that can help a very tiny proportion of the population but have absolutely transformative impacts, and this is one that we are discussing today.

There is no doubt we would love to see a resolution, but we can't move away from the system that until now has served us extremely well. To suggest the minister intervene may be wishful thinking but, ultimately, the experts in the field are commissioned to do this work and to come to an agreement. I do hate to say it—and I say it without the other protagonists in the room: if an agreement can't be struck, it is simply because typically there is no agreement on the specific cohort to be treated, or the amount sought is larger than every agreement we have ever drawn up for patients with different conditions. We have to be a little bit dispassionate here. If they are going to strike a deal with other countries and keep that price confidential, it will be hard for Australia to be blamed when we do not see the rapid approval of a drug here.

I go back to why cystic fibrosis is so important. This is a condition that starts early in life with the colonisation of small airways in particular, and other parts of the body, with infections such as haemophilus and strep. As one moves past the teenage years, pseudomonas and other more complicated infections can have an incredible impact on life. While many of
those suffering cystic fibrosis may be infertile, they are not sterile. And there is now the potential to have children through assisted technology. So now, increasingly, we need to be able to screen for this recessive condition and give parents information. It is very expensive to do the screening. So, typically, we do one parent and, if they are positive with this recessive gene, a second parent is offered that screening. While it is tempting to have other parties, including the minister, intervene, this system has stood very well. We need to be careful that, if we do intervene, we do not end up with a deal whereby every other current agreement will then need to be renegotiated.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:53): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion of the member for Mayo. Cystic fibrosis is an insidious disease that starts at birth and causes life-threatening damage to the lungs, airways and digestive system. It affects more than 3,000 Australians, whose average life expectancy is just 38 years. It affects one in every 2,500 babies and is the most common serious genetic condition in Australia. Children with CF have chest infections and breathing problems and, as they get older, their lungs can become permanently damaged. Because the pancreas doesn't produce the usual enzymes and secretions needed for digestion, sufferers can become malnourished, some will have liver problems and 40 per cent will develop diabetes.

Finally, it seems that a solution may be available for many sufferers but, sadly, they can't access that solution. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has, for the third time, refused to recommend that the potentially life-saving drug Orkambi be put on the PBS so it can be accessed by those who need it. My understanding is that, because the government and the drug company Vertex can't negotiate a price, the drug is not available. Vertex says the government is demanding a 90 per cent discount, which Vertex says is untenable.

Health minister Greg Hunt's response has been to ask Vertex to resubmit its application and, while that is being done, provide further clinical trials to give more patients access to the drug. That is the government's plan for providing access to Orkambi: ask the drug company, with which it can't negotiate a price, to give away free samples. So the government has confidence in Orkambi if it is freely given away by Vertex, but it will not list it on the PBS.

The chief executive of Cystic Fibrosis Federation Australia, Nettie Burke, says the CF community is 'dramatically disillusioned'—those are her words—that the government and the drug company can't come to an agreement to deliver a life-extending drug to thousands of Australians. Ms Burke, whose very job is to know the suffering this disease brings, says:

It's almost unimaginable that children and adults with a debilitating disease like cystic fibrosis can be denied a drug that could quite literally help save their lives because of cost … it is difficult to understand any sense behind this quarrel over dollars.

To highlight how important Orkambi can be for those with CF, consider this: most people with CF will take up to 40 enzyme replacement tablets every single day. They will also be required to take added vitamins and salt in order to properly digest their food. Many have to inhale medicines to open up their airways. Others require intensive daily chest physiotherapy to break up the build-up of mucus in the lungs, when they could take just two Orkambi tablets a day for a result vastly superior to those provided by any and all of those current methods. If Orkambi were approved for the PBS, more than 1,000 Australians would immediately have a chance to lead a far better and longer life.
There is already research from highly respected sources to support the use of Orkambi. The results of positive trials were published in the British medical journal *The Lancet* in 2014. In 2015, *The New England Journal of Medicine* reported that two clinical trials found Orkambi, a mixture of the ivacaftor and lumacaftor drugs, produced significant improvements in lung function and vital weight gain. The data also showed a 30 per cent reduction in the number of infections and need for hospitalisation experienced by those who were tested with the drug. I understand that Orkambi has been found to correct mutated genes in people with CF and, rather than deal with the symptoms, treats the root cause. It's been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, and it's already achieving impressive results in the US.

It's not a catch-all for every strain of CF, but it's a major improvement. Perhaps it could be limited to those people who have the particular strain that it has been found to be effective on. It has been argued that Orkambi is only directed at a specific mutation of CF and that there are 1,800 rare mutations, but it still addresses the needs of about 50 per cent of sufferers today, and it's those 50 per cent that the listing should be focusing on. Continued research is needed, but in Orkambi there is at least relief that, for half of those who suffer from cystic fibrosis, there is a possible solution. I urge the PBAC to move on their review of the application so that Orkambi can be available to those with cystic fibrosis sooner rather than later, because for some it may ultimately be too late.

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (11:57): I am proud to be speaking in this parliament again in support of those living with cystic fibrosis. I will always take every opportunity I can to raise awareness of this disease. Last year, as a very new MP, I went to meet with the team at Cystic Fibrosis Queensland to learn more about their vital work, and I learned that here in Australia we now have more adults than children living with CF due to our improving ability to manage the effects of this incurable disease. Many of them live in Queensland, I should add, because of the weather. As it is a respiratory disease, sufferers tend to move to warmer climates for relief, and so Queensland has a disproportionately high number of people living with CF, and that increases the importance of and reliance on the hard work and resources of Cystic Fibrosis Queensland. It's possibly why so many speakers from Queensland have been joining with me to speak on this motion here today.

The current life expectancy, as was previously said, is only 38 years for those with cystic fibrosis. I turned 36 years old just last week, so that number really resonates with me. Last time I spoke in this parliament about cystic fibrosis, I spoke about my pride that this government had just expanded access to the life-expanding drug Kalydeco by listing it on the PBS for those aged two to five. That announcement by the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, meant that 30 young children around Australia now have the help they need to stave off the lung disease that ultimately denies them their life expectancy.

Naturally, as I predicted then and as I welcomed at that time, the cystic fibrosis community has now turned its focus to drugs like Orkambi. I note the PBAC has made this recent decision not to list Orkambi on the PBS at this time, and without that recommendation by the PBAC a government can't subsidise the cost of the medicine under the National Health Act, yet it does seem clear that this drug with further clinical testing and trials will have a tangible benefit to the cystic fibrosis community. My understanding is that the PBAC's offer would have seen Vertex, the owner of the drug Orkambi, receive more than $100 million in public funding, but that was declined in those negotiations.
So I and many of my colleagues across this parliament will continue to push for an agreement that will see further testing and future access to the medicine. I note, for instance, the very thoughtful contribution of the member for Bowman just before on how the PBAC works and how sometimes the stakeholders in this global world do not necessarily make it easy for countries like Australia. What I do know is that the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, has been working tirelessly to see as many life-saving medicines as possible listed on the PBS. The decision to list and fund Kalydeco was one of many decisions that this government's made as part of its investments in new medicines.

It is a solid track record there. This government has so far provided $7 billion of additional subsidies for new medicines. Over 1,000 new medicines have been listed and are being funded. This government has a 100 per cent track record of funding all of the new drugs and medicines that do get recommended by the PBAC. It has a perfect track record of finding the money to deliver those subsidies. I just want to note in passing that that kind of track record doesn't just happen automatically. This is one more example of why it matters to everyone to have strong national economic management. Everyone hoping for new medicines to be listed and then subsidised will rely on a government that can manage the economy and the budget effectively to find the money to pay for them.

My understanding is that there is now a proposal on the table for a phase 4 clinical trial, which would allow patients access to the drug whilst getting the data that we need on its effectiveness. The findings of a trial like that could be used to help get the medicine listed on the PBAC in the future. It seems I join with many of my colleagues across the parliament to call on Vertex to resubmit an application and to consider running further clinical trials to give more patients access to the drug. It's vital that both PBAC and Vertex continue negotiations on the best way forward for Orkambi.

Australia's PBS is one of the foundations of our universal healthcare system, which is the envy of most countries around the world and which we must continue to work hard to defend and to refine over time. It's in this environment—in this policy setting—that I hope for and look forward to Orkambi's eventual listing on the PBS. Achieving quality of life and longer life expectancies for the cystic fibrosis community is paramount, and I look forward to continuing to work hard with Cystic Fibrosis Queensland, with cystic fibrosis sufferers around the country and with other relevant stakeholders to ensure that their advocacy is strong and that they have a voice here in Canberra and in government.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (12:02): This is a personal thing for me. I've looked after people with cystic fibrosis since the 1970s. I've cared for many children who, unfortunately, haven't survived. I've seen the slow but steady improvements in the care of people with cystic fibrosis, and now life expectancy has gone from the late teens to the late 30s. So really there have been some significant changes.

I've seen children with cystic fibrosis present in many different ways, from a condition called meconium ileus, which is a type of bowel obstruction in the neonatal period, through to hyponatremia, low salt levels in the blood and seizures; failure to thrive; malnutrition; and recurrent pneumonia—all different presentations of cystic fibrosis.

Like with many paediatric disorders, Australia has actually led the world in management of cystic fibrosis, and we were one of the first countries in the world to introduce the newborn-screening test for cystic fibrosis. This led to early diagnosis, early treatment and better
outcomes. In the days before the 1980s, the diagnosis was made on clinical suspicion, and many children had much-delayed diagnoses and were quite sick and malnourished by the time they were diagnosed.

The underlying defect in cystic fibrosis is a genetic defect in salt transport across the cell membrane. Children with cystic fibrosis produce very sticky mucus, which leads to problems with pancreatic function, malnutrition, recurrent chest infections and chronic cough. Other complications include something called biliary cirrhosis, where the bile is sticky and blocks the bile ducts, and chronic liver disease follows and all the complications of that.

The primary defect really depends on the genetic mutation. There are a whole list of genetic mutations that cause cystic fibrosis. It's what's called autosomal recessive, so you need to get an abnormal gene from each parent. If they are both carriers, their children have a one-in-four chance of having cystic fibrosis. The commonest genetic defect is a gene deletion called delta F508. That's the one that is being targeted in the use of Orkambi. Orkambi is actually a combination of drugs: it's a combination of the drug ivacaftor, Kalydeco, which is used for a couple of specific genetic mutations, and lumacaftor, which is a different sort of drug that targets the two mechanisms that are involved in delta F508 homozygous people with cystic fibrosis, whereas Kalydeco is a life-changing, game-changing medication for people with cystic fibrosis with what's called the G551D mutation. Orkambi is not as game-changing for the 50 per cent of people who have the two doses of the delta F508 mutation. We know from studies that Orkambi does make some difference in lung function, and some improvements in weight gain and nutrition, but it is not as life-changing and game-changing as Kalydeco.

The government and the minister are to be congratulated for the approval of the use of Kalydeco in the five per cent of people with cystic fibrosis for which it works. That is a wonderful, life-changing drug for those people. Orkambi is slightly different, in that the studies have not shown as dramatic improvements in the delta F508 homozygous people, which is about 50 per cent of the people with cystic fibrosis. Nevertheless, it has shown some improvements. We know that there are better drugs on the horizon, so I think it would be reasonable to have the Orkambi until better drugs are available. I do think we need to spend much more time, effort and resources on better treatments for people with cystic fibrosis. That means better home nursing, better home physiotherapy, better research et cetera, and we can fund the specific clinics for this.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): The time allotted to this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Cambodia: Human Rights

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (12:08): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that between 1975 and 1986, over 12,000 Cambodians were settled in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program after being forced to flee their homeland by the Khmer Rouge;

(2) acknowledges the contribution that Cambodian-Australians have made to our nation since that time and the role they have played in the success story of Australian multiculturalism, including the large Cambodian communities in Fairfield, Liverpool and Cabramatta;
(3) notes that the Cambodian community in Australia faces challenges that require attention, including a higher than average unemployment rate and a higher proportion of lower wage employment than the national average;
(4) notes the struggle that many in Cambodia still face from their Government, including the right to peaceful assembly and opposition to Government policies; and
(5) reaffirms Australia's commitment to the United Nations Human Rights Council's statement of 14 September 2016 that we are 'deeply concerned about escalating threats to legitimate activities by Opposition parties and Human Rights NGOs' in Cambodia'.

The Cambodian community in Australia is not our largest ethnic community and it's not our most high-profile ethnic community, but it's a very important ethnic community. I want to take this opportunity for the House to record its views about significant issues relating to the Cambodian community in Australia.

By way of background, there wasn't much migration from Cambodia to Australia until about 1979. The first recorded case of migration from Cambodia to Australia was in the 1940s—one family of nine people—but it was after the issues and the troubles and the terrible tragedies which befell Cambodia in the 1970s that Australia, quite rightly, provided refuge to many more Cambodians. We now have, on the last figures I've seen, around 25,000 Australians who claim Cambodian heritage.

The Cambodian community is a particularly vibrant and colourful one. Those honourable members who've been to Cambodian functions in their electorates at their temples and other events, as I have, would attest to the friendly and vibrant nature of a Cambodian community event.

The Cambodian community has contributed much to Australia. I will use a small case study. Mr Sawathey Ek is a lawyer who resides in Western Sydney and works closely with me and my office in assisting Cambodians, particularly around immigration cases. When he was awarded an Order of Australia medal, in 2001, he said something very profound, and it's relevant to some of the debates we see more broadly on immigration and refugee issues in Australia at the moment. He told a story. He said: 'When my father first went before the immigration board in 1983, aged 60, they said to him, "What do you have to offer?" He said, "Maybe nothing, but my sons will." That was a very telling statement, I thought, by Mr Ek Sr. And he is right: his sons, Sawathey in particular, have gone on to make an important contribution to Australia. That was recognised with the Order of Australia medal in 2001. I'm sure that in 1983 Mr Ek Sr could not have imagined that his son would make such a contribution that he would receive an Order of Australia medal.

I want to deal with the matter of the interaction of the Australian Cambodian community with events in Cambodia. The Australian Cambodian community, as I said, is a vibrant, strong, good community. But there are some who seek to drag the Cambodian community in Australia into domestic political issues in Cambodia. That is most unfortunate. It is incumbent on governments around the world to leave their diasporas free to undertake political activities in new countries—that applies to the Cambodian community as well—and not to feel in any way intimidated or admonished by home governments for any views that they might take which aren't in keeping. We all know the challenges that continue to exist in Cambodia. Even this morning, I heard on the radio that a newspaper in Cambodia is being closed down, allegedly because of a tax bill. A newspaper which has been critical of the government is
being closed down. Of course, this is the latest in a long line of concerns which have been raised with the Cambodian government. The government has been admonished by international organisations for denying Cambodians their right to peaceful assembly, for suppressing protests and for enforcing bans on non-violent gatherings.

What this motion is about is the House coming together as one and saying to the Australian Cambodian community: 'You are valued, you are an important part of Australian society and fabric, but we will not tolerate members of the Cambodian community in Australia being intimidated in any way by anybody, including by the Cambodian government or anybody in the Australian Cambodian community who seeks to interfere with their rights as Australian citizens to express views.' We do not want to see a situation where what is a very troubled political environment in Cambodia is carried over to Australia. We stand with the Cambodian Australian community, a wonderful community that has contributed so much. We stand with them not just in words, not just in general sentiments, but in the view that they are not the playthings of political parties in Cambodia and they should not be involved in efforts to rope them in to political issues in Cambodia. They are Australian citizens and they have every right to conduct themselves as Australian citizens and not feel in any way intimidated. If we see that intimidation at any point, we will call it out for what it is in this House and in other places.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Hill:** I second the motion.

**Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (12:13):** Through my association with the Parliamentary Friendship Group of Cambodia, I've come to learn how important the close relationship between Australia and Cambodia is and that it's vitally important we continue to foster this relationship into the future. I thank the honourable member for making this opportunity to further this discussion, because it is a very important relationship that we have.

There are currently 60,000 citizens of Cambodian descent who call Australia home. Their contribution to our way of life enriches our society and contributes to Australia's economy and, indeed, our very social fabric. There's also a growing cohort of self-funded Cambodians who choose Australia as their place of preference for studying. The federal government's scholarships program has seen 700 Cambodians study in Australia since 1994. This has provided these Cambodians with important skills and training and qualifications that they are able to take back to their own country and assist with their own social and economic development. Importantly, the Cambodian government has proven to be a strong supporter of the New Colombo Plan, which encourages a two-way exchange of students within the Indo-Pacific region. Cambodia joined this program in 2015 and expects to host 530 students in the program during 2018.

The governments of Australia and Cambodia enjoy close cooperation on transnational crime, education, development, cooperation in defence and trade, and investment. Australia's support has delivered real progress in economic growth and also in reducing poverty in that country. In particular, we've supported the Cambodian health sector through the Development Cooperation Program. One goal of this program is to achieve universal health coverage, which equates to a financial contribution from Australia in the order of $50 million over five years. Assistance that has been provided in agriculture and infrastructure has also seen positive results across the Cambodian nation.
It is clear that Australians have a very strong desire to support and nurture our relationship with the Cambodian people. This is evidenced by the nearly 7,000 Australians who currently reside in Cambodia. Australians are also choosing Cambodia as a tourist destination, with approximately 147,000 people travelling to Cambodia in 2016 alone.

During the 65 years that Australia has maintained close diplomatic ties with the Cambodian people, we have also ensured the relationship has been supported by high-level exchanges. This year the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, visited Cambodia in March; Vice Chief of the ADF, Vice Admiral Griggs, visited in July. There have been many other high level exchanges over the years that demonstrate Australia's ongoing interest in and support of this nation.

In addition to its strong track record in supporting the economic and social welfare of the Cambodian people, Australia has also supported Cambodia's development as a democracy. Australia closely monitors political developments in Cambodia, and has not remained silent in instances where it has held concerns. Indeed, in February this year, the Australian embassy in Phnom Penh issued a statement raising concerns the government had with amendments to Cambodia's law on political parties. Australia made direct representations, including at an ambassador level and at senior levels of government, both before and after the law was passed. Senator Fierravanti-Wells raised our concerns in her meeting with the Cambodian foreign minister during her visit. I am a proud member of the parliamentary friends of Cambodia group. Friends speak up when they need to, and the Australian government will continue to work with the Cambodian government in times to come. (Time expired)

Mr HILL (Bruce) (12:18): I'm pleased to rise today in support of the member for McMahon's motion to acknowledge the important role the Cambodian-Australian community have played in our multicultural nation. The first Cambodians came in small numbers in the middle of the last century under the Colombo Plan and for education. But then, over the 11 years from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties, we had more than 12,000 people settle in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program, fleeing war and persecution and murder under the Khmer Rouge. Amidst today's debates about refugees and people from other cultures settling in Australia, they're a shining example of successful settlement and integration.

The motion notes 'the large Cambodian communities in Fairfield, Liverpool and Cabramatta' in New South Wales. I had a look at the census numbers. If you total up those of Khmer ancestry, you get about 12,000 across the four New South Wales electorates of Fowler, McMahon, Werriwa and Macarthur. Also, Victoria is home to around 40 per cent of our country's Cambodian Australians, and indeed there's a vibrant community in my part of south-east Melbourne. To cite the numbers, 13,100 people claim Khmer ancestry across the electorates of Bruce, Holt, Hotham and Isaacs. In my electorate, there are nearly 2,000 people who claim Khmer ancestry, with 1,500 born in Cambodia.

To put those numbers into context, however, I was actually a little surprised to realise that it adds up to only 0.2 per cent of the population of Australia. I say I was surprised because, in my electorate, they're such a large, well-known and enormously successful community. Twenty years ago, Hong Lim was the first Cambodian-born person to be elected to a democratic parliament, the Victorian parliament, anywhere in the world. He came to Australia as an international student, studied in Tasmania and stayed. Outstanding community leaders
include Councillor Youhorn Chea, who is a long-serving councillor, was many times Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong and is currently the President of the Cambodian Australian Federation; and the wonderful Councillor Heang Tak, a former mayor, lawyer and broadcaster. These people, of course, are leaders not just for the Cambodian Australians but also for the broader Australian community in their leadership roles. I record my thanks in the parliament to them. They were founders over 40 years ago of the Cambodian Association of Victoria. I was delighted to attend its 41st dinner, in June—which was hosted, actually, at the Victorian parliament, the very seat of Victorian democracy. We see them taking their rightful place along with the broader mainstream community having functions in that place. The work that these leaders do to promote diversity is incredible, especially for the first-generation Cambodians, who've been through the most dreadful war, persecution and violence. They do not speak of it very often, but what they've seen stays with them and their families. To be such a peaceful, loving people serving the community and attending the Buddhist temple is so impressive. But the next generation, who also featured at that dinner, of scientists, media broadcasters, businesspeople and so on are also impressive.

I want to say a few words in closing on the political situation in Cambodia. We're just a few weeks away from 23 October, the 26th anniversary of the 1991 Paris peace accords, which were a shining success for the tenure of Gareth Evans, a former member for Holt, as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Sadly, 25 years on, the situation is not as the world then had hoped it would be. It's a difficult time now for the Cambodian people and, indeed, the diaspora. We've heard growing and disturbing reports of human rights abuses and state-sponsored, or at least state-tolerated, threats, violence and oppression. Today's report of the arrest of the opposition leader, Mr Kem Sokha, on treason charges, for plotting to overthrow the government is, in one sense, farcical. Of course it's the job of an opposition leader to plot to overthrow the government. That's what we do in performing our job of holding the government to account and putting forward a platform for government. That is the job of opposition leaders in a democracy. As the Chair of the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights noted, this has taken things to an alarming new level. The Cambodian Australian Federation expressed its outrage today that now the opposition leader has joined 19 other political prisoners behind bars. The use of the criminal justice system to persecute dissidents has to stop.

The signs do not augur well for next year's national elections in Cambodia. We did have some problems, although they were not as bad as was feared, in the local commune elections, but comments by the current Prime Minister, Hun Sen, who said recently that 'war will happen if the CPP loses control' following elections, or statements by the national defence minister that protesters would be beaten 'until their teeth came out' do concern not just people living in Cambodia but those in my electorate and the member for Holt's electorate, where their families and friends are under threat. (Time expired)

Mr Byrne (Holt) (12:23): I commend the motion put forward by the member for McMahon and the contribution by the member for Bruce, who I know is a passionate advocate on behalf of the Cambodian community here and in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, along with the member for Hotham and the member for Isaacs. I too note the significant contribution that Cambodian Australians have made to our community, because they really have been one of the success stories of Australia's multiculturalism. It has been
mentioned previously that my predecessor, Gareth Evans, had some significant role in the Cambodian community and the difficulties that arose out of the killing fields of the Pol Pot regime. I refer to the motion, which states:

... between 1975 and 1986, over 12,000 Cambodians were settled in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program after being forced to flee their homeland by the Khmer Rouge;

In the four years—and it's important in this debate to recall the context—that the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia, it was responsible for one of the worst mass killings of the 20th century. The barbaric Khmer Rouge regime in power in that period of time claimed the lives of up to two million people. According to the BBC, under the Marxist leader Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge tried to take Cambodia back to the Middle Ages, forcing millions of people from the cities to work on communal farms in the countryside. But this horrific attempt at social engineering had enormous cost. Many families died from execution, starvation, disease and overwork. That's important to reflect upon, particularly given the current concerns of the Cambodian community here in this country.

I pay tribute to the former member for Holt, Gareth Evans. As many in this House will know, he played a significant role in the political settlement of this conflict. As foreign minister, he helped secure the 1991 Paris peace accord, which ultimately resulted in direct involvement by the United Nations in the civil administration of Cambodia during the transition period.

Given that history, particularly of my most illustrious predecessor, it is of grave concern to see the recent actions of the Cambodian government. In recent years, the local Cambodian Australian community, including the Cambodian Australian Federation, in Springvale, along with Gareth Evans and many others who have taken an enduring interest in and focus on the future of the Cambodian state, have voiced concerns about increasing human rights abuses and the attack on free speech. For example, the Cambodian community is very concerned about Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's assault on government critics, which has intensified since May 2015. The Cambodia Daily newspaper, a frequent critic of the government, has been forced to close down recently. An incredibly disturbing development occurred last year with the assassination of political activist Kem Ley, which caused deep concern and anguish amongst the Cambodian community in my region. Most recently, the opposition leader, Kem Sokha, has been taken into custody by around 100 police. The accusation is treason.

On Saturday, 9 September, the Cambodian Association of Victoria, under the leadership of President Youhorn Chea, will be leading a protest at the Springvale Town Hall condemning the Cambodian government's recent actions of suppressing dissenting voices in Cambodia and, importantly, particularly given Gareth Evans's involvement, failing to fulfil commitments as a party to the 1991 Paris peace accord. I know that many members of the Cambodian Australian community as well as the broader community will be in attendance to support this particular action.

We have been blessed with the contributions made by important figures within the Cambodian community in my time in politics. For example, Victoria has been incredibly well represented by Hong Lim, the Victorian state member for Clarinda. He's obviously of Cambodian-Chinese descent. He's been a member for 21 years. Hong was the first and only Chinese Cambodian to be elected to a parliament anywhere in the English-speaking world and
has served the community very well. Councillor Youhorn Chea was the first Cambodian mayor when he was the Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong. We now have Councillor Heang Tak, from the Paperbark Ward, who has also been Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong. Their contribution to this country has been amazing and fulfilling. They are one of Australia's great multicultural success stories. We need to do what we can, as we are with this motion by the member for McMahon, in supporting them with their concerns about what is happening in Cambodia today.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:29): I also rise to speak about the contemporary human rights situation in Cambodia. There is an increasing threat to civil society, independent journalism and opposing political groups in Cambodia today. With the upcoming general election, many groups and individuals have been subjected to intimidation from the government for exercising their rights to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and political expression. I've been made aware of many of these concerns by local Cambodian Australians living in my electorate. They've shared with me, firstly, their struggles which they faced when they were forced to flee their homeland following the occupation by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge through the seventies and eighties, with many of them resettling here in Australia. The development and ongoing contribution of the Cambodian community to this country is a very successful migrant story. But despite these challenges, and many that they still face, they continue to share that dream and passion for a more open society in Cambodia.

In Cambodia today there are escalating threats to independent media and civil society, with authorities now alleging that outlets and organisations owe back taxes as a means to close them down. I have been informed that independent English-language newspaper The Cambodia Daily has been threatened with closure under these allegations. Furthermore, two radio stations—the Women's Media Centre for Cambodia and Mohanokor—were recently suspended for breaching their licence agreements. They were airing news from Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America. I was informed that the National Democratic Institute, a US NGO focusing on civil participation, was told in late August this year that all its foreign staff must leave Cambodia within seven days and that it must close operations. All domestic and international NGOs are required to register with the government in Cambodia and to report their activities and their finances on a regular basis. If they fail to comply they risk being charged for contempt and face criminal prosecution. Hence, organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International do not have offices operating in Cambodia.

This level of intimidation is increasing in the lead-up to next year's general election in July. It is concerning that Prime Minister Hun Sen has warned repeatedly of civil war should his ruling party lose the general election. It is also widely reported that many government agencies have threatened violence should people protest the election results. These acts of intimidation follow the murder of Kem Ley, a prominent political commentator and critic of the Hun Sen government in relation to, in particular, issues of illegal logging and corruption. The founder of Khmer for Khmer, a grassroots advocacy group, Kem Ley was shot and killed in July last year at a petrol station in Phnom Penh. I'm advised that there are many questions outstanding in regard to the investigation into Mr Ley's murder despite a person being convicted in March this year.

In a stunning recent development, Kem Sokha, the leader of Cambodia's main opposition party, was arrested this weekend on charges of treason. The government has alleged that he is
participating with a Washington based organisation to undermine the country's leadership. According to John Sifton, the director of Human Rights Watch Asia:

The government's charges lack credibility, given its long record of misusing its legal system to silence or intimidate critics and political opponents.

The arrest of Kem Sokha is a dangerous setback to Cambodia, only reinforcing the long-ruling authoritarian Prime Minister Hun Sen's bid to consolidate power ahead of next year's election.

Addressing these issues of human rights are essential for any development in Cambodia. Promoting safety in society through the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, rather than threatening, can help Cambodia improve its standing in the global community. Given Australia's ambitions for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, we can play a greater role as we develop closer economic ties with countries in the Asia-Pacific. We can ensure that our commercial ties help states like Cambodia to improve their human rights records, which will in turn open up new economic opportunities. (Time expired)

Debate interrupted.

**BILLS**

Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Take Home Pay) Bill 2017

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"The House is of the opinion that the bill does not fully address the issue of penalty rates, and:

(1) notes that:

(a) when the Leader of the Opposition was Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), his union negotiated enterprise agreements that reduced or removed Sunday penalty rates, including for:

(i) around 780 workers at Big W in North Queensland, whose penalty rates were 50 per cent under the award;

(ii) around 129 workers at Target Country in North Queensland, whose penalty rates were 50 per cent under the award;

(iii) around 119 workers at Just Jeans in Queensland, whose penalty rates were 50 per cent under the award;

(iv) around 101 workers at Rydges Tradewinds in Cairns, who got no penalty rates at all; and

(v) around 480 workers at Cleanevent, who lost all their penalty rates;

(b) when the Labor Party was in Government, penalty rates were reduced in 2010 following its award modernisation process, including for many workers in the hospitality, restaurants, fast food and clubs sectors;

(c) presently, millions of workers—including staff at multinational and large businesses, such as Woolworths, Coles, Bunnings, McDonalds, KFC, Pizza Hut, Officeworks, Target, Kmart and the Langham Hotel—receive Sunday penalty rates that are below the award, thanks to enterprise agreements negotiated with large unions, including the AWU and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA);
(d) the proposed Sunday rate of 150 per cent in the retail industry that has been determined by the Fair Work Commission is the same as the Sunday rate in a range of retail industry agreements negotiated by the AWU and the SDA; and

(e) small businesses that compete with large retail and fast food chains, and wish to employ staff on a Sunday, must currently employ them at higher rates than those large chains; and

(2) agrees that any legislation to address cuts in penalty rates under awards must also address cuts in penalty rates under union negotiated enterprise agreements.”

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird) (12:34): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Dawson has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Ms O’TOOLE (Herbert) (12:34): I am proud to rise in this place to stand up for around 13,000 workers who are being dealt nothing short of a devastating blow by the Turnbull government with their complete lack of understanding of and action on protecting penalty rates for vulnerable workers.

This government uses the language of the fair go and they talk about fairness, but the reality is that they are completely out of touch with low-income families and our veterans and ex-service personnel. This government's trickle-down economics is not creating jobs, but it is creating an environment where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer; consequently, inequality is at an all-time high. Townsville's unemployment is just under 10 per cent and our youth unemployment is at an all-time high of over 24 per cent. The net result of this government's failure to take action to save penalty rates has left around 13,000 people in my community facing a massive pay cut or working longer hours for the same take-home pay. This is not a fair go or fair in any man's language. Less money in our community will mean less spent in locally-owned small businesses such as coffee shops or boutiques, which reduces cash flow in the general economy. This is in stark contrast to the Turnbull's government's rhetoric that there will be a great flow-on effect from this massive pay cut. That is simply false. The Turnbull government's trickle-down economics doesn't work, has never worked and will certainly do nothing for workers in Townsville.

Queensland Senator Ian Macdonald said this would be a good thing for the north. I beg to differ. Judging by the workers I have talked with, nothing could be further from the truth. Some of the lowest-paid workers are getting one of the biggest pay cuts ever. How could this possibly be called a good thing? I can assure Senator Macdonald that the 13,000 workers in the Herbert electorate don't think that a pay cut is a good thing.

Townsville hasn't felt the projected uplift, but big businesses have extra money in their back pockets. A cut of $50 a week might not mean much to our multimillionaire Prime Minister and other wealthy cabinet members, but it means a lot to vulnerable workers in Townsville. Losing $50 a week from someone's take-home pay may be the difference between being able to pay the rent and buy groceries, or to simply just get by, or not. A loss of $50 a week for someone like Jaidyn Bar in my electorate of Herbert means a lot because for him it may be the difference between being homeless or not.

The Turnbull government is hell-bent on Americanising everything in Australia. They want to privatise Medicare, ruin our public and Catholic education systems and create a clear class divide. They want the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. And they want to cut
wages to over 700,000 Australians. In fact, the only thing that this government isn't following America in is legalising marriage equality.

I stand here today to say to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull that the Herbert community doesn't want your top-hat thinking. We want to be able to access affordable and quality health care when we are sick, we want all of our children to have access to quality education and we don't want your wage cut. Inequality in Australia is at an all-time high and growing. It appears clearly evident that this fact has totally escaped the Turnbull government because nothing is being done to address inequality.

This government is also spruiking that this pay cut supports small business. The member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, said that penalty rates were a huge impediment in Far North Queensland, wiping out small business and adding to the region's unemployment. How out of touch can one be? I have met with a diverse range of small business owners over the last 12 months and every single owner has mentioned two major problems: the rising cost of electricity and commercial leasing. Penalty rates do not and have not rated a mention. The business owners that I talk with recognise that their employees are their greatest asset.

In my experience as a small business owner, it was clearly evident to me that the people I employed were and always will be any business's greatest asset. It is also widely acknowledged that there is inequality between male and female wages and superannuation, and cutting penalty rates does nothing to address this major issue. There is absolutely no reason why this government and large clubs cannot support their workers in the north by not cutting penalty rates.

Brothers Leagues Club owns a few clubs in Townsville. Their website says that all profits go back to its members and the community. Surely there could be no greater community benefit than ensuring low-income workers receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. (Time expired)

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (12:40): I start by saying it's very disappointing to see the continuation of this gesture based, grandstanding, virtue-signalling politics from the opposition through moving this amendment to the second reading motion for the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Take Home Pay) Bill 2017. In the end, what this government is focused on is outcomes for the Australian people. What we actually had with the Fair Work Commission was a Labor reference to a Labor-created Fair Work Commission and a Labor-appointed commissioner, and the response that came back is the one they are now opposing. Someone would almost have to say that they question whether the political judgement of the Australian Labor Party in bringing this issue forward and bringing forward the reference which led to the outcome is so that they can simply get up here and spout out how much they disagree with it. It's almost like it was a political arrangement that occurred in the first place. It's deeply disturbing to be able to draw those conclusions, but it seems kind of self-evident. That's what we're seeing today: gesture politics and virtue signalling.

That's when you have to recognise just how out of reality and out of step and out of touch the opposition are. They're not interested in delivering better outcomes for young Australians,
who need more work opportunities and more creation of jobs so that they get their first taste in life of the kernel of opportunity, of work and of the dignity of work, particularly for a lot of women who want the opportunity to be able to work and often, particularly when they're balancing out some other family arrangements, are more likely to be able to work in casual arrangements. This government is a government that is committed not just to the opportunity of the few or the interests of one sectional interest or another but to the opportunity for everybody to have a country where people who want jobs and opportunities can secure them and not be priced completely out of the market by regulation and legislation or bad decisions by the previous government that make it harder for them to get jobs. Imagine that: a legislative and regulatory arrangement that makes it harder to get jobs, pushed by a party that claims it wants better outcomes for workers.

I guess only focusing on the interests of the people who are members of a union is what the modern Labor Party is about these days, particularly for public sector workers. They don't worry about unemployed people. They don't spend any time thinking about them. They don't stand up for the interests of people who don't have jobs and want to secure an opportunity to build the foundations of a happy and successful life, to afford their own home or to hold the dignity of work to provide for their family. That's the foundation of a Liberal philosophy. It's one of the core reasons why I'm a Liberal: we believe in the dignity of work and the opportunity it provides. The only position that comes from the opposition at the moment is to make that hard for people.

I do not know what's going through their brain sometimes. They don't actually seem to have any understanding. It's not just harder for the workers; it's harder for people who want to create economic opportunities for them. I speak to a number of people in my electorate who are aware of the challenges of employing people and get so frustrated, and I understand their frustration. They're actually trying to do good for this country. They're actually trying to create opportunities for more people to expand their businesses and employment opportunities, and the response is heckling and hectoring from the opposition, who want to make it harder. They can't understand why the opposition wants to make it harder to employ more young people and give them an opportunity in life and why the opposition, the modern Labor Party, is making it harder to employ women who want casual work arrangements to balance out their lifestyles and men who are in exactly the same situation, particularly when they're doing their best to create opportunity while at the same time building the opportunity for a family life.

One thing I will agree with the previous speaker on is that there are other priorities and issues for businesses as well. They're particularly concerned about rising electricity prices. We have a federal government that is, for the first time, sitting down and focusing on electricity prices in the right way, which is worrying about reliability and making sure people can afford supply, as well as the environmental challenges, rather than just being obsessed with appeasing a Green vote. It is actually thinking about what the country needs to secure the opportunities so that people can go and employ people and pay for people's salaries and jobs. But really, if their confected outrage about this issue—the virtue signalling they do in the other place and here—is sincere, let's sit down and have a proper conversation about industrial relations reform. If you're concerned about the decision of the body you set up, on the reference that you set up, by the appointed person who you put in— if you're so concerned
about it—let's sit down and have a proper conversation about it. But we're not. We just get more and more fluff that's being put out there in the community because they want to be able to gesture to their communities that they're trying to defend them, when it's a complete lie. (Time expired)

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (12:45): I think there's probably something seriously wrong at the heart of the member for Goldstein's Liberal philosophy. I'm certainly not speaking in this debate today because I want to grandstand or because I'm out of touch with my electorate. I'm making a contribution here in support of the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Take Home Pay) Bill 2017, like many of my Labor colleagues, because I represent an electorate in which large numbers of people—even if they are fortunate enough to have jobs—are really struggling to make ends meet. They struggle to find as much work as they need to sustain their families. They struggle to meet the ever-increasing costs of living on wages that remain stagnant and are currently at record low rates relative to the cost of living.

The reality for so many of these hardworking people is that penalty rates have become an essential component of their pay. It's the difference between just managing and not really managing at all. Cuts to penalty rates in the retail and hospitality sector, in which many of my constituents are employed—even only partial cuts—would have the effect of a cut of up to 10 per cent of these workers' wages. That 10 per cent cut is just not possible. My constituents cannot take that hit. When you're talking about modest pay packets to begin with, this is, as I said, a devastating cut.

We know that those who will be most affected will be the young people; they'll be women; and they'll be the migrant workers. We all know that young people in particular who juggle work and study are already at risk of being exploited, underpaid and treated as expendable by many employers. The evidence is in, in relation to the exploitation of young people. Women, too, who are often the sole supporters of their families and who juggle numerous paid and unpaid jobs at the same time, stand to be affected, as do migrant workers who have limited working choices because of language barriers and because they lack the networks, and who may be highly qualified, as many of my constituents are, but not have those qualifications or experience recognised in the local employment market.

Of course, there will be many working men equally affected, as women will be, by cuts to penalty rates and to take-home pay, particularly those in my electorate who after years of dedicated service have found themselves the victims of a declining manufacturing sector and are forced to make do with irregular, casual and part-time work. The loss of the local car industry due to the neglect and outright hostility of this government has for so many local women and, in particular, men in my electorate led to insecure and often poorly paid work. Now, this unemployment and insecurity for men in particular is further compounded by the devastating impact it creates on their sense of identity as providers for their families. It's a devastating hit at a very personal level, affecting their sense of purpose and their contribution to the broader community and to their families.

Coherent industry policy and fair wages policy are vital because they have a real impact on real lives and communities, such as those that I represent. They impact upon the ability of working people to feed their kids, to pay rent and to enjoy, however modestly, their lives. The ability to enjoy life is not some indulgence that should be reserved for highly paid white-collar workers, as some on the other side here seem to believe. If we're serious about
economic stimulus and growth, we need a society where people can afford to participate. It
does take a community of properly paid people to ensure that more people like them can
actually get jobs.

Just last week I was speaking to one of the last industries that still exist in my electorate,
and that is the caravan-manufacturing industry. This is a very important local industry that
employs local people. Their view is that, if people can't afford to buy caravans, because they
can barely afford to pay the rent, what will happen to those jobs? That's a real issue for us in
the federal seat of Calwell.

The protection of take-home pay is not only vital for fairness and for justice but equally
important for the health of our economy. I strongly reject the argument that cutting wages at
this time of already historically low wages will somehow lead to employment growth. It
won't. It does not. It has not and it never will. Anyone who says that is propagating a myth.

I support this bill because it protects the take-home pay of some 700,000 low-paid workers.
That is in our national interests. I support this bill because it is in our national interest to do
so.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): The time allotted for the debate has expired. The
debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the
next sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Royal National Park

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:50): I move:

That this House notes that:

(1) Australia has over 500 national parks that protect our unique and precious environment;
(2) Sydney's Royal National Park (RNP) was established in 1879 and is Australia's oldest national
    park and the world's second oldest national park;
(3) the 16,000 hectare RNP has unique cultural, heritage and environmental values;
(4) the RNP:
    (a) is the traditional country of the Dharawal people;
    (b) has one of the richest concentrations of plant species in temperate Australia with more than
        1,000 species; and
    (c) is rich in wildlife such as birds, reptiles and butterflies and exemplifies the biodiverse
        Hawkesbury Sandstone environment;
(5) the RNP's importance to the nation was recognised with a National Heritage listing in 2006;
(6) the values of the RNP deserve World Heritage protection;
(7) federal Labor will consult Traditional Owners and the local community on nominating the RNP
    for the World Heritage List; and
(8) with the consent of the Traditional Owners, Labor will prioritise a World Heritage nomination.

I move this motion as somebody who has had a love of the Royal National Park his entire life
and in the context of there being a very real threat to the Royal National Park right now from
the New South Wales government. The New South Wales government, under Premier
Berejiklian, has a proposal to, effectively, get rid of 60 hectares of the park to make way for
the proposed F6 extension. It's a plan that was produced without public consultation, and that
highlights the government's reckless and destructive approach to the natural environment of New South Wales.

With a proposal like that, World Heritage is clearly the only mechanism available that can stop a coalition government from environmental destruction. We know this because we've watched it in the last few years. It used to be the case that, when anything was put under protection, there would be an argument as to whether the protection should go ahead; but, once it was in, there would be a principle of 'no backward steps'. Even on a World Heritage listing, this government was willing to try to take backward steps; but a World Heritage listing is the one thing where a line is drawn and they are prevented from doing so.

We saw it with respect to the areas of Tasmania that had been added to the World Heritage List during the previous government when I was Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water and Population. One of the first actions of this government was to go back to the World Heritage Committee and say: 'We know you looked at these beautiful rainforests, and we know you thought they were World Heritage, but we'd like to log them anyway. Can we just take them out?' The World Heritage Committee dealt with it in a few minutes. Embarrassingly, the delegation from Portugal described the submission from Australia as 'feeble', and it was thrown out. Those forests, as a result, were protected.

It doesn't stop the government from still wanting to engage in environmental destruction. Only a couple of weeks ago the Deputy Prime Minister was to announce a new dam in Tully which was going to involve the flooding of the Wet Tropics area. Once again it was a World Heritage area that we thought was protected, that now had bipartisan support for its protection, the battle for which had gone with the passing of the Bjelke-Petersen government. Yet World Heritage is the one thing a coalition government has not been able to undo. Similarly, with the protections that we put in place in the oceans, they are keeping the boundaries but they want to be able to kill the sea life within them. That's what's happening there.

The Royal National Park should not be up for grabs. The Royal National Park should not be up for clearing. The Royal National Park should not have areas that are up for demolition. We have a very proud legacy in Australia with that national park. We turned the national park announcement that the United States had made with respect to Yellowstone from a one-off announcement to a global movement. We made it clear, with the advent of the Royal National Park, that what was happening was going to be a global shift of country after country protecting areas. I would have thought that that action of protection was locked in and was in place. People have spent their lives, as I have, riding bikes on Lady Carrington Drive, going for picnics at Wattamolla or going to Garie Beach or Marley Beach or just driving through on their way to Bundeena. But now this incredibly precious place is being viewed by the New South Wales government as up for grabs. This resolution is about noting the magnificence of the Royal National Park and about having a pathway forward to committing to the only form of protection that coalition governments do not undo.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr SNOWDON: I second the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Lingiari. The question, therefore, before the chair is that the motion be agreed to.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (12:55): I am pleased to speak on the motion of the member for Watson this morning about the Royal National Park because, following the redistribution before the last election, I got the most fortunate of redistributions, and most of the Royal National Park. Most of the park, apart from some of the real southern parts, now falls within the great electorate of Hughes, and that is something that I am very proud of.

I would concur with points (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6) of the motion moved by the member for Watson. But I am a bit confused when it comes to point (7), which says that federal Labor will consult with the traditional owners and community on nominating the Royal National Park for World Heritage listing. Why I am confused is that this motion is moved by the member for Watson, who was the federal environment minister of this country for three years under the Gillard-Rudd government, yet I am unable to find where he actually said 'boo' about the Royal National Park. As the federal environmental minister for three years, why didn't he, in the past, take any step or say anything about an attempt to get the Royal National Park World Heritage listed?

Both the state government and the federal coalition government have already made moves on this. In fact, in a press release from back in 2015, the New South Wales environment minister said:

Royal National Park is one of the most remarkable places in Australia and we are currently finalising our assessment of the potential World Heritage values of the Park.

He went on:

Once finalised, we will work closely with Minister Hunt's—

the coalition's federal environment minister's—

department to ensure any documents comply with the World Heritage Committee's operational guidelines and the broader World Heritage Convention.

So it was the coalition—the Liberal government of New South Wales and the coalition government here in Canberra—that actually took active steps, while the member of parliament who moved this amendment, a former environment minister for three years in this country, sat on his hands and did absolutely nothing.

There are a couple of issues with the attempted World Heritage listing. I agree with the four criteria put forward by the subcommittee of the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre as to why we should obtain World Heritage Listing. The Royal National Park is the first national park in Australia, having been gazetted in 1879, and its creation marks the beginning of the conservation movement in this country; it is the only national park in the world within the boundaries of a major city; its biodiversity is wide-ranging and unique; and it contains a wilderness area, and a World Heritage listing would protect this unique place from the aggressive urbanisation facing the area.

One of the issues that need to be tackled with the World Heritage listing is that, although we love the Royal National Park—it is a most magnificent area—it is not actually pristine. Before it was listed as a national park, it was used for timber getting. Even after it was gazetted as the Royal National Park, we know that, in 1887, some 3,000 ornamental trees were planted, many of them exotic, when they beautified the area around the Audley weir in the style of an English garden. We also know that in the park in the past there has been
excavation of large volumes of gravel, ironstone and claystone for road and rail construction. The logging of trees continued until the 1920s.

I am pleased to support the heritage listing. I am pleased that the New South Wales government are working through all the issues to get this heritage listed. But I am very concerned that we see political opportunism from the Labor Party on this issue, especially from the member for Watson. As environment minister for three years, he did nothing—he did not say boo—but all of a sudden, when he comes into opposition, he thinks this is a good idea. It is something the coalition government has been working on.

One of the great things about the Royal National Park, if I can just conclude, is the magnificent waterways of Port Hacking. Since my electoral boundaries moved, I've taken to throwing my kayak in down at Grays Point and Swallow Rock and kayaking all the way around the south-west arm. The water there is absolutely pristine. You can see the bottom for a couple of metres. Anyone that does that kayaking trip and sees the wilderness and the natural wildlife understands that this place deserves World Heritage listing. I'm pleased the coalition is working towards that.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (13:01): Could I firstly acknowledge the motion that has been put by the member for Watson and which I have seconded. I endorse totally the member for Watson's remarks and refute the objectionable concerns expressed by the previous speaker around the member for Watson, who, as the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, was a very good minister and did a great deal, despite what the previous member said.

I know not a lot about the Royal National Park, but I do know a lot about World Heritage listing because there are a number of national parks in my own electorate. Principally, there are Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta, but there are also two other national parks in my electorate which are administered by the Commonwealth, one of which is on Christmas Island and the other on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. There's no question that two of the most iconic national parks in this country, Kakadu and Uluru, are both World Heritage listed for their natural and cultural attributes, and there's no question about their importance in preserving their natural heritage and also the cultural heritage of those two wonderful properties.

It's worth pointing out, though, that there is some concern being expressed which I think is well worth understanding. A lot of international visitors don't appear to be availing themselves of the opportunity to visit our national parks. Indeed, I discovered this morning that, of all the visitors to 15 national landscape areas featured in a recent Tourism & Transport Forum report on nature based tourism, only four per cent of these are international visitors. That raises a couple of issues, but most of all it raises an opportunity. Clearly, we're underselling our national parks and their importance as opportunities for cultural and natural tourism for the environmental values of those parks. Despite the advertising campaigns that appear to be happening regularly, we don't appear to be able to attract those tourists to our national parks.

I might point out that there are real opportunities to be garnered here. The way in which we've entered the joint management arrangements—particularly at Kakadu and Uluru—is important because it gives a primary interface with Aboriginal people in those parks and their cultural heritage concerns and makes them important sites in their own right. But there is more that can be done. Of that, there is absolutely no question. I think that, as we enter these
discussions further about the attributes of World Heritage listing and the importance of our parks, and the importance of joint management and understanding the cultural and heritage values of these parks, what we need to understand is that we've got a greater capacity than we currently exercise to engage with local communities and local community members and traditional owners, in this case, in both Uluru and Kakadu. There's no reason, in my view, why new partnerships can't be forged beyond what currently exists for fire control, weed and feral animal management control—particularly in places like Kakadu—and the obvious opportunities for improving their role in cultural heritage management.

I do want to commend the national parks workers for their commitment to preserving the natural heritage and for their engagement with the local communities around cultural heritage values. Over the many years since the establishment of Uluru as a park in 1987—you'll recall we had celebrations about that recently—under the Aboriginal land rights act the land was claimed and won back and then leased to the Commonwealth for the benefit of the nation, as happened in Kakadu where:

Most of the land that was to become part of Stage One of Kakadu National Park was granted to the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust under the Land Rights Act in August 1978 and, in November 1978, the Land Trust and the Director signed a lease agreement for the land to be managed as a national park.

That's been the history of these two parks. They have been Aboriginal land that the Aboriginal people have given back to the nation to operate as parks for the betterment of the nation. For that, they deserve great acclaim.

The parks on Christmas and Cocos are different entirely, but both have significant natural attributes of great importance to preserving identity—for example, the rainforest on Christmas Island. On Cocos (Keeling) Islands is one particularly important site, the resting place of the Emden, the mighty ship that was sunk by HMAS Sydney. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): The time allotted for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Sitting suspended from 13:06 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Hurricane Harvey

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:00): Hurricane Harvey and the catastrophic flooding of Houston is a window into our future if we don't get global warming under control. Scientists warned that when events like hurricanes, monsoons and typhoons were supercharged by climate change they would be worse—and that's exactly what has happened. When they come, they pack a super punch. Harvey produced rainfall totals of more than a metre that left parts of Houston looking like a tsunami had hit. It was in fact the most extreme rainfall event on continental United States in recorded history. Warmer than normal water temperatures in places such as the Gulf of Mexico fuel the formation and rapid strengthening of tropical storms. Warmer air holds more water vapour, which, in turn, produces more rainfall. Rising sea levels exacerbate storm surge and inland flooding.

This isn't just happening in North America. While the world focused on Harvey, the death toll topped 1,000 from unusually severe monsoonal rains half a world away in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Here in Australia, climate change is already fuelling longer bushfire seasons.
and extending droughts. We are in a climate emergency. We owe it to the victims of the most recent catastrophic weather events to do whatever we can to stop these disasters from becoming the new normal.

**Oaktree**

Mr CREWTHER (Dunkley) (16:01): As the chair of the foreign affairs and aid subcommittee, today I want to raise with my colleagues the wonderful work done by the Oaktree foundation, Australia's largest youth-run aid and development organisation. In the last sitting week before the winter recess, I met with representatives from Oaktree, who represent more than 180,000 voices who believe that poverty is fundamentally unjust and are determined to do something about it. Through consultation sessions with young Australians around the country, Oaktree put together their Collective Future report entitled 'Young Australians and their vision for foreign policy'. The report emphasises the importance of the involvement of young people and their perspectives, as well as the values identified through the consultation process that young people believe that foreign policy should consider, including equality, partnership and community, transparency, empathy, compassion, open-mindedness and sustainability.

As the youngest member in the House of Representatives, I especially commend Oaktree for their work in ensuring that young Australians have the opportunity to present their views and to contribute to the ever-dynamic area of foreign policy. This is an area that I have long had a particular interest in, and I am thrilled they are enabling other young people to stand up and have a voice in the development and execution of Australian foreign policy.

**Herbert Electorate: Townsville Choral Society**

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (16:03): I rise in this place today to congratulate the Townsville Choral Society for an absolutely outstanding rendition of the production *Wicked*. The depth of talent in Townsville is simply amazing. Our young people are incredibly talented and hardworking. Courtney Dibben played a truly gregarious and enthralling Galinda, alongside a superb Elphaba, played by Nina Lippmann. These two young women told the incredible untold story of an unlikely but profound friendship between two girls, one a popular blonde and the other a misunderstood green girl. Their chemistry on stage was just wonderful, as was the energy of the whole cast. No-one missed a beat throughout the entire show. Sandra Neal played a wonderful Madam Morrible, Brady Cronin played a great Fiyero, Brett Greenland played a strong Dr Dillamond, Patrick Higgins played a very convincing Wizard of Oz, Jasmine Delle Baite played a great Nessarose and Zac Chalkley played a convincing Boq. The singing was strong and sensational; the choreography was extraordinary; the live music was fabulous; the sets, costumes, make-up and hair design were sublime. The back-of-stage was very professional. Congratulations to everyone involved in the Townsville Choral Society for an outstanding and sold out production. This production was equally as good as the professional show that I saw in our state capital, Brisbane, and I say well done to the Townsville Choral Society.

**Calare Electorate: Molong Magpies Rugby Club**

Mr GEE (Calare) (16:04): September brings footy finals fever to the Calare electorate, and it is with a heavy heart that I report to this House that the mighty Molong Magpies went down 31-10 in the GrainCorp Cup Northern Division rugby grand final last Saturday. The
heroic Magpies lost to the undefeated Narromine Gorillas, who made the most of their home ground advantage at Cale Oval. The points scored by the Magpies came from a terrific try from Mitch Brown and a conversion and penalty goal by Will Oldham. The Magpies may not have secured victory but they were awarded accolades from the referees, who voted players Matthew Hobbs and Blake Hutchinson best and fairest for the GrainCorp Cup Northern Division 2017 competition.

I would like to give special mention to Molong Magpies President Greg Travis; Sarah Cary, who is the secretary of the club and plays a key role in keeping the Magpies flying high; treasurer Jock Haynes, who bleeds black and white; committee member and club legend Mary Mulhall; coach Graham Hobbs; assistant coaches Peter Evans and Mark Toynton; captain Josh Peffer; players Mitch Brown and Will Oldham; world-famous lawnmower racer and club No. 5 Ross Cary; Robbie Ferguson; Damian Hayes, who always has the ball on a string; Jayden Fahey; Joe Reid; Hugh Westcott; Blake Hutchinson; Dylan Little; Brodie Travis; Matt Hobbs; Jack Pratten; Michael Thompson; Matt Corin; Isaac White; Joe Doyle; Scott Nicholls; Mitch Taberner; and Kyle Travis, who scored that last-second try in the 2014 grand final to secure the Miracle at Molong. I'd also like to mention Jed Pratten, Peter Finlay and Carl Reid. Congratulations to the Molong Magpies. This House looks forward to hearing about your exploits in 2018.

Broadband

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (16:06): From Redcliffe to Launceston, Mittagong to Newcastle and in my own electorate of Whitlam, businesses are pulling their hair out because of problems they are facing with the NBN. It is nothing short of a crisis. On Friday, 15 September, the member for Cunningham and I will be convening a crisis summit of businesses in the Illawarra and South Coast to deal with the real issues that the government is ignoring. Last week the Executive Director of the Illawarra Business Chamber, Chris Lamont, had this to say:

Feedback from members indicates that unreliable telecommunications that are dysfunctional for lengthy periods of time is putting their business at risk and in some cases has caused them to go out of business entirely.

The government's response is to stick their head in a bucket of sand. Businesses in my electorate—and I know in yours, Deputy Speaker Claydon, because I have visited them with you personally—do not have that luxury. They are seeing money and customers walk out the door because their phone lines won't work and because their internet services won't work—all from a government that promised an NBN that would be faster, better and cheaper. The government has failed on each of these three measures.

We can't wait till the next election, we need solutions now. So the member for Cunningham and I will be looking for solutions with businesses at the business summit in our electorate.

Burma: Rakhine State

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (16:08): The world is witnessing an unfolding humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. Hundreds have died in the conflict between the military, Rohingya and Buddhist communities in Rakhine State in the west of Myanmar. As each day goes by, the situation appears to be worsening, with tens of thousands of Rohingya seeking refuge in Bangladesh.
At the beginning of this year I was part of a parliamentary group which visited Rakhine State and its capital, Sittwe. The causes of the current crisis are complex. We witnessed the entrenched disadvantage of those living in Rakhine State, be they Buddhist or Muslim, and we learned of the discrimination faced by the Rohingya community in the provision of services as basic as health, education and employment and in their freedom of movement.

The current violence is marked by claim and counterclaim. In the absence of credible international observances, establishing the truth is challenging. Opening the region to the United Nations and NGOs must be made a priority. The Myanmar police and military have been the subject of terrorists acts, including the attacks on border posts in October 2016 and those documented more recently, yet that criminal activity has been met by a reaction from the Myanmar military which is contrary to the norms of human rights and policing and to any sensible pathway to a peaceful solution.

The government of Aung San Suu Kyi must act swiftly to deactivate the violence. To do otherwise will see this conflict worsen and be fertile ground for those promoting extremism. The democratic forces and longing for basic human rights which propelled Suu Kyi to office and so excited the world must surely be extended to all of Myanmar's people.

**Parramatta Electorate: Eid al-Adha**

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:09): I rise today to wish the Muslim community in Parramatta and all around Australia Eid Mubarak. Last Friday, I attended morning prayers at Old Kings Oval in Parramatta with over 800 people from Western Sydney to mark Eid al-Adha. It was a great day to catch up with the many Muslims in my community and to engage in quiet reflection. There was some baklava, which turned out to be really good at seven o'clock in the morning! It was a great day to catch up with—

*An honourable member interjecting—*

Ms OWENS: That is true, any day. Eid al-Adha, also known as the feast of sacrifices, is a time to share with relatives, friends and neighbours. It is also known as a time of great charity, sharing with the poor and the needy, and helping those less fortunate. Around 17,000 Muslims live in the electorate of Parramatta, including adults and children—just under 10 per cent of the population—and they contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of our community every day. I would like to thank the chairman of the Parramatta mosque, Neil El-Kadomi, for inviting me to the event. It is always a pleasure to take part in Islamic celebrations throughout the year, particularly those held and organised by our local mosques. I wish every member of the Muslim community in Parramatta and around Australia Eid al-Adha.

**Parliamentary Friends of Young People**

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (16:10): I rise to inform honourable members of the creation of a new parliamentary friendship group, the Parliamentary Friends of Young People. Our parliament doesn't necessarily reflect the aged make-up of Australia's population, yet we are all young at heart, represent young people and have a keen interest in ensuring a bright future for them and for our country. Alongside my co-chair, the member for Mayo, our new friendship group provides an additional way for younger Australians to access and interact with parliament and our democratic processes. It provides a forum for members and senators to meet and interact with young members of society, visiting youth leaders, students, advocates for young people and so on.
Last month, our parliamentary friendship group held its first formal event in conjunction with the Parliamentary Friends of Disability. We heard from Youngcare and the Summer Foundation, who gave us some interesting insights into the future landscape with the NDIS, particularly as it relates to younger people with a disability and their carers. I want to thank some of our famous guests at that dinner—Darren Lockyer, Nathan Sharpe, John Aloisi, Amy Parmenter and our MC, Sylvia Jefferies. I also want to thank all of my honourable colleagues who were able to attend, and I trust that they learnt a lot. I encourage members and senators to join us at future events so that together we can give a stronger voice to younger people in Canberra.

**Economy**

*Mr HART* (Bass) (16:12): I would like to bring to the attention of the House the growing problem of intergenerational inequality. Increasingly, young Australians cannot afford to buy their own home, they cannot afford to go to university and they cannot find jobs. I was lucky enough to have benefitted from the Whitlam Labor government's education policies. Today the average university degree costs well over $50,000. Most of us bought our first homes when houses cost around $70,000. When my wife, Annie, and I bought our first house, it cost less than $50,000. Today the Tasmanian median price is over $270,000. Obviously, the median price Australia-wide is higher in areas with high growth and younger populations.

This government has made the lives of young Australians harder. In 2014, the government tried to hike the price of a university degree to $100,000 or more, which, thankfully, the Senate rejected. However, that risk is still with us with cuts to the funding of our university sector. The government has continued to argue for raising the retirement age from 65 to 70. This may hamper the employment of young Australians. Youth unemployment in my state exceeds 15 per cent. Forcing older Australians to stay in the workforce even longer will affect job opportunities for younger Australians. I call on the government to stop persecuting both the old and young of Australia and to instead invest in them. The young are our future. We cannot afford to send mixed messages about the importance of investing in education.

**Employment**

*Mr IRONS* (Swan) (16:13): Last Monday, I welcomed the Minister for Employment, Michaelia Cash, and my electorate neighbour, Minister Ken Wyatt, to Swan to announce the federal coalition government's Career Transition Assistance Program.

*An honourable member interjecting—*

*Mr IRONS:* You might be eligible for this one day! The CTAP announcement was made at a company called Globaltech in Forrestfield. CTAP is part of this government's $110 million mature-age employment package announced in the 2017-18 budget, creating opportunities for mature-aged Australians to re-skill.

*Mr Hammond interjecting—*

*Mr IRONS:* You might need this, member for Perth. It is a program which is recognising the skills and experience older Australians are able to offer and giving them the confidence to get back into the workforce. The government has recognised that there are many older Australians looking for work. They may be looking for a new occupation or have struggled to find work after spending decades in industries that are now in decline. The program is designed to ensure that mature-age Australians can retrain and integrate back into the
workforce and is currently to be trialled in five locations across Australia from 1 July next year. It will deliver short, intensive courses consisting of skill assessments, exploring suitable occupations and teaching resilience strategies.

We met Alan Howard, from Globaltech, who has re-entered the workforce at the age of 56 and is working with the company to manufacture devices for mining and drilling applications. Alan is unique, as he travels five hours every day just to get to his new employment. Alan is thoroughly enjoying his new job and has a new lease on life with the work he's doing. I'd like to thank the minister for coming to Swan and congratulate her on the work she's put into this great program.

Marriage

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (16:15): I am very fortunate to represent a community that has a tradition of engaging wholeheartedly and constructively in the cause of creating positive change. It's a community that is happy to discuss and debate the issues of the day, large and small. I can say from experience that the people of Fremantle don't mind and won't shirk the blustery winds that always blow when you're prepared to walk towards change.

In that vein, on the Friday before last, I was very happy to host a community rally in support of marriage equality under the banner of 'Fremantle says yes'. It was lovely to see 1,000 people gather at sunset at the extraordinary public sculpture by Marcus Canning called 'the container rainbow'. We enjoyed organising ourselves into a massive, and sometimes dancing, human 'yes'.

I was grateful for the support of the City of Fremantle and the participation of the mayor, Brad Pettitt, and members of his council who, together, have taken a clear advocacy position on this issue. It was fantastic to hear from my friend and colleague Senator Louise Pratt, who has long campaigned for the rights of LGBTIQ Australians. It was a privilege to hear from the director of Australians for Equality, Tiernan Brady, who spoke from the heart in saying that this shift away from discrimination and towards greater inclusion is not about what but about who. It is about all the many people who will have the right to choose the happiness, stability and commitment that comes with marriage and in so doing can feel, within our communities across Australia, included, accepted and loved.

McPhee, Ms Anna

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (16:17): I rise to honour the life of Anna McPhee, daughter of Bill and Trish, wife of Reggie. She departed this world late last week after a long battle with breast cancer. Such was her verve for life that death waited until she slept to take her. Anna was a true Liberal. She fought for the rights of those who could not, because she understood better than most that by protecting the rights of the meek she was fighting for the rights and privileges of all people.

She was an uncompromising advocate for the advancement of women at a time before it was welcomed, and often to her own detriment. She represented Australia at the United Nations convention on the advancement of women. When, in 1995, she went to the United States, most people in our party wanted time with Newt Gingrich and his stormtroopers. Anna instead wanted to learn how the Democrats had coaxed, encouraged, recruited and trained women into public life. She was instrumental in ensuring that, when the Liberal Party won government in 1996, it was with a record number of female representatives. In 1998, when the
Liberal Party lost the popular vote but won the election, it was because this cohort of female candidates had held their seats when many of their male colleagues had not.

Her contributions are far more numerous than this, but none was greater than the way she could bring light to an argument that seemed intractably cloaked in darkness. While we will all miss Anna, in truth, she will not leave this mortal coil while those of us left keep her alive in our memories.

Macquarie Electorate: New South Wales Rural Fire Service

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:18): It's only a few days into spring, but yesterday's almost 30 degrees in my electorate of Macquarie was a taste of the bushfire danger that lies ahead, with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service declaring an early fire season for the Blue Mountains. The Bureau of Meteorology and NASA data mean we can see that conditions are similar to 2013, when more than 200 homes in the mountains, including mine, were lost. In my area, preparations for bushfire season pretty much never stop.

In the Hawkesbury, the annual championships last month were a chance for friendly competition between the brigades. I was pleased to help present the prizes, with Tennyson winning overall for a second year running. Hawkesbury firefighters have also spent weeks doing hazard reductions and have treated more than 3,000 hectares. Nearly 400 people have been involved, and I especially want to mention 110 of them, who took time off paid work, for their efforts, and their employers, for their understanding.

It's the same in the Blue Mountains. I recently attended the opening of the new Shipley brigade fire shed, a long fought-for addition to this upper mountains community. Captain Jim Crowther needs to be recognised for his absolute determination to see this shed rebuilt, as do all those involved in completing the wonderful project.

The Blue Mountains district has also recognised 58 members for their long service, a staggering 1,357 years of service between them. These are people who will drop everything when bushfires strike, and we thank them. (Time expired)

Goldstein Electorate: Charities

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:20): Today I would like to celebrate two wonderful charity events organised in the Goldstein electorate. The first one, at the Pantry Party in Brighton, was to raise money for Very Special Kids. It started a few years ago by Guy Mainwaring after Very Special Kids helped him and his wife, Juliet, in a difficult time when they were nursing their late son, Gus, after he was diagnosed with Batten's disease. In the grounds of St Andrew's Church on Saturday morning they raised $47,312 for this year. Particular thanks go to Dan Vaughn, from the Pantry Party, for his support.

I would like to say thanks to everybody who was involved—including Matt Tilley, for his hosting, Tweety bird, Bugs Bunny and Darth Vader. And I have to say that Felicity Frederico did look particularly good in her pig costume! Of course, I did my bit as well: I was dunked on Saturday morning, but I will say that I am a little disturbed by Matthew Paynter's decision to pay 400 bucks for the privilege!

Secondly, I would like to congratulate those involved in the Riding for Good bike ride, which is an important charity raising money for Sandringham Hospital. It is biennial, raising $150,000 in 2015. This year they raised another $113,000, taking total funds raised to half a million bucks for the Sandy hospital. They ride from Black Rock to Mordialloc. The event
was opened by Judy Reeves, from Sandy hospital, and me. It was a wonderful charity event and I want to thank the organising team: Alistair Murray, Anthony Green, Michael Paynter, Joe Tyrrell, Darren Eger and Graham Nicolson, who worked with the hospital team of Kerry Stratford and Judy Reeves, and also all of the corporate sponsors, who did the right thing.

Domestic and Family Violence

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (16:21): Recently, I spoke at the National Council of Women’s conference about the vulnerability of women. I would like to thank Barbara Baikie for the invitation to be part of the panel discussion. The panel discussion was in response to violence against women. This was followed by a presentation by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins, who explored the root cause of violence against women, which is gender discrimination.

I was a co-panellist with Nathan Costigan, the cousin of Tara Costigan, who was brutally murdered by her former partner while holding her eight-day-old baby. He attacked her with an axe, and her older children watched on. In Tara's memory, the Costigan family set up the Tara Costigan Foundation to support the thousands of women who need support at the most critical time of their lives. Recently, I was invited to be the keynote speaker for the foundation's ladies' lunch. They were raising money for Tara's Angels, a service that helps women post-crisis in a social work or advocate position. It goes on for two years post that woman leaving that violent relationship.

I would like to see a time when foundations like this are not needed and a government's response is adequate—or, even better, when we eliminate violence against women once and for all. Until we move to a time where we treat women equally in pay and workplace conditions, have women on boards and in the highest levels of management—and represented equally in our parliament—and value women's work as much as men's, I fear we will not see this.

I want to place on Hansard today my thanks to the National Council of Women and to the Tara Costigan Foundation. More than that, I would like to thank them for their continued advocacy towards a continual gender-equal future.

Corangamite Electorate: Sporting Facilities

Corangamite Electorate: Charles Stewart & Co.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (16:23): It was my great pleasure to join President Dick McDonald and Surf Coast Mayor Brian McKiterick for the turning of the sod at the Anglesea Bowling Club last Wednesday. After a 10-year journey—or, more correctly, battle—construction has finally begun on their $1.1 million new clubroom, supported by $500,000 from the Turnbull government. And I was actually at the Torquay Bowls Club for its season opening on Friday night and the upgrade of its new club, thanks to $1.5 million from the member for South Barwon, Andrew Katos. It has absolutely transformed this place; it's now a thriving community hub, which is one of the fundamental reasons why we invest in these very important facilities.

On Saturday I joined Golden Plains Shire Council Mayor Des Phelan to open Bannockburn's new soccer pavilion, to which our government has contributed $100,000. President Anthony Vanjek gave the most wonderful speech about the importance of
volunteers and the sacrifice of families in growing this club, so it is a great credit to everyone at the Golden Plains Soccer Club.

And on Saturday night I joined the owners, staff and friends of Charles Stewart & Co for a wonderful centenary celebration of this preeminent real estate and livestock company which has done so much for farmers and for the broader community of south-west Victoria. Congratulations in particular to Neil and Michael Stewart, as well as to Peter McConachy. It was a wonderful night and it is a wonderful company. (Time expired)

Canberra Electorate: Broadband

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:24): Canberrans, what if I told you the current rollout plan for fibre to the node in Canberra would perpetuate the digital divide across the ACT and that the rollout of fibre to the node would reinforce a digital underclass in the ACT? Many areas of south-east Tuggeranong are on ADSL and, with fibre to the node, will continue to be left behind. And what do we hear from the Turnbull government? That the NBN will fix it. Right now, there is no recognised upgrade path for fibre-to-the-node technology.

Canberrans, what I'm saying today is that you don't have to settle for a second-rate NBN. Bellingen Shire Council has worked together with NBN Co to prevent the rollout of fibre to the node across the shire in New South Wales. This agreement will see fibre to the curb as the minimum technology standard deployed. This is what Canberra needs. This is what Canberra deserves. If fibre to the curb can be rolled out in some streets to some homes and businesses, it can be rolled out to each and every home and business in Canberra. NBN Co, you're on notice. I will seek a meeting with you in this sitting period to discuss Canberra's digital infrastructure, our digital divide and the way forward for my electorate. I will not allow Canberra to be left behind. I will not allow Canberrans to have their educational opportunities, their commercial opportunities and their democratic opportunities impeded by a second-rate NBN.

Coptic Christians

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:26): I rise to extend a most warm welcome on behalf of myself and the many Coptic Christians in my electorate of Hughes to Pope Tawadros II, the Patriarch of millions of Coptic Christians around the world. The Pope is an inspirational leader of the Coptic Christians, who face daily persecution by Islamic extremists in their homeland of Egypt. It was only in May of this year that ISIS gunmen brutally attacked a bus heading for a monastery, killing 29 Coptic Christians, including women and children. Such atrocities are to be condemned as having no place in a civilised society.

During these challenging times, Australia stands with our Coptic community, which is now estimated at more than 100,000 people across Australia. I'm also honoured to have St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College in Wattle Grove in my electorate. It does a fantastic job educating our youth. It's been great to see the Coptic community growing and contributing so much here in Australia. From humble beginnings back in 1969, when there was only one priest and one church, we now have 72 Coptic priests and 40 Coptic churches.

It's wonderful to have Pope Tawadros visit Australia for the first time since being ordained in 2012. He certainly has a full schedule of meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, including with the Prime Minister. To the Pope, a hearty welcome from all Australians
Equal Pay Day

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (16:28): Think back to 1 July, the first day of this financial year. It feels like it was a long time ago, I suppose, but that's because it was a long time ago. It was just over two months ago—66 days ago. Sixty-six days is actually really significant because it's one more day than the 65 additional days from the end of the previous financial year that a woman must work to earn the same as a man. Despite the 0.9 per cent decrease over the previous 12 months, the national gender pay gap still sits at 15.3 per cent. That means, on average, men still earn over $250 per week more than women. When you add the recently announced penalty rate cuts by this government, which disproportionately affect women, that gap looks set to be wider and wider and wider. This just shows that we've got such a long way to go as a nation to stamp out bias, move on from outdated gender stereotypes and knock down the barriers that women still face when seeking senior and higher paying roles. We must address this immediately. Women are retiring with less super. They are living week to week on wages in total less than those of men, and we must do something to help our women.

Veterans

Mr DRUM (Murray—Chief Nationals Whip) (16:29): Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to meet with Ken Jones and Bob Barker from the Vietnam Veterans Association of Echuca-Moama. Ken and Bob wanted to meet me to raise issues that veterans are facing locally and nationally. We talked a lot about the large number of suicides and mental health issues in the veterans and serving members community. According to a report conducted by the National Mental Health Commission in March this year, between 2000 and 2016 there were 119 confirmed suicides of serving members in the ADF, and from 2001 to 2016 there were 150 confirmed suicides of veterans. Another striking statistic is that between 2000 and 2016 there were 986 hospitalisations of veterans or their family members due to self-harm, and 789 of these events were individual cases. These statistics are horrendous and it is up to all of us to work together to help the people who have served our nation.

The federal government has made a leap forward in trying to solve these issues. Minister Tehan made the first annual ministerial statement on veterans and their families, outlining a number of areas where the federal government can improve services. For example, the Department of Defence didn't have the capacity to notify the Department of Veterans' Affairs when a serving member became a veteran. The minister has changed that so that now, when a member leaves the ADF, they are automatically registered with the DVA. I thank Ken and Bob for meeting with me, and I hope that the government can continue to help our veterans in our community.

Workplace Relations

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (16:31): Back in June this year, 220 maintenance workers at Esso in Victoria employed by contractor UGL were terminated and offered their jobs back with a cut of up to 30 per cent of their wages and the introduction of a roster that will see them lose very valuable time with their families. Esso's parent company, ExxonMobil, already pays no tax in Australia. Now they're allowing UGL to rort these highly skilled employees, some of whom have decades of experience and work in dangerous conditions to ensure the consistent supply of gas to south-eastern Australia. All this was done with no notice and no consultation with the workers. That just isn't right. I met a delegation of the Esso workers at Parliament House
in the last sitting week. These guys are all proud members of the Australian Workers' Union, the ETU and the AMWU, and they have been maintaining a peaceful protest at the Longford gas plant in Victoria. They will continue to do so for however long it takes until they're reinstated on the terms and conditions of employment that they had negotiated in good faith with their employer. But, while Esso and UGL let this dispute roll on, facilities are being either left unmanned or staffed with underskilled, undertrained personnel. This poses a safety risk to the existing workers and the facilities themselves. I call on Esso to negotiate in good faith and stop hurting the communities and their families. Do the right thing.

Page Electorate: Community Events

Mr HOGAN (Page) (16:33): Volunteers were recognised from my community for their outstanding contribution at the annual Volunteer of the Year Awards held at the South Grafton Ex-Servicemen's Club. I'd like to congratulate Tania Williams of Maclean, who received both the 2017 Northern Rivers Region Adult Volunteer of the Year Award and the overall Volunteer of the Year Award for her work with Lower Clarence Community Radio. Congratulations also to Donna van Leeuwen, who was named Senior Volunteer of the Year for her work at the Bonalbo & District Memorial Hall and Bonalbo's RSL women's auxiliary. Finally, I would like to congratulate the Clarence Youth Action Group, which was named the Volunteer Team of the Year. The Clarence Youth Action Group is made up of a diverse range of young people aged between 12 and 29 and promotes social inclusion in the Clarence Valley. Congratulations to all the winners.

In Lismore on the weekend, the sixth annual Trojans Turnout was hosted at the showgrounds. This year, over 50 hot rods and custom cars were on display. I would like to congratulate the Trojans president, Rick Pacey, the secretary-treasurer, Toni Pacey-Miller, and everyone who showed their car on the day. The people's favourite on the day was Allan Hicks's 1959 Camaro coupe. Awards were presented to Ian Leake for his 1936 Ford sedan, Steve Fitness's 1962 Valiant sedan, Rebecca Robertson's 1959 Cadillac and Steve Molloy's—

Mr DICK (Oxley) (16:34): Last week I had the pleasure of spending time with two of our great local Meals on Wheels volunteers. The Australian spirit of generosity and helping each other is often talked about, but there is no better example than the volunteers who run our local Meals on Wheels. On Wednesday it was National Meals on Wheels Day. I spent time on the delivery run in the Centenary Suburbs with local champions Maree and Greg Franklin. The following day, I was able to get a firsthand insight into the Woogaroo Meals on Wheels service, run out of Redbank, with local legend, driver Diane. These volunteers make sure that the motto 'more than just a meal' rings true. I congratulate Meals on Wheels for all their fantastic work and the two million meals they have delivered for people in Queensland this year.

But it's not all good news. I've also been informed about the inequities in government funding that sees Meals on Wheels in states and territories outside of Queensland receive up to three times as much funding. The inequitable funding is also failing to keep pace with inflation, meaning services are being slowly diminished. Meals on Wheels in Queensland represents 130 independently run local services that operate in virtually every community. These services and the volunteers who run them are an essential part of ensuring seniors,
pensioners and vulnerable Australians are provided with daily in-home visits, nutritious meals and welfare checks. I call on the government to support the tremendous work of Meals on Wheels in Queensland so we can see them continue to provide this vital service well into the future.

Father's Day

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (16:36): Yesterday, 3 September 2017, was Father's Day. I want to take the opportunity to thank all Australian fathers for the work they do. My wife, Louise, had the opportunity to attend the Scripture Union Queensland Father of the Year Award last week. It was started by Alan Male back in the 1970s. This year's winner was Jeremy Lange, who is a young father from Mackay, in the member for Dawson's electorate. Jeremy Lange, despite the fact he came from a broken family and also has a broken family himself—he has two children and he and his wife had split up—has gone on to be a wonderful father. I think that says a lot about Jeremy. I want to congratulate him.

My own father, Ron Howarth, taught me a lot about work ethic, hard work and basic economics. He was a great provider for my family and still is. He taught me about money, debt, interest and small business. My wife's father taught her about unconditional love. Spending time together was important, whether it was washing the boat or polishing the bull bar. He was a strong, stable and constant father in her life and that helped her.

Fathers have a great responsibility and every one of them has a different contribution they can make to their child's life. I want to thank them for what they do and encourage them to keep doing their best as they raise the next generation of Australians.

Asylum Seekers

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (16:37): A week has gone since the government's plan was revealed to cease almost immediately all income support for asylum seekers transferred to Australia for medical reasons. These asylum seekers will be given three weeks before being evicted from government-supported accommodation, essentially coercing them back into offshore detention centres. Over the past week my office has been flooded with calls and letters from our local community voicing their frustration and anger at the government's latest attempt to rob refugees of their rights and legal choices. I echo their sentiments. These asylum seekers are vulnerable people. They may be traumatised by a violent past, they may have been through severe medical challenges and they may have virtually no financial support. Now the government is cutting off their income support and giving them an eviction notice. Making these people deliberately destitute is not an act of toughness. Making these people deliberately homeless is not an act of strong leadership. It is an act of cruelty, and it is a cynical political ploy seeking a distraction from the chaos this government inflicted upon itself time and again. It is definitely not an act of strong leadership. Strong leadership would be to join with Labor in bringing an end to indefinite detention through third-party resettlement, not to punish people for needing medical care. Strong leadership would be to follow the recent recommendation of the Senate and publicly confirm these asylum seekers' eligibility to apply to participate in the US refugee resettlement arrangement, not to deny them the opportunity to apply. I will not support the removal of up to 400 refugees transferred to Australia for medical reasons.
Moore Electorate: City Deals

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:39): I support the city of Joondalup in its application for funding under the City Deals program to develop the civic precinct of Joondalup around Boas Avenue and Grand Boulevard. At a time when business turnover for traders is lower than normal in the current economic climate and the city centre is quiet after business hours, there exists the need to give local businesses a boost. Our vision is to develop the landholding adjacent to the civic centre, presently used as open-air car parking, to include mixed use development comprising commercial office space, hospitality and residential uses. These more productive and higher uses will bring more vibrancy to the city centre, creating more local jobs and taking advantage of the public transport, amenities and services already available in our master-planned city. Under the federal government's City Deals program, our cities will be transformed into better places in which to live and work. The City of Joondalup's civic centre will be transformed into a vibrant hub with more activity after business hours as office workers support hospitality businesses such as local cafes, restaurants and bars. Through City Deals, governments, industry and communities will develop collective plans for growth and provide a coordinated investment plan for our cities.

Automotive Industry

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (16:40): In 1971, the year before I was born, Steve Hollingworth began on afternoon shift at Holden. He worked there for 36 years. He was a great supporter of the industry and of the vehicle division of the AMWU—prior to that, it was the vehicle builders' union. Steve still lives in the north, still has a lot heart and still has a connection to the plant because his son works there. He sent a letter to the union, and I would like to read the last paragraph: 'On 20 October, the lion's heart will stop beating. The gates will close for the last time, and it will all be gone. It's so sad that there has to be an end to an industry where employees worked so hard to keep this Holden plant working. Fellow Holden workers, I salute you—a great job done. You can walk away proud of your achievements.' That is certainly true.

Last week I was at the Holden plant and they informed me that, of all the plants in the world, the GMH Elizabeth plant is the top plant in the world for quality. It has been the top plant in the world for the last four months, beating every other GM factory in the world. And it is just months away from closure. These workers are going out with their heads held high, despite those opposite damaging their reputations. They are ending world's best practice.

Ms Flint interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: Yes, I do.

Ms Flint: So do I.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I give the call to the slightly unruly member for Boothby.

Energy

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (16:42): Last Monday I held a roundtable discussion with businesses, local government leaders and the Minister for the Environment and Energy. I'm glad my South Australian colleague is still in the chamber because in the meeting we discussed the effects of South Australia's world's-highest power prices on employers and local
councils in my electorate of Boothby. These outrageous and unaffordable power price hikes were caused by the terrible policy decisions of state and federal Labor governments alike. For local government, and therefore ratepayers, the price of keeping street lights on will be hundreds of thousands of dollars more each year. Local businesses, like independent supermarkets, pubs, restaurants and crash repairers, are facing increases to their power bills of up to 72 per cent. I don't know how these businesses are going to absorb these costs. Between them they employ thousands of South Australians—in particular, young South Australians who are in their first jobs. Labor have put these jobs at risk and they have put current and future investment at risk. When businesses are facing double the cost of power, they will not be able to afford to employ new staff. They will not be able to afford to renovate their stores or invest in new plant and equipment. They will not be able to afford to build new stores or new sites. The federal government is doing all we can to drive power prices down. This is absolutely critical for South Australia, but we can't say it is the same for federal and state Labor parties, unfortunately. The future of my state depends on us getting these power costs down.

**Liberal Party**

Mr HAMMOND (Perth) (16:44): We're all adults in this place, and I think we'll all agree that through perhaps the effluxion of time, misadventure or folly, or sheerly through being in the wrong place at the wrong time, we've all seen things that we can't unsee. I'm adding one more thing to that list of things that, sadly, I can't unsee, and that is the Western Australian state Liberal conference held this past weekend at Scarborough. What a treat that was! We saw Western Australia's answer to Ned Flanders, Mike Nahan, stand up and talk about the need to find some mates—what he called 'Mike's Mates'. The thing we know about names is—just as the Prime Minister likes to call himself strong—they don't resonate when you make them up yourself. I don't have any confidence in his being able to find those mates. But it got worse. Not only did Mike not find any mates but things really got hot and flustered when they started talking about 'succession'. I thought they were talking about regeneration in the Liberal Party, but they were actually talking about 'secession', as in breaking away from the entire country. Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, it became very clear what all that sound and fury was about. It was about the Prime Minister having no answer on the GST and having no support for Western Australia. They should be departing in droves. They should be hanging their heads in shame.

**Pensions and Benefits**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:45): The somewhat nondescript town of Ceduna, in South Australia, has been thrust into national headlines with the release last week of the ORIMA research on the healthy welfare card wave 2 trials. It is impossible to explain how hard it is to change the character of a town such as we've seen in Ceduna with the impact of the healthy welfare card with a reduction in the area of 40 per cent in alcohol and gambling recorded. There was 41 per cent less frequent consumption of alcohol; a 37 per cent fall in presentations to Ceduna for alcohol related issues; a 14 per cent fall in apprehensions under the Public Intoxication Act; a 40 per cent perception among nonparticipants that their town is safer; 48 per cent of participants gambling less; and a 12 per cent collapse in pokie revenue, something we've never achieved anywhere else in the country and representing over half a million dollars re-injected into the real economy in Ceduna, by which I mean the purchasing of
goods, food, medicines, toys and supplies for children and babies. Obviously, we've seen reports of the consumption of legal drugs dropping, not just in 24 per cent of participants but, in wave 2, to 48 per cent. We have also seen 45 per cent of participants better at saving money, 40 per cent of them better at caring for those they are responsible for, and a fall in crime and other harmful behaviours. These changes don't come easy but they come with a healthy welfare card.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
National Police Remembrance Day

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:47): I move:

(1) notes that National Police Remembrance Day is observed on 29 September;
(2) acknowledges the significant role police officers across Australia play in our local communities and the great deal of risk and sacrifice that comes with their duty;
(3) honours the lives and memories of those police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the course of their duty and tragically this year we specifically honour Senior Constable Brett Forte of the Queensland Police Service, who was shot and killed in the Lockyer Valley on 29 May;
(4) pays tribute to the families and friends of police officers who have been killed in the line of duty throughout our nation's history;
(5) commends the good work of Police Legacy, who look after the loved ones of police officers that have fallen; and
(6) reaffirms its support for the nation's police officers and honours their courage, commitment and dedication to ensuring the peace and safety of our communities.

National Police Remembrance Day is observed annually on 29 September, the feast of St Michael, the patron saint of law enforcement and, according to Christian tradition, the protector of good over evil. Since 1989, this has been one of the most significant days in the national police calendar. As a nation, we pause on this day to remember those officers who have lost their life in the execution of their duty and to honour the courage and commitment of all police members who are sworn to protect our communities.

Policing, as we know, comes with a high degree of risk and danger that, thankfully, most of us will never have to face. It really does take a special type of person with a special type of courage to wear a police uniform. We are forever indebted to those fine men and women who have chosen to do so, and we recognise their commitment to ensuring the peace and security of our communities, a duty we should never take for granted. National Police Remembrance Day is therefore a significant occasion not only for police but also for the wider community. It provides us with the opportunity to reflect upon the invaluable service that our police give and to express our gratitude for their contribution. Our safety and that of our families, the security of our homes and businesses and, indeed, our democracy are all reliant on the enforcement of our laws, a task which falls largely to our police.

The National Police Memorial in Canberra, which was completed in 2006, currently carries the names of 775 police officers from across the nation who have lost their life during the course of their duty. This year, the service will see the total number of police officers listed on...
this memorial rise by one as we recognise the tragic loss of Senior Constable Brett Forte, of the Queensland Police Service. Senior Constable Forte was shot and killed in the Lockyer Valley on 29 May this year during a police operation with the Toowoomba Tactical Crime Squad.

An officer with over 15 years experience, Senior Constable Forte, I'm told, was born to be a cop, with his closest friends describing the Queensland Police Service as his passion and saying they could not imagine him doing anything else. Senior Constable Forte came from a family of police officers. His father is a retired cop, his wife, Susan, and his brother-in-law are both serving officers. The death of Senior Constable Forte highlights the inherent dangers in police work. Not knowing what they are likely to face day in and day out, police officers are prepared to put their lives on the line every time they go on shift. Senior Constable Forte tragically leaves behind his wife, Susan, and three children, Brodie, Samuel and Emma.

National Police Remembrance Day is also a time to think about the loved ones who have been left behind and the families and friends whose lives are now forever affected. While we mourn with them, we thank and honour all police families whose unconditional support has allowed these fine men and women to serve our communities. We owe it to the fallen to look after their families, which is why the work of Police Legacy is of particular importance and deserving of our support. In this regard, I will begin participating in the police Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance. I've been to some events earlier this year, albeit on four wheels rather than two. I will join this year with more than 2½ thousand police officers and friends to raise much-needed funds towards assisting the work of Police Legacy.

To Senior Constable Forte and to all those police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice, as well as all past and current serving members of the police forces around the country: we honour you, and we profoundly thank you for the service that you have given.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mrs Elliot: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (16:52): As we heard, National Police Remembrance Day, 29 September, is the day that serving police officers and we as the broader community remember their fallen colleagues. The men and women of the police force are vital to each and every community, protecting 24 million of us every day. That's what they do. There are over 6½ thousand officers in WA, and they put their lives at risk every single day.

Since the turn of the millennium, eight police officers have tragically lost their lives in Western Australia, and that's eight too many. They've left behind friends, families and colleagues who loved and cared for them. I acknowledge the officers who've lost their lives: Constable Mark Loo huys, Detective Senior Constable Michael Jenkins, Constable Gavin Capes, First Class Constable David Dewar, Senior Constable Donald Everett, Senior Constable Phillip Ruland and Constable Damian Murphy.

I want to also talk about the fact that we lost 29-year-old Senior Constable Jamie Pearson, who was driving an unmarked police car along the Bussell Highway near Capel in 2004. His car collided with another vehicle and, tragically, he lost his life. Senior Constable Pearson only ever wanted to be a police officer. He took pride in his job. He was very well respected by his peers, particularly his senior colleagues, and of course he was greatly loved by his
parents, Gary and Kathleen. He joined the force as a cadet in 1993 and graduated in 1995. He was posted to Bunbury Police Station in 2002. At the end of last year's Police Remembrance Day ceremony in Bunbury the conference room of the South West Police Complex was officially named the Pearson Room in memory and honour of Jamie.

I also want to talk about the police officers who suffer physical and emotional trauma while doing their job to protect us. In Harvey, Sergeant Laurie Morley suffered serious and debilitating injuries after he was assaulted by several youths. At the time, he was protecting a member of the public. He was off duty, and he was in Harvey. He saw some young person being attacked by four or five adults. He intervened to help protect the young man but was punched, shoved and choked. It was his 40 years of experience that enabled him to get all of them to the police station in Harvey, but then the group attacked the youth again. In trying to stop this attack, Sergeant Morley was attacked by the group. They had him in a headlock, they hip-and-shouldered him, and it is believed he was also hit by a hammer. He was king hit at one point and lost a tooth. The damage was so severe he needed to have 46 weeks off work. He's had four surgeries to date and several medical injection procedures. Another surgery on his wrist is coming up. Laurie could have died on that day. Attending officers at the scene found the hammer and a 13-inch knife in the garden bed where the incident occurred. The impact on Laurie, on his wife, Jo, on his colleagues and on the people of Harvey community is severe.

I really want to thank all of the Laurie Morleys, every policeman and policewoman who faces this, as we know, every single day in the jobs they do to keep us safe. I really want to thank Laurie particularly. When you're the police officer and the sergeant in a small community, everybody knows you and everybody generally respects the work that's done. We all rely on Laurie and we rely on the police officers in our small communities to keep us all safe. We can't do without these amazing people, and I want to acknowledge the trauma for people like Laurie Morley, the trauma for his wife, Jo, and even the fact there's so much that he can't do that he used to do and the impact that that has on physical and mental health. He will carry the results of this right throughout his life now, and he would be typical of police officers right around Australia.

So, in thanking the member for this private member's motion, I want to pay my great respects and honour and thank every single police officer right around Australia for the work that they do every single day, whether it's in a small community like mine or in a major metropolitan centre, and the way that they protect us and make our communities safe. I just want to thank them all, and I have great respect for what they do.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:57): I'm very honoured to rise and speak today in support of the motion on National Police Remembrance Day moved by the member for Fowler. I wish to commend the member for his dedication to this important day of remembrance and his continued advocacy in the area of policing. I also commend my other colleagues speaking today on this motion, who I know all share a very deep commitment to highlighting the significant role undertaken by police officers right across Australia. This is an acknowledgement of the important role that police play in our local communities and the great risk and sacrifice that come with their duty.

As we know, National Police Remembrance Day is observed every year on 29 September and is a solemn occasion for police and the community to gather and reflect on the invaluable
service rendered by our very brave policemen and policewomen. This is a time when we pause to honour the lives and memory of all the fine men and women who in serving and protecting our community have had their lives tragically cut short.

This year one such life was that of Senior Constable Brett Forte of the Queensland Police Service, who was shot and killed in the Lockyer Valley on 29 May. On the afternoon of Monday, 29 May 2017, Senior Constable Brett Forte was performing duties as a member of the Darling Downs District Tactical Crimes Squad, Toowoomba. In company with his partner, Senior Constable Forte was driving a police vehicle that was following a known violent and wanted offender along the Warrego Highway and then on to Wallers Road, Ringwood. It was at that point in time that the offender got out of his vehicle and opened fire with an automatic weapon on the police vehicle. Senior Constable Forte was struck a number of times and, although he was able to reverse his car from immediate danger, his injuries proved fatal. The offender, having fled to a bushland location, refused to surrender and instead later confronted specialist response officers with gunfire. The offender was subsequently shot and killed as he fired at police. Senior Constable Forte was known as a loving son, brother, husband and father but also a great cop. He was posthumously awarded the Queensland Police Service Valour Award for his actions in protecting his colleagues and community on the day of his death. I want to take the moment to extend my greatest sympathies to Brett's wife, Susan, to their children and to all of his family, and also to his colleagues.

As a former general duties police officer myself, having served with the Queensland Police Service, I've seen firsthand some of the situations and complexities that police officers face day in and day out while serving their communities in the execution of their duties. It's important to acknowledge that these individuals who wear the blue uniform are out there working hard to keep our communities safe. And often, during these times, police are faced with terrible tragedies—events that are so often a part of everyday life. These are the tragedies, fatal accidents or family losses that we so often hear about. It's police that are often the ones to break the news to the parents, the children and the partners when such terrible incidents occur.

It's also essential to acknowledge the impact upon police from exposure to such terrible situations. This of course leads me to highlight the very significant and important role of Police Legacy. Police Legacy branches, like police forces, are individually state based, but the commonality is that they all perform the same vital function. Whilst primarily established to support the families of officers killed on duty, their roles have expanded.

New South Wales Police Legacy states that while it was:

Initially founded to support bereaved families following the loss of their loved one, our support now extends to include police officers and their families experiencing challenging times in their lives. Our police family has grown to include not only families suffering from loss and grief, but those experiencing misfortune that require extra support.

What wonderful work these organisations do for police families and loved ones. I commend them especially for this important work.

It is also important to state that this motion also states that we reaffirm our support for the nation's police officers and honour their courage, commitment and dedication to ensuring the peace and safety of our communities. Although on National Police Remembrance Day we
remember all police across all those jurisdictions across Australia, I would like to finally and personally thank all those brave and dedicated officers who gallantly and bravely serve in my electorate of Richmond on the New South Wales North Coast. I would like to salute their dedication to our wonderful region and to the protection and safety of our North Coast community. I would like to thank you on behalf of our community and acknowledge your service in keeping us all safe all of the time. You do an outstanding job. So on 29 September, on National Police Remembrance Day, let us all reflect and remember those brave police officers. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (17:02): Senior Constable Brett Forte grew up not far from the Sunshine Coast in the Moreton Bay region. He served for three years just south of my electorate in Caboolture. This year, he gave his life bravely in seeking to keep Queenslanders safe from a dangerous criminal. His death has affected many in my community and throughout Australia. It is a reminder to all of us to honour the service of our police officers and their sacrifices made on our behalf.

I want to speak today about how we might honour that sacrifice by supporting those officers who continue to live with the personal consequences of their work. Mercifully, the number of police officers who are killed in the line of duty is small, though every death is a tragedy. However, hundreds of police officers retire from their service having experienced and seen some of the worst that humanity is capable of. Many of our police officers see the effects of serious violence and encounter domestic abuse. Many are assaulted themselves or suffer threats and attempts at intimidation. Many speak to the victims of terrible sexual crimes and come face to face with their suffering. For a minority, working on child sex offences, antiterrorism or organised crime, the psychological consequences of their experiences is hard to fathom. We must honour and remember those police officers who have died protecting the public, but we must also remember their fellow officers who go on living with the impact of their service. In recent weeks, one senior officer has helped remind us of this important duty.

Commander Grant Edwards is an exceptionally strong person in every sense of the word. He has trained police in Afghanistan, supervised airport security for world leaders, managed all Australia's policing in the Americas and in 1999 was named Australia's Strongest Man. There are few people who can say that they have single-handedly moved a 200-tonne locomotive with their bare hands, but Commander Edwards can. I note he recently moved a C-130 aircraft as well.

Commander Edwards is an exceptionally strong person, but in recent weeks he has revealed that his strength was no protection from the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. The consequences of his exposure to images of serious child sexual exploitation and his experiences in Afghanistan left Commander Edwards struggling with his mental health and suicidal thoughts. He now receives treatment and continues to be a valuable leader in the AFP. On behalf of all members, I thank him for his bravery in speaking out about this important issue. I've spoken in this place and elsewhere about the urgent need to support the returning veterans of our Australian Defence Force—in particular, with dealing with the psychological impact of their experiences in theatre. In my own electorate of Fisher I hope to play a part in the creation at the Thompson institute of a treatment and research program into PTSD for our returned servicemen.
The government should be commended for its unprecedented focus on this area. We've committed $37.9 million to extend funded treatment for all mental health conditions to all serving and former members of the ADF through the white health card and Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service. The government has also provided funding to continue suicide prevention training for members of the ex-service community.

National Police Remembrance Day reminds us, however, that there are others also serving our community who may benefit from similar help. When we remember Senior Constable Forte, we must also remember the officers who were by his side when he was shot and who sought to provide him with first aid and CPR. We must remember both those who have given their lives and those who are living with the consequences of their service. I congratulate the government on the action we have taken to date to improve veterans' mental health and I for one will continue to push for more on this important issue, but I wish to encourage the Minister for Justice also to look, in collaboration with his COAG colleagues, at what more we might do to support our current emergency service workers, because it is they who are our first line of defence on the home front.

Ms LAMB (Longman) (17:07): 'Born to be a hero'—that's how Stuart Forte described his son, Senior Constable Brett Forte, after he was shot in the line of duty earlier this year. And a hero he was. Later this month is National Police Remembrance Day, but I rise today to recognise the risks they take and the sacrifices that our police make to protect our country. They are all heroes. I would like to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the course of their duty and to reflect on their lives and memories.

This year in Queensland and in Longman we specifically reflect on the life of Senior Constable Brett Forte. Though he was working in the Tactical Crime Squad at the Toowoomba Police Station Complex when he tragically fell, Brett actually grew up in the Moreton Bay region. He went to school not far down the road at Clontarf Beach State High School and joined the Queensland Police Service. Not long after he found himself working in the region at the Caboolture Police Station. This made him a third-generation police officer in his family. Caboolture Police Station is just down the road from my office, and so I have heard firsthand the memories that many of his former colleagues have of just what a wonderful man he was. His former team leader, Sergeant Pete Thompson, said it was a privilege to have worked with him. Though Brett worked at the Caboolture station from 2009 to 2012, he forged some truly meaningful relationships there. A number of the officers at the Caboolture station told me that they even had attended his wedding. That's how close they became working together. They were really a very tight-knit family at the Caboolture Police Station.

Police officers like Brett, who are outstanding members of society and who serve and protect our communities, should be recognised, and those who fall must be honoured and remembered and their families supported. And so I must take this moment to commend the work of Police Legacy, a charitable organisation which offers this support and assistance to the loved ones of police officers who have been killed on duty or who have died as a result of their duties. As at July 2017, Queensland Police Legacy was supporting 55 Queensland Police Service families just like Brett’s. It's supporting partners just like Brett’s—his wife, Susan, is also a police officer out in Toowoomba—and children just like Brett’s—his children are Emma, Brodie and Sam, and they have lost their father.
I stand here and express my unwavering support for the nation's police officers, particularly those in my home state of Queensland. As the member for Morayfield, the state seat that is located inside the electorate of Longman, we have the Hon. Mark Ryan. He is the member there, but he is also Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. In speaking to him and his office, I can see just how much the Queensland state Labor government is putting into supporting its Police Service.

Just last week, last Wednesday actually, we had the officer of the year awards at Caboolture, at the function centre. They were hosted by the Caboolture and Morayfield Combined Services Club. I saw and heard firsthand of the quality of our local officers, both in their roles in the service and as members of their local community. They spoke about the work that they do when they take the uniform off. They are coaches at the local football club; they belong to their local service organisations; they go above and beyond just being members of the Police Service. They truly are members of their communities and their families' communities as well.

These men and women—the men and women in Caboolture, the men and women in Queensland and the men and women right across Australia—who make up the nation's police service deserve our respect and, when it's needed, they deserve our support. So this year, on 29 September, National Police Remembrance Day, I urge all Australians to take a moment and reflect upon those people who have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect us all—people like Senior Constable Brett Forte.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (17:11): In the spirit of the motion, I would like to not only continue the sentiment about paying homage and giving recognition to those police officers who have served our community and paid the ultimate sacrifice but also recognise the service of every other serving police officer. The sole purpose they have committed themselves to in their professional lives, and the word we should use is 'service', is to protect our community. Everybody in this chamber shares the sentiments and the spirit of the motion and, in particular, the acknowledgement and recognition of that service. What they do is not only for the immediate community and those they are charged to protect but also for the Australian community. They bind us and provide us with the safety and security on a daily basis which—let's face it—we too often take for granted but which is foundational to our freedom and having a country that we can all feel safe and confident in. That doesn't mean that we should discard in any way the very real challenges and threats and perils that police put themselves in and the situations that they face. Everybody here understands that you cannot have a safe and free society without people who are prepared to serve the community and, if necessary, to make the ultimate sacrifice.

The hope is always that there has been a significant reduction in the number of police deaths that have occurred in this country. Over a long time frame you can actually say that that is occurring, but that should never diminish the memory of those people who have died in the service of our community. In researching this motion, I looked at some of the research data that has been available as a consequence of police deaths and what has been driving those deaths in the past. It also partly informs what we should be doing to address it and tackle it to make sure it doesn't occur into the future. The data is basically showing that there has been a decline, particularly in accidental deaths. This has particularly been driven by a change in motor vehicle safety, which is a very important thing, as well as the use and power
of technology. But we should always be mindful that while we can increase safety, and technology can play an important part in making sure that we continue to reduce police deaths, there will never truly be an environment where we are risk free, and so we must take action appropriately to support the police. Since 1997, there have been 11 deaths of Victoria Police officers in the great state of Victoria. Nationally, that figure is 61. It's still too high—tragically high—and we again acknowledge very much the sacrifice that people have made in pursuit of our safety in these difficult circumstances.

It goes to the heart of the concern that many people have around crime and safety, because we know full well that, when there are deaths related to the police, it's because of an issue of unrest which has escalated to the point of people's deaths. We've seen too many incidents around the country where police officers, as well as the general community, have been placed in a severe position of risk. Within the Goldstein community, we had an event earlier this year, the Brighton siege, where there was an individual who decided to take an extreme act inspired by his mad ideology. This led to one civilian death of a young man working in a local hotel. In the end, to arrest and tackle the person who was responsible, the police were compelled to put themselves in harm's way in front of a gunman. Thankfully no police died on this occasion, but it does show you that no matter where you are in the country, even in a community as wonderful as Goldstein, sometimes you have these problems and that we all have a collective responsibility as representatives of the state to support and resource police so that they can make sure they can do anything. I know that's not just my very strong view but the view of the state parliamentary colleagues who I share the Goldstein community with, David Southwick, Louise Asher and Murray Thompson, and also those people who seek to replace them, James Newbury, Brad Rowswell and, in the case of the Bentleigh community, Asher Judah, who all place community safety and, in consequence, police safety at the heart of one of the key motivators that have led them to seek political office.

It's when we work together on these issues that we can have the most important and powerful voice for change and for making sure we secure that future. That's why I'd like to pay recognition to the motion and the spirit in which it was introduced and also, particularly, to say thanks to the Victoria Police and all police officers serving around our great nation. You have our thanks for your service to our community and to our country.

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa) (17:17): I rise to speak on this motion by the member for Fowler and acknowledge the work that police do in our communities every day, and especially the risks that they take when called to assist and to ensure that those communities are better places to live. A lot is asked of our police, and it's no small feat working day in and day out in what can be a highly unpredictable environment where your safety is not always guaranteed. The dedication and commitment displayed by police officers see them putting their own safety second to the safety of others. Invariably it is the police who are the first people we call in times of crisis, and they are first on the scene. They are our front line. Whether it is because of violence, natural disaster or something else, they are most likely to be there. They will be the first to render assistance. They see us at our best and, unfortunately, they also see our suburbs and people at our worst.

Police officers are not only there for everyone's safety; they also ensure our communities continue harmoniously by working across local groups and supporting programs that build relationships. In fact, just as I came to give this speech, I was sent photos of my grandchildren
dressed up because the police were at their day care today. Mind you, it's a beautiful, cute photograph, but this is what builds confidence in our police among our young people.

In too many situations, police officers are killed in the line of duty, making the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community. I acknowledge the family and friends who have endured loss of a loved one through their service. To them, I also pay my deepest respect. The National Police Memorial in Canberra recognises and commemorates those police who have made this sacrifice. At the time of the National Police Remembrance Day last year, there were 775 names on the memorial and the honour roll, and these are officers who died as a consequence of their duties. Tragically, since then another name has been added to the list. I note the tragic circumstances in which Senior Constable Brett Forte was killed in Queensland earlier this year. I know that the space left with friends and family by those so dedicated to their work is particularly strong, especially in smaller communities, and that void can be so difficult to fill. It's heartening to see the community rally and support this family after such loss, and I wish to include my expression of condolences to Constable Forte's family, colleagues and friends.

I'm fortunate in Werriwa to represent sections of three local area commands within the south-west metropolitan region: Green Valley, Liverpool and Macquarie Fields. All three are exemplary and maintain close ties with their respective communities both through day-to-day contact and formal partnerships with local organisations. Tomorrow night is the Liverpool and Green Valley Police Officer of the Year awards. These recognise the distinguished service of police working across these local areas. The awards are organised by Rotary in conjunction with other community organisations, business and council, and acknowledge outstanding acts of dedication to duty, community involvement, caring for victims, inspiring people and investigative abilities. The sheer quality of the past recipients and the nominees for this year demonstrate the calibre of the officers working in many of the communities that I represent. The proceeds of the night will be donated to NSW Police Legacy and police youth projects in Liverpool.

The role of community organisations like NSW Police Legacy is that they are there to support families of police who are killed in the line of duty. This support is central and very much needed for their children to have an education, for the mental health of the officers that are supporting them and for the wives and loved ones that are in their families. The continuing support that they provide for families in trauma cannot be overstated. I would like to extend my congratulations to all the nominees and recipients, as well as to everyone involved in organising this event which acknowledges many of our local heroes—who should be acknowledged every single day.

I note that on 29 September we again observe National Police Remembrance Day. I pay my respects to all those officers whose names are commemorated by the memorial and again thank all our serving police officers for their dedication to keeping our society safe, and I thank their families for their support.

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (17:22): I want to thank the honourable member for Fowler for moving this motion today to recognise the upcoming National Police Remembrance Day. I've been moved by the speeches already given on this very important day and I appreciate the opportunity to share the vital work police officers are doing in my electorate. I would also like
to talk about my own experiences, seeing firsthand the difference that local police make every day.

I would first like to acknowledge Senior Constable Brett Forte of the Queensland Police Service who was so senselessly and tragically taken from us earlier this year. It was a stark reminder of the very real risk that police officers face while on the job. The outpouring of love and support from the community in the aftermath of this tragedy has been heartening. Our thoughts are with his family and loved ones. Last month the Queensland Police Service Rugby League Association hosted a charity rugby league game in my electorate to raise funds for the Brett Forte Remembrance Fund. There was a great turnout by the public. This event's success is just one of the examples of the strong support my constituents have for our local police, and deservedly so.

In life before politics I was a small business owner, and I enjoyed a close relationship with local law enforcement. There was no issue that they couldn't help me with. To this day I've been fortunate to maintain this good relationship. I can't speak highly enough about the great help they've been in addressing local crime and safety concerns for my constituents. Just recently, a number of my constituents had contacted me, worried about crime in the electorate—particularly in the Gumdale-Wakerley area. I conducted a community safety survey to find out more, and the results showed that the main issues of concern were break-and-enters and hooning. I set up a meeting with Acting Inspector Mark Norrish and Acting Senior Sergeant Carolyn Cox from the Wynnum-Manly police service to discuss these concerns. I then hosted a 'coffee with a cop' in Manly West to give residents the opportunity to get to know their local police officers, to discuss with them their experiences with crime and to seek advice on protecting their homes and properties from lawbreakers.

It's been a pleasure working with local police on this pressing local issue, and I continue to be impressed by the genuine care that they put into their work. I look forward to working more with law enforcement in my electorate to improve safety in the community. Mark Norrish, especially, is doing an outstanding job.

On a side note, I want to thank the state member for Chatsworth, the Hon. Steve Minnikin, for also taking up the issue of crime and safety in the Gumdale and Wakerley area. It was great to attend his crime forum last week alongside hardworking members of the Wynnum/Manly district crime prevention unit. I've heard some eye-opening stories from local police over the years. My sister Pauline works in police intelligence and my brother-in-law Scott is a detective, while my brother and father were prosecutors. They have given me insight into the dangers police officers encounter every day. It is very important to recognise their sacrifices. I'm proud that we have set aside a day to observe the work of our nation's officers and to honour those who have been killed in the line of duty. I'm proud to support our local police, and I must say that they are doing a terrific job under very, very difficult circumstances.

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (17:26): I rise now with a heavy heart as my community of Groom is still mourning the loss of one of its own. This year's National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September will be a sad day for the people of our community. It honours the lives and memories of those police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. This year, the hurt in my community is still raw. As other members have reflected already, on 29 May Senior Constable Brett Forte was shot and killed in the line of duty just
east of our city of Toowoomba. News bulletins were my initial source of information about that incident. I then contacted members of the police force in my community to gain a better understanding of what had happened that afternoon. Here in Canberra the Prime Minister passed on this parliament's condolences to Brett's family. The Premier of Queensland did the same, as did Mayor Paul Antonio. It's an incident our community will never forget.

Brett's funeral was one of the largest ever seen in my community. Thousands attended the service. It was a sea of blue outside the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre at the University of Southern Queensland. His wife, Susan, also a serving police officer, was supported by her police family and the wider community. This support will continue, as the upcoming National Police Remembrance Day will be a testing day for her and her family. Brett's daughter, Emma, said at the funeral, 'To the world you were one person but to our family you were the world.' To me, that was extremely poignant. And that's just it. Brett Forte was a husband, father, son, brother, colleague and friend. He could be any one of us.

When you strip away the uniform, when officers are in their civvies among the community, they serve in the local P&C, they play in the local footy clubs and you see them pushing their shopping carts alongside the rest of us. They are just ordinary women and men like the rest of us. Yet they are called upon in their profession as police officers when it's not just a job. Each day, these men and women willingly place themselves in potential danger to make our community a safer place. Enforcing the law is their primary contact with the community, but I think it's part of a greater effort of ensuring our daily lives run smoothly. They protect our rights as individuals and, in many cases, they work with various community members to resolve and contain incidents or social problems before they spread or impact on those around us. They do this through their training, their compassion and their understanding of the communities they serve.

know my community appreciates them. We live in a wonderful, caring, peaceful community due in part to the wonderful work our police officers do each and every day. It's a community that will stand beside Brett Forte's family, first and foremost, but also his colleagues, especially those who rendered him assistance on that tragic day, because they need our support as we approach this coming remembrance day. Therefore, today I again take the opportunity to thank each and every member of the Queensland Police Service, and police services around Australia, for their commitment and courage. Stand firm and know that we all support you.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (17:30): On 29 September, a little more than three weeks away, Australia will commemorate National Police Remembrance Day. Sixteen years ago the National Police Memorial was built in Canberra to pay tribute to Australian police officers killed on duty or who died as a result of their duties. It also recognises the unique nature of police service and the dangers police members face in their jobs. The memorial and remembrance day are small ways that we can recognise the sacrifice of police members and their families for our community.

In Tasmania we are thankful that we have not lost any serving officers over the past year or indeed in recent years. But we too pause to reflect on the losses felt by communities in other states and indeed other countries. Constable Ty Bennett was 23 years old in 1999 when he died in the service of his duty in Tasmania. He was the last Tasmanian officer to lose his life on the job, and we remain hopeful that he will be the last ever. Nationally, an officer died in
2016 and another this year. The tragedy for those officers and their families and friends cannot be understated. But it says something about the Australian culture and the expert training that our officers receive that the fatalities in a nation of 25 million are so relatively low. Other nations could learn from our example.

Last week I held a community safety forum in Bridgewater, which was well attended by community leaders. Heading up the forum was Inspector George Cretu, of the local station, and he did an amazing job presenting facts, figures and the local strategy that he has for making the Bridgewater community safer and stronger. He provided a context of how modern policing methods are being used in our area and explained how policing's first priority is community safety, including the safety of young people who might well end up in police sights.

There's no doubt that we expect much of today's police officers. They are better trained and more equipped to deal with a multitude of issues than ever before. These are officers who spend time working directly with the community and with community groups to provide education and guidance within the broader police force. They build relationships through schools and, of course, PCYC programs. Policing includes sometimes not chasing a kid on a stolen bike down the street but instead waiting for him at home because it's less risk to the child and less risk to community safety. Whether it's alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence, mental illness, family violence, cybercrime, child protection or just speeding and burglaries, it is police officers that we turn to in our hour of need.

Police officers are also involved, of course, in fundraising. The Black Dog Ride through my electorate raised money for people suffering depression. Police provide funds for camps for schoolkids. Police are part of our community, and their culture has embraced seeing people as an opportunity for strength and growth rather than just an arrest statistic. It's this kind of community engagement that makes our police service today relevant and accessible. I pay tribute to the leadership of our police in all our communities.

In 2016 in Tasmania, we tested our emergency services with fires and floods. In 2017 they've been involved in rescues; they've policed our communities; they've enforced road safety. In Tasmania our police service of 1,223 members includes 44 new recruits, graduating from the two courses run each year in the state. This is complemented by six police from the AFP. I'm sorry to say none are based at Hobart Airport yet.

While the job of policing is hard, the Tasmania Police are really getting it right when it comes to getting their message out. Their Facebook page is something to look at. It has 152,000 followers and a great mix of positive and funny engagement. They've gone viral a few times. They posted a selfie they took in Launceston on a phone after they dropped off a young fellow who was very, very drunk. They tucked him into bed and took a photo of themselves to prove that's how he got into bed if he wasn't quite sure how he got home. So to all the police in Tasmania, to all the police across Australia: thank you for your service; we are with you every day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.
Superannuation

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (17:35): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Superannuation Guarantee system—in conjunction with voluntary superannuation contributions and a means-tested, government funded age pension—forms an integral part of Australia's retirement income policy;

(b) recent analysis by Industry Super Australia indicates employers failed to pay an aggregate amount of $5.6 billion in Superannuation Guarantee contributions in 2013-14;

(c) this amount represents 2.76 million affected employees, with an average amount of more than $2,000 lost per person in a single year;

(d) within the electoral division of Indi there were 16,068 affected employees, with an average amount of $2,001 lost per person in a single year;

(e) evidence received by the Senate Economics References Committee inquiry into the Superannuation Guarantee indicates a failure to adequately detect and address that Superannuation Guarantee non-compliance causes long term financial detriment to millions of Australian employees, significant competitive disadvantage to compliant employers, and an unnecessary impost to Government finances through additional reliance on the age pension; and

(f) in its report, the Committee:

(i) concluded the current approach of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) in identifying and addressing Superannuation Guarantee non-compliance is inadequate and recommends that the ATO takes a more proactive stance;

(ii) argued that there is a compelling need for the determination of a reliable Superannuation Guarantee gap figure annually in order to track rates of Superannuation Guarantee non-payment, analyse which policies are effective, and ultimately minimise the problem;

(iii) recommended the current Superannuation Guarantee Charge framework, with its reliance on employer self-reporting, should be reviewed in order to ensure that penalties are strong enough deterrents; and

(iv) considered it is crucial to move Superannuation Guarantee compliance from the 'paper age' to the 'digital age', enabling a greater focus on proactive methods, and in turn increasing the effectiveness of efforts to detect and remedy Superannuation Guarantee non-compliance; and

(2) calls on the Government to accept and act upon all 32 recommendations made in the Committee's report to address the significant problem of Superannuation Guarantee non-compliance.

In moving this motion, I call on the government to recognise that the superannuation guarantee system in conjunction with voluntary superannuation contributions and a means-tested government-funded age pension form an integral part of the Australian retirement income policy. All employees must receive the full benefits of their superannuation guarantee entitlements. They should not be short-changed by employer noncompliance or bankruptcy. I believe in fact that we've come to an emergency situation, where hundreds of thousands of people have fallen through the cracks and have missed out on their superannuation entitlements, often thousands of dollars, through no fault of their own. Superannuation guarantee noncompliance has, according to the super funds themselves, cost as many as 2.7 million Australian workers an estimated $5.6 billion in one year alone: 2013-14. When employers fail to meet their obligation to pay employees their proper entitlements, we see
poorer retirement outcomes for those workers who miss out. As a consequence, there's a higher age pension liability for the Australian government.

In December 2016 a report from the Industry Super Australia and CBUS indicated that retirement incomes have been undermined over many years by employers who have not met their obligations on behalf of workers. On average, Australian workers have missed out on more than $2,000 per person each year. On 30 August, the ATO, the Australian Taxation Office, reported that Australian workers are denied as much as $2.8 billion in superannuation payments each year. So we've got a serious problem here.

I first became aware of this when the employer of a constituent—and I would like to acknowledge Cheryl Robl, of Wangaratta—claimed bankruptcy, leaving her retirement fund short-changed by more than $8,000. There have been at least another five constituents who have approached my office with similar stories of lost savings. We as an office have had limited success in working with them to resolve this. The sensitivity around their loss and the betrayal of trust is such that they are reluctant to make their identities public. Ms Robl recently advised the Australian Taxation Office that her employers had failed to honour the superannuation guarantee charge to her fund. She followed the ATO formal superannuation recovery process to the letter, but, even after the ATO took steps to collect the debt owed to her, she was left empty-handed, and earlier this year the case was closed. The bankruptcy trustee advised that there's no money to be claimed. Despite this devastating outcome, Ms Robl directed her energies into highlighting the impact of what happens when employees miss out on the superannuation guarantee entitlements. She's become the face of this issue in my electorate. I want to thank and acknowledge her for her determination in ensuring that this problem remains before the government, needing a solution.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the North East Media newspaper journalist Jamie Kronborg, who told her story and the personal stories of others impacted by this superannuation emergency. And, through the Wangaratta Chronicle, Jamie Kronborg has followed these stories. I acknowledge the role of the local media in bringing these cases to my attention and to that of the public. Their work ensures that we have a clearer understanding of the extent of the problem and its impact on our constituents. Following this, I made representation to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services, Kelly O'Dwyer, in December 2016 and also asked the minister a question in parliament. While there is a clear legislative framework for the ATO to protect employees, the legislation only works if there is adequate resourcing for the ATO to respond quickly to claims. Ms Robl did everything absolutely correctly but was still unable to recover her superannuation.

Late last year, the Senate agreed to an inquiry into unpaid superannuation. The inquiry made its report in March 2017, with 32 recommendations. The minister also established a superannuation guarantee cross-agency working group, which released its final report on 14 July this year, with nine recommendations. I'd like to place on record my support for the minister and my acknowledgement of the action she has taken. Perhaps it is too little too late, and there's a long way to go before this issue is resolved. On 29 August—in fact, last week—Minister O'Dwyer announced that the government would introduce a package of reforms to give the Australian Taxation Office near real-time visibility over superannuation guarantee compliance. I welcome this package. It includes measures to require that superannuation funds report contributions received at least monthly to the ATO. It requires a rollout of the
single-touch payroll, or STP, system, which will reduce the regulatory burden on businesses and transform compliance by aligning payroll functions with regular reporting of taxation and superannuation obligations. This is long overdue. The package involves the improvement of the effectiveness of the ATO recovery powers, including strengthening director penalty notices and the use of security bonds for high-risk employers to ensure unpaid superannuation is better collected by the ATO and paid to employees' super accounts. It gives the ATO the ability to seek court ordered penalties in the most serious cases of nonpayment, including employers who repeatedly fail to pay their superannuation guarantee liabilities. In July, the government introduced legislation to close a legal loophole used by employers who have previously counted salary sacrifice amounts paid by employees towards their own employer contributions. That was very welcome.

All these changes are, in fact, welcome, but they come too late for my constituent and others in my electorate and they come too late for millions of others who may never see their full entitlements paid. The ATO is dealing with about 20,000 complaints about unpaid super each year from both current and former employees. In announcing the government's most recent package, Minister O'Dwyer pointed out that employers' failure to meet their superannuation guarantee obligations to their employees has been a problem since the guarantee was first introduced in 1992. Successive governments have failed to make significant reforms to the system. The ATO has managed to recover more than $2 billion owed to employees since 2010, but even it admits estimates of losses to employees are conservative. So I welcome the strengthening of employer penalties for noncompliance and the increased powers for the ATO when dealing with repeat offenders. The move to single-touch payroll electronic payment systems will give the ATO near real-time visibility on an employee's wage and super payments, particularly amongst small businesses, where the problem of noncompliance is most acute.

However, the government needs to act on further key reforms, including all 32 recommendations of the Senate Economics References Committee. The super industry has been united in calling for an expanded taxpayer funded safety net to cover super entitlements for workers in cases where their employer goes broke. The existing Fair Entitlements Guarantee, the FEG, is limited to outstanding wages, is only for bankrupt and insolvent companies and doesn't cover super. The government needs to consider a recommendation to improve pay-slip reporting to help employees keep better track of their super payments by providing the ability to check that their super has actually been paid into the fund. The requirement for improved pay-slip reporting to include superannuation guarantee payments is outlined in a private members' bill proposed by the member for Mayo. The bill will be introduced to the House in the near future. I welcome that.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the work that the government has done so far, but it's not enough. We need to go much further. We need to address many of the issues that people in my constituency are feeling. I welcome the work of the ATO in prioritising this work, but they need more resources. They need significantly more resources to get on top of what I call this emergency. As a local independent member of parliament, I'm proud to bring these issues to parliament. I'm really proud to have this debate today, and I thank my colleagues for participating in it. I ask for your continued support as we work with the government to make
sure people's super guarantees are protected for their retirement, thus saving the government money through pension schemes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is there a seconder for this motion?

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

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (17:45): I welcome the opportunity to speak on what is a very real concern for many people in our communities. I would like to thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion to the House. Indeed, the superannuation guarantee, along with voluntary contributions, forms an integral part of Australia's retirement system. I also accept and acknowledge, as the member for Indi outlined in her contribution, the very real problem of employers' noncompliance with that system—not that this is a new event, unfortunately. Many governments over a long period of time have tried to find various ways to deal with that issue. When companies are found to be noncompliant, they do face punitive payments and penalties as a result.

But we should bear in mind that this motion draws on the figures promoted by the industry super fund, Industry Super Australia. We have seen that these have been dramatically inflated as a result. On 29 August the ATO published its estimate of the superannuation guarantee gap at $2.85 billion. This shows there is an enormous difference between what the ATO have reported and what Industry Super Australia has estimated. We must ask ourselves: why the difference? The reason, as discovered by the government's superannuation guarantee cross-agency working group, which is led by the ATO and includes APRA, ASIC, the Department of Employment and the Treasury, is that Industry Super Australia's methodology was inadequate. In fact, the Treasury estimates just one of its shortcomings regarding defined benefit fund members accounts for some $2.5 billion—45 per cent of Industry Super Australia's $5.6 billion estimate. It must also be noted that ISA made assumptions about locations of individuals. Because the source data is not disaggregated by federal electorate, it is therefore logical to conclude that ISA's electorate-specific figures would have to have a high degree of uncertainty.

This government accepts and promotes that any level of noncompliance within the superannuation system is illegal and unacceptable. The problem, as outlined by the ATO, suggests a gap of some 5.2 per cent of total potential superannuation contributions. This means that around 95 per cent of businesses are compliant with their superannuation guarantee obligations and they are actually paid. It is important to recognise that 5.2 per cent represents real people missing out on what is rightly due to them. Therefore, we see the suite of measures being proposed presently by those opposite as not assisting the system—in particular, the notion of removing the $450 earnings limit.

Amongst the most important elements of our reform package is the commitment to better informing employees about their SG entitlements and ensuring accountability at every stage. It is true that employees are sometimes unwilling to come forward. I congratulate those people in the member for Indi's electorate who have taken the opportunity to come forward and see their local member and raise their concerns, because that is not always the case. Sometimes, unfortunately, that is out of fear of reprisal such as losing their job.

So modernising reporting, which is another important commitment of this package, will allow the ATO to intervene early on employees' behalf, without receiving a complaint, to
address nonpayment before it spirals out of control. Furthermore, the ATO will use the data from funds to provide employees with information about all of their superannuation payments through myGov. It will be able to tell all affected employees about their recovery activities, where previously only affected employees were informed.

The reform package does not stop there. It will increase the range of penalties for employers who are doing the wrong thing, and that is the critical part: to remove the capacity for employers to do the wrong thing by their employees.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (17:50): I congratulate the member for Indi for her motion on this significant issue that affects hundreds of thousands of working Australians. Strengthening the compliance on superannuation guarantee payments and improving our efforts to recover unpaid superannuation for distressed employees are issues for which I and the member for Indi share great concern.

According to Industry Super Australia, within the electoral division of Mayo in 2016 there were 12,896 affected employees, with an average of $1,748 lost in superannuation per person in a single year. This amounts to a staggering 28 per cent of all employees in my electorate who are entitled to employer-paid superannuation contributions but are underpaid on those entitlements. All too often I am approached by members of my community who have been victims of unscrupulous employers. They sometimes learn only too late that their employer has not been paying their superannuation for many months or even years. I received another such email today. All too often, the employer eventually winds up their business and manages to avoid paying most or the entirety of the outstanding amount of superannuation that they owe their employees. This occurs even when employees notify the Australian Taxation Office of the unpaid superannuation.

Notifying the ATO is currently the only official avenue of recourse available to employees in their attempts to recover their unpaid superannuation, and yet the ATO is singularly ineffective in achieving this task. I have been approached by some constituents who have notified the ATO of unpaid superannuation amounts in the many thousands of dollars, and yet, more than seven years later, the results that the efforts of the ATO have reaped for these individuals can be measured in cents rather than dollars, while the business continues to operate as normal. Sadly, in one case the company concerned declared bankruptcy, and my constituents will never see the remaining unpaid superannuation paid to them. One of them was hoping to approach retirement. I do not seek to come down hard on the ATO, but I do have concerns that this area is not adequately resourced for the job of recovering unpaid superannuation. Employees need a much more direct avenue through which they can recover their superannuation, as the diligence and fervour of the ATO is never going to match an aggrieved employee, and understandably so, because what amounts to another day in the office for the ATO is the future livelihood of an employee.

For every year the employee's superannuation is unpaid, another year of compounding returns and future financial security is lost. Every year also creates a greater burden upon the Australian taxpayer, who must then fund additional and completely avoidable age-pension payments. The current ineffective system is helping only to force people onto government funded income support payments instead of allowing them to provide for themselves, as every ordinary retiree prefers. Much more needs to be done. I welcome the contribution of the Senate Economic References Committee, which reported on its inquiry into superannuation...
guarantee nonpayment in May this year. I have investigated all of the inquiry's recommendations seriously and at great length, and that is forming the basis for a private member's bill I am drafting on this issue of recovering unpaid superannuation. I look forward to presenting this bill in the coming weeks of parliament, during which I will cover this issue in much more technical detail and in far more time than I have today.

In conclusion, I congratulate the member for Indi on her ongoing work, interest and dedication in seeking a fair go for Australian workers and I urge the government to consider both the substance and intent of this motion most seriously.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (17:55): I'd like to start with my recent reflections on this motion and say that no-one is disputing that there are problems where sometimes private citizens who have done legitimate work have not had their superannuation honoured and measures that should be appropriately taken to make sure they're properly paid have not occurred. I think everyone in this chamber would share the spirit of this motion. A couple of months ago somebody from the superannuation sector came around and showed me some data around unclaimed superannuation in different electorates. My data was among the lowest in the country; most of the superannuation benefits that should have been paid to employees within the Goldstein community has been paid. That is wonderful, but I know that isn't the circumstance everywhere. That's why legitimate efforts to address some of these issues are very important, particularly in the context of making sure that we have a system that people have confidence in. Superannuation provides security for people later in life—nobody would dispute that—but it's important to make sure it's paid as people go along so they can manage affairs.

Decisions made today around superannuation can have a big impact on people's material conditions at latter stages in life. In fact, one of the things that regularly gets raised with me is that people don't really think about their superannuation until they're over the age of 50. The advice I want to give to anyone watching this under the age of 35, or at least under the age of 50, is that you should take your superannuation seriously now. If you are able to get a principal place of residence, it's probably going to be the biggest asset you will have and the biggest opportunity you are going to have around making sure you retire with confidence, so take it seriously and make sure you get every cent that is available to you legally and that you have earned. But, in addition to that, make conscious decisions about how it is to be invested. That is where perhaps some members within this place will end up with slightly more diverse opinions between different types of funds. I have taken maximum control of my own superannuation, but I recognise that other people would like to take less control and rely on the faith and goodwill of others. That's their call.

In short, I don't think people would broadly disagree with the spirit of this motion. The government already has a clear package of reforms to safeguard and modernise the superannuation guarantee from the start of the next financial year. I think that appropriately and proportionately represents and addresses the issues for now, but that doesn't mean the spirit of the measure put forward is wrong. I think it acknowledges some of the concerns that many members have, and that have come out of parliamentary processes, and makes sure that, in introducing this legislation, future amendments may be needed. That has to be done through proper processes around making sure it's proportionally recognised by the government and with a higher degree of confidence than currently exists.
In conclusion, I welcome this proposition is from the member for Indi, along with her contribution on this issue as well as many others, and recognise the efforts that the government has already made. On reflection, it's something I continue to think about and will continue to consider as part of what we need to do to deliver the type of security and confidence people need for their future retirement. That includes me and everybody in this room. In fact, I don't think there's anybody left under the old super scheme, so now we all have to think about it. And we will continue the dialogue into the future.

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (17:59): I'm really pleased that I can make a contribution on this excellent motion of the member for Indi on noncompliance around payment for the superannuation guarantee. It's an issue that impacts on every electorate. But you'd expect me to draw attention to the statistics for the seat of Shortland, which I proudly represent in parliament. There are 15,714 residents of Shortland who are underpaid or will receive no payment of their superannuation guarantee. Fully 31 per cent of workers in Shortland suffer underpayment or non-payment of their super. This is a disgrace. The total amount per year is $30 million, and the average underpayment is $2,000 per worker per year. If you consider that, the compounding impact of that is massive. If you're going without $2,000 of super per year and that compounds through your 30- or 40-year working life, that is massive. It is robbing workers in my electorate, which is a low-SES region. I've got the poorest town in all of New South Wales in my electorate, the town of Windale. Just imagine the loss of that income for those workers. It is a crime, and I will return to that particular issue in a minute.

This is a startling statistic and that's why it's so important that urgent action is taken, and the Senate report is an excellent contribution. I welcome the fact that Minister O'Dwyer has at least drawn attention to it. I think the government aren't going far enough, but at least they're drawing attention to it. It starts with ATO compliance. If the ATO took this as seriously as they took nonpayment of GST, it would change pretty quickly. But I don't solely blame the ATO. They've had 4,000 staff cut under this government—and when an organisation loses 4,000 staff, it's pretty hard to do anything well—but this is a massive issue, and ATO compliance is the start of it. Moving to the single-touch system will help, but we really need to understand the scope of this and really understand the trials and tribulations that people go through to try to recover their payments.

I had a constituent come to me. She had worked for an accountant and found out that her accountant employer was underpaying her super. She left that job, because of being ripped off, and she now works for another accountant, who is helping her, pro bono, to recover her money. They actually made a submission to the Senate inquiry, and well done to them for making that submission. They were able to walk me through five years of talking to the ATO to try to recover this money, and the ATO couldn't even tell them how much was owed. The ATO would dribble out records; it would dribble out payments from the non-compliant accountant. It was a nightmare for people who were reasonably well educated, who were in a good position, because they're accountants, so they were in the system, to try to recover the funds. The system was absolutely abysmal. That's why urgent action is required to make the ATO take it seriously, to give the ATO the resources to recover the funds, to really try to help the 15½ thousand people in Shortland who are suffering underpayment of super, and to recover the $30 million that impacts 31 per cent of workers.
I'm going to go out on a limb and be controversial: this is theft. Often employers, when they get in a bit of trouble—and I understand that some might do it innocently—think that the easiest thing to not pay is the super, because it's the thing that workers don't notice immediately because it is paid in arrears. It is the easiest thing for them to start cutting down on. They might kid themselves that when business picks up, when sales come through, they'll pay it back, but it is theft. I would put to you that a worker who stole $2,000 from their employer would be facing jail time pretty quick smart if they got caught out. So why don't these employers face jail time? I'm not talking about an accidental underpayment; I'm talking about when an employer, in a concerted fashion, knowingly fails to pay super. That is theft from their workers and they should face jail time, just as any worker who steals from their employer should face jail time for knowingly stealing money. Until we do this seriously, until we lock up the employers who are the worst of the worst, who knowingly steal money from their workers, then this issue will not be solved. I know that's controversial, but this is theft and theft should face punishment. The due punishment should be jail time if it's serious enough.

I applaud the member for Indi for raising this issue. The ATO need to get serious about this. They need to pursue the 15½ thousand cases of underpayment in my electorate, and we need to lock up employers who do this regularly.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (18:04): I rise to speak on the motion put forward by the member for Indi on superannuation guarantee noncompliance. I'm sure the member knows that this is an issue that's been around for a long time. It’s a real issue and, in listening to the member for Shortland and his obvious passion, I'd say this has been going on since I've been in the workforce. I first started work in the mid-seventies, and I saw issues related to superannuation then. I think I've still got a small superannuation fund existing with Gas and Fuel, who no longer exist in Victoria, from when I was working for them for 18 months. I'm sure that money has been chewed up by the super industry already, taken away in fees and things like that. This is an issue that has been around for a while. There have been some classic cases over the years of major companies not paying their superannuation obligations, which they should do. I heard it from the member for Shortland, but I fear that, if we lock up the employers, their staff will lose their jobs. So it has to be a two-way street. But the ATO does have an obligation to make sure that employers pay their superannuation.

To the member for Indi: it is a bit disappointing that you've actually cherrypicked some of the facts and stats that greatly inflate the size of the problem. I know that in your motion you refer to the 2014 analysis conducted by Industry Super Australia, indicating that employers failed to pay an aggregate amount of $5.6 billion in superannuation guarantee contributions in 2013-14. But, as you heard from the member for Forde, last week, on 29 August, the ATO published its estimate of the SG gap at $2.85 billion, which is around the half of the figure ISA cited.

Ms McGowan: It's still huge!

Mr IRONS: I totally agree with you. I've just said there is an issue, and I agree with you that it's an issue that needs to be dealt with, but we need to do it with real figures and not figures that are inflated.

Any level of superannuation guarantee noncompliance is unacceptable. As we heard from the member for Shortland, he wants to jail them, but I think that might be going a bit far,
depending on the category or size of that noncompliance. That is why the government has established a cross-agency working group led by the ATO and including APRA, ASIC, the Department of Employment and the Treasury to investigate these issues and recommend solutions.

I note that the member for Indi's motion has called on the government to accept and act upon all 32 recommendations from the Senate Economics References Committee inquiry into the superannuation guarantee. This government will not adopt blanket recommendations to keep up an appearance of doing something. Instead, we are working collectively towards achieving real outcomes in safeguarding workers' entitlements. For example, the Senate committee recommended things that have very little impact on noncompliance but would instead expand superannuation entitlements, like abolishing the $450 rule, reviewing the definition of ordinary time earnings or requiring more frequent superannuation guarantee payments. The rule that SG is not payable to employees earning less than $450 a month is a longstanding feature of the superannuation system that is well understood.

Noncompliance is largely driven by cash flow issues and not confusion about definitions. I know that the member for Indi, who has experience in business as well, knows that there are many situations where employers are paying their superannuation guarantee levies out of their own cash flow when they're still waiting on huge debtors and creditors to pay their bills and fund them as well. So it is a fine balance for many businesses out there, particularly in the current economy, but, again, no excuse for not paying the particular superannuation guarantees that they are obligated to pay. The government's response to increased visibility targets the key problem as well. Similarly, the use of ordinary time earnings as the basis for the superannuation guarantee is well established and benefits from considerable guidance from the ATO. Any confusion about the definition of OTE is not a key driver of noncompliance.

Requiring more frequent payment will also do little to improve compliance. More onerous superannuation guarantee payment rules can only make compliance more difficult for small businesses, particularly those with cash flow problems, as we've heard before. Already, with the PAYG and the BAS payments, you see companies paying PAYG when they're not earning any money at all, and the government is taking money from them and the ATO is taking money from them. We must be careful that we balance, particularly for small businesses, the cash flow problems. Around two-thirds of employers pay SG more frequently than the required quarterly payment in any case, so there is no value in mandating more frequent payments when its impact on compliance and the total guarantee payments will make little difference.

To the member for Indi: thank you for raising this. It is a real issue, and I'm sure the outcomes from the government's actions will lead to a better system in the future.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (18:09): I would also like to thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion before the House. Likewise, I would like to thank my Labor colleagues in the Senate, who took part in the important Senate Economics References Committee, instigating this inquiry last year. I think the inquiry into the superannuation guarantee has started now, with particular focus on this noncompliance around the nonpayment or underpayment of the superannuation guarantee. It is important because it impacts on so many people's lives, and we also know the cumulative impact that the nonpayment or underpayment
of someone's superannuation guarantee has for them in retirement. So it's a great pleasure that I'm able to stand and support the member for Indi's motion here. It not only supports the superannuation guarantee system as a really integral part of the retirement incomes for Australians but also really calls on the government to act on the full 32 recommendations of that Senate Economics References Committee inquiry and the report that they brought down.

A lot of serious work was done by people taking evidence from all the players involved, and yet here we are, some nine months later, really faced with a government doing so little to correct the anomalies that exist in the system. It is incredibly disappointing. I acknowledge that the government has indeed formed what it refers to as a 'working party', which comprises some of the important key players there, and that's a start, but I've got to say that that was like seven months down the track after having done nothing but sit on these recommendations. We now have the government purporting to take action, but really there is little movement that I have seen so far around facing head-on the issues of noncompliance, and that for me is the real nub of the problem here.

Like colleagues before me, I don't just see one-off cases. I see many constituents who have been burnt, utterly burnt, by a boss that failed to pay their superannuation payments. That I see many people should not be surprising. Stop for one moment to consider that there are 18,000 people in my electorate alone who we know have been underpaid or not paid superannuation at all by an employer. And the member for Shortland, before me, is spot-on to describe this as theft. Make no mistake: superannuation nonpayment is tantamount to theft, and I don't think we should dress it up as anything else. These are entitlements that were duly owed to the employees. These were part of working conditions hard fought for over many decades to get in place.

Those of us on this side of the House value superannuation. Labor created superannuation. We will stand here to defend it and protect it. It's a vital part of retirement incomes for Australians. But the other vital component of this system is that the employers hold up their end of the bargain. You've actually got to pay the dollars that your workforce is entitled to. You cannot leave these people hanging out to dry both now and in retirement.

I have an example which I will end on. One of my constituents is owed at least $10,000—it's hard to know entirely. He's one of nine staff owed around that much money by one company, and the fact is that he is unable to ascertain how much is owed. In fact the ATO entered into an agreement with his boss about the repayment, but that's secret; he's not allowed to know the details of that agreement, so no-one can follow up and no-one can make sure that this company finally does do the right thing and comply.

I made a submission to the Senate inquiry, and I'm eternally grateful for those two issues around it. Get rid of the secrecy provisions and make sure that it's more than just pay slips that people rely on to get their superannuation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Price): The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Crime: Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:14): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
(a) the use of sexual violence in armed conflict is a war crime; and
(b) the use of sexual violence as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population is a crime against humanity;

(2) acknowledges that Islamic State:
(a) is perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity against minority Muslim groups, Christians, Yazidis and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria;
(b) has perpetrated acts of sexual violence amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity; and
(c) has dedicated infrastructure for the kidnap, trafficking and sale of sex slaves; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government to:
(a) investigate, prosecute and hold to account Australians who have committed crimes, according to domestic or international law, as members of Islamic State or other recognised international terrorist groups; and
(b) support international efforts to gather evidence, investigate and prosecute those responsible for international crimes perpetrated by Islamic State or other recognised international terrorist groups.

According to the United Nations, sexual violence in conflict is one of the greatest moral issues of our time. It is a moral issue we face now and it has been a moral issue from time immemorial. Sexual violence was considered a natural consequence of war and a lesser crime than other breaches of the law. Sexual violence, because of its roots in the notion that women's bodies were property to be conquered, was seen as a lesser crime. Unfortunately, this notion of women's bodies as something to be conquered is something that we're seeing exemplified in ISIS's guide book. ISIS's guide book, that was produced in a very contemporary context, in 2015, codifies sexual relations between ISIS fighters and their female captives for the first time under the 15 dos and don'ts for owners of ISIS female sex slaves. One of the 15 dos is: if the owner of a female captive releases her, only he can have intercourse with her and he cannot allow someone else to have intercourse with her. Another do is: if the female captive is owned by a father, his son cannot have intercourse with her and vice versa. This was something written in 2015. Moreover, intercourse with his wife's female captive is also not permissible.

The international community has repeatedly condemned sexual and gender based violence in armed conflict, but not enough is being done to end impunity for these crimes. The Rome Statute by the International Criminal Court criminalises sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The Security Council has passed eight resolutions on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Australia has criminalised these crimes in our own Criminal Code. Australia has a whole-of-government policy—the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. We have it in our power to investigate and prosecute those who commit these crimes.

The United Nations, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have extensively reported the use of sexual and gender based violence by ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and the 15 dos and don'ts are a very good example of their views on women. Their use of sexual violence is so widespread and systematic that it constitutes a crime against humanity. ISIS is perpetrating sexual violence as part of an armed conflict—a war crime. ISIS's intention to destroy these people aligns with definitions of genocide under international law, but not a single ISIS
fighter has been prosecuted for any of these international crimes. We have a moment in time right now to end impunity for conflict related sexual violence. Now is the time.

Over 30,000 foreign fighters have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS. Many of these foreign fighters come from countries where sexual violence is criminalised in legislation on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. More than 200 Australians have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight with ISIS, contributing to systematic rape and sexual violence. We must investigate and prosecute the Australians who have committed these crimes. Sexual violence is not acceptable at home. It is not acceptable abroad. Australia needs to lead by example. It's not acceptable for Australians to perpetrate sexual violence in times of conflict. We are currently advancing justice for victims of sexual violence here in Australia. We need to justly apply the law for our victims in Australia and also overseas. If we investigate and prosecute our own nationals who have committed these crimes, our allies and like-minded nations may follow.

We are a developed democracy with a sound judicial system. For decades, we have invested in the rules-based global order. Now we need to bring that order home. We need to fulfil our obligations under the Rome Statute and under our own legislation. We have the ability to investigate and prosecute sexual violence perpetrated as war crimes. Now we must show willingness. The government must establish the policy framework and provide the resources to undertake these investigations and to carry out prosecutions in order to bring justice to the victims of these crimes and to end impunity for conflict related sexual violence. We need to prosecute, not perpetrate. I want to thank Susan Hutchinson, who is here, who is leading the campaign for prosecuting not perpetrating here in Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Price): Is there a seconder for the motion?

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

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (18:20): I thank the member for Canberra for bringing this motion to the attention of the House. Around the world, there are currently 37 ongoing conflicts, including in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, the Central African Republic, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Afghanistan just to name a few. The International Institute for Strategic Studies reports that around 167,000 people died in armed conflicts around the world in 2015. One in three of these deaths occurred in Syria. These conflicts turn entire towns and cities to rubble. They destroy people's lives, as people have to flee their homes. They decimate national economies. Worst of all, they lead to widespread acts of brutality, torture and sexual violence, as we've heard from the member for Canberra in her contribution. These acts of violence are most often committed against children and women, and they are committed against men as well.

ISIS have particularly targeted minority ethnic and religious groups, including Christians, Yazidis and minority Muslim communities. ISIS have also waged a war on the Kurds. Early in my time as a member of this House, I had representations from the local Kurdish community, many of whom had relatives who'd been raped, tortured and even killed by ISIS. One of the most horrific elements of the campaign of ISIS in seizing lands in Syria and Iraq is the immense level of suffering they've inflicted on these populations. In a single act in August 2014, Islamist militants massacred 80 Yazidi men and abducted women and children in a community in northern Iraq. ISIS has repeatedly executed Shiah Muslim civilians in Iraq, and Human Rights Watch reported the killing of at least 40 Shiah Turkmen civilians, including
children, in a single day. ISIS marked the doors of houses belonging to religious and ethnic majorities, defining them as Christian, Shia/Shabak or Shia/Turkmen, and levied a jizya, or special tax, on them.

Like all Australians, I deplore the persecution of innocent people, particularly on the basis of their religious or ethnic minority status. I particularly want to focus my contribution on the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, not only in areas currently controlled by ISIS but in other parts of the Middle East as well, and to draw attention to this persecution. Some of the earliest Christian communities in the world were in the Middle East. The Middle East, of course, is the birthplace of the three Abrahamic monotheisms, and descendants of all three of those monotheisms live in my electorate. I’m proud of the Maronite community around St George church in Thornleigh and the Coptic community around St Mary and St Sidhom Bishay church in Dural.

The position of Christians in the Middle East is particularly important, and acts of persecution and discrimination have escalated against them in the past 15 years. It’s now estimated that Christians comprise only three to four per cent of the Middle East population, down from around 20 per cent of the Middle East only a century ago.

I want to particularly note the position of Chaldean Christians in the Middle East. Previously numbering around a million people, today they number less than 200,000. The persecution of Chaldean Christians was so great that, at the outbreak of the Iraq war in 2003, many fled Mosul, including the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul, Archbishop Nona, who became the Archbishop of Sydney. Of course, as ISIS has been in retreat, the position of Chaldean Christians has improved. In particular I want to note the work of Archbishop Warda, who’s the Archbishop of Erbil. He has commenced a Catholic university there in order to try to train the next generation of Iraqi Christian leaders in that area, and he has had a lot of help from around the world, including from Australia, in his work there.

I also want to look at the position of Egypt, which has the largest population of Christians in North Africa. Approximately nine million people, or 10 per cent of Egypt’s population, are Copts. They too have suffered at the hands of extremists committing acts of violence against religious minorities. In February 2015, the world witnessed 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians martyred. These were construction workers lined up along the Libyan shore and beheaded by ISIS militants. In April 2017 at least 44 people were killed in two bombings, in Alexandria and Tanta, as Copts celebrated Palm Sunday. I note that Pope Tawadros is currently in Australia, and I hope that his visit will help draw attention to some of the continued violence that occurs against Copts.

Many Christian leaders and others have drawn attention to this, not least of all Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the former Nuncio in Australia, who has become the Vatican’s foreign minister. He has noted that there is a very important role for Christians to maintain in these societies in contributing to their social cohesion, which is vitally important to the future of the region.

I’m pleased to support the member for Canberra’s motion and, in particular, to draw attention to the plight of Christians in the Middle East.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (18:25): It is an honour to rise and support this motion from the member for Canberra in relation to the hideous crime that is sexual violence that is
perpetrated against women and children during times of war. This motion is important not only for underlining the use of sexual violence as a weapon during war but also for calling out what this behaviour is: it is a war crime and it is a crime against humanity. And I don't think we should be going soft around the edges in describing this in any way, shape or form.

We've had some very, very distressing stories come to light—certainly from the member for Canberra in her articulation of the ISIL guide book. There are shocking revelations from cover to cover. The recent report from the United Nations Human Rights Office about the promotion and protection of the rights of victims of sexual violence captured by ISIL in areas of Iraq is equally distressing and disturbing reading. So it is that this motion, as I said, really brings to light an issue that this parliament does have to take seriously. We should recommit ourselves to taking action.

It seems to me that we are very clear: this is a war crime and this is a crime against humanity. We have domestic laws that would assist us to recognise those crimes, yet, as the member for Canberra made clear, not a single prosecution. So that is a very poor report card for us to reflect on. Sexual violence has always been used as a weapon during times of conflict, so it's not like this is something new. And for too long, in fact, it has probably been considered too much a by-product of war—as something kind of unavoidable. But this has absolutely changed: sexual violence, as I said, is now, rightfully, classified as a war crime. When sexual violence is perpetrated as part of an armed conflict, it is a war crime; when that violence is widespread or systemic, it's a crime against humanity; and when it's used to destroy, in whole or in part, an ethnic, racial or religious group, it is genocide.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognises rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence as crimes against humanity if the action is part of a widespread or systemic attack directed at any civilian population. Unfortunately, these gender crimes are too often perpetrated outside the jurisdiction of institutions willing and able to bring the perpetrators to justice, leaving victims without justice and terrible crimes unanswered. This is precisely what is taking place in both Syria and Iraq now. There is no doubt that sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by Islamic State, and over recent years there have been countless stories of women and girls—and to an extent men and boys—being subjected to sexual violence.

According to the organisation Prosecute; don't perpetrate—I acknowledge your presence, Marie; it is very powerful to have you in the chamber; thank you for being here—which has researched and recorded these stories extensively, Islamic State has kidnapped women and published entire doctrines on its use of sexual slaves and has thrown LGBTQI people from roof tops because of their sexuality. This is an abhorrence for most of us in Australia. More than an abhorrence, it is a war crime. It is deserving of action. We cannot let these crimes go unaddressed. It is time for this parliament to step up to the mark and apply maximum pressure wherever we can to ensure that these crimes are prosecuted.

**Mr FALINSKI** (Mackellar) (18:30): The use of sexual violence in armed conflict is a war crime and the use of sexual violence as part of a widespread, systematic attack directed against any civilian population is a crime against humanity. That definition includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and any other form of sexual violence of comparable
gravity committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.

As a country and as a global community of nations, we have decided these acts constitute the absolute worst crimes against the whole of humanity. It saddens me to stand here today to speak on what has been going on in the Middle East. I can think of no group of people, no regime, which mistreats women to a greater extent than Islamic State in Iraq. To say that a grim future awaited you if you were a Christian or Yazidi woman in a territory invaded by Daesh would be a gross understatement. The United Nations found that Islamic State insurgents carried out mass executions, abducted women and girls as sex slaves and used child soldiers in Iraq. It found gross human rights violations and violence of an increasingly sectarian nature against groups including Christians, Yazidis and Shiite Muslims. Women from the Yazidi and Christian communities were transported to Syria to be given to ISIL fighters as a reward or to be sold as sex slaves. The New York Times reported:

The systematic rape of women and girls from the Yazidi religious minority has become deeply enmeshed in the organization and the radical theology of the Islamic State … since the group announced it was reviving slavery as an institution.

The trade in Yazidi women and girls has created a persistent infrastructure, with a network of warehouses where the victims are held, viewing rooms where they are inspected and marketed, and a dedicated fleet of buses used to transport them.

I, along with the rest of the government, deplore this horrific persecution of women from religious, ethnic and other minority groups, including Christians, Yazidis, Shiite Muslims and others, at the hands of ISIL. We unanimously and wholly condemn the egregious abuses committed by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, including beheadings, sexual exploitation of women and girls, rapes and massacres, and we continue to support all efforts to bring ISIL to justice for its heinous atrocities.

The best, most effective, way to stop ISIL from perpetrating crimes against women is to stop ISIL. We are fully committed. We have made and continue to make a major contribution to the global coalition to defeat ISIL. We are making a significant military contribution. As of 6 August 2017, ISIL has lost over 78 per cent of the territory it once held in Iraq and 58 per cent of the territory it once held in Syria. Nearly five million people have been liberated, and two million Iraqis have returned to their homes. ISIL is losing this war.

But military tactics alone will not be enough. To stop ISIL trading women of Christian, Yazidi and Shiite Muslim faith, or other minority ethnic groups being traded like cattle and sold at auction, we have been working with the coalition to cut off their financing, stem the flow of foreign fighters willing to join them and suppress their pernicious messaging. With the threat of defeat looming, fighters might seek to return to their countries of origin. Sadly, these include Australia. But actions have consequences, and fighters from whichever country they hail from who have chosen to support this group of barbarians will be judged for their atrocities. Anyone fighting with, providing material support to or associating with ISIL or other terrorist groups is committing a serious crime and will be subject to the law.

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro) (18:36): I'm very pleased to speak on this motion moved by my good friend and colleague the member for Canberra, who I know has been a passionate advocate in this space, ably supported, as I have been for many years, by Susan
Hutchinson, who has been a wonderful worker in the overall space of peacekeeping and stabilisation issues. In fact, when we established our Asia-Pacific centre for civil-military cooperation, she was also involved in the development of our women, peace and security initiative, which has been so well received in the United Nations and across the globe in UN circles. It really was a reflection of the sorts of issues that we've seen emerging in conflicts in recent times.

It doesn't begin just with the situation in northern Iraq and Syria. I confronted this in my service in Bosnia, where there was a situation of sexual warfare on a massive scale. We don't know the exact figures, but somewhere between 12,000 and 50,000 women were sexually abused, raped and mistreated in what was effectively a systematic policy of warfare in that conflict of extreme ethnic cleansing. Names like Trnopolje, Omarska and Karaman's house are now etched in my mind as examples of the extremes of that circumstance. It was the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia that helped carry us forward, at least in the legal space on this issue, by designating sexual violence like this as a crime against humanity. And we had the landmark case in 1996 of Dragan Zelenovic, who was convicted of those crimes. That has contributed to our body of work going forward.

But the situation in Iraq and Syria has been absolutely horrendous. Of course, the Yazidi people have been suffering from attacks going way back to the periods of 2007 when al-Qaeda was conducting mass bombing exercises—car bombing, suicide bombing—against that community and causing hundreds of deaths. That went to extreme levels from 2014 onwards. We have heard the stories of people kidnapping women and children and turning them into sexual slaves. The figures are not known completely, but we're talking about upwards of 7,000 women and children in this situation. The circumstances as they've been described are absolutely horrendous. We're talking about ISIS actually having gynaecologists on service to examine women and children to determine whether they were virgins but also if they were pregnant. If they were, they were then subjected to forced abortions being performed on them, in what the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Senator John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, determined were crimes of genocide because of the intent that the ISIS forces had at that time to eliminate the entire culture and people of the Yazidi community.

Some of these things don't bear fuller description, but the treating of women and children as cattle in this was the most reprehensible aspect of it. There were values, dollar figures, placed on particular circumstances. For example, a virgin was worth around $10,000 in this trading market. They even utilised the possibilities of social media to facilitate this trading regime. They were using apps like Telegram and WhatsApp and using Facebook to facilitate the marketplace of this horrendous trade in women and girls.

The situation in Iraq and Syria has been something that we haven't seen since Bosnia, but it has taken to a whole new level attempts to justify these actions on a religious basis. The trading of these people—the commerce—is something that defies belief. It really does take us back centuries to the old days of the slave trade. So we have to come to grips with defining what's gone on there as genocide. We have to do that work and join with the rest of the international community in calling this what it was. We also have to look more broadly at the status of women in the Middle East—and, of course, the LGBTI community. We have heard references to the fact that they were also routinely persecuted and executed by ISIS, and we know that in places like the Gaza Strip LGBTI people are routinely executed by the Hamas.
organisation in that way—by being thrown off roofs et cetera. We also know of the persecution and poor status of women right through that region, including, of course, in Iran, Saudi Arabia and other places where the rights of women are not what we would want them to be.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:41): We've all been sickened by the stories of the kidnap, trafficking and sale of women and girls as sex slaves by ISIS. Seeing the courageous survivors tell their stories, it's sickening to see such appalling mental and physical torture. We must seek to find and punish the perpetrators, and we must do all we can for the victims. I believe the government should be commended for its vigour in pursuing this important aim.

With the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act, the government granted the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection the right to strip any dual national who commits these crimes with ISIS of their Australian citizenship. Though it's not always possible to gather proof and extradite offenders from conflict zones, the government will not allow perpetrators of these crimes to return to Australia. We will not permit them to continue to call themselves Australians. We will not count among our number dual citizens who reject everything that we so cherish. We also, with the support of members opposite, passed amendments to the Foreign Evidence Act and other national security legislation which enhance our ability to gather and exploit evidence gathered overseas in trials of returned fighters. These amendments enable evidence received from foreign partners on an agency-to-agency basis to be deployed in prosecutions here in Australia.

The government were among the most vocal supporters of attempts on the UN Security Council to refer the crisis in Syria to the International Criminal Court so we can hold individual fighters to account. We supported a resolution that strongly condemned these sorts of crimes, though both of these actions were vetoed. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs has reported, the government continues to call on the Security Council to involve the International Criminal Court and give strong support to the 'Bringing Daesh to Justice' initiative of Belgium, Iraq and the UK. Ultimately, it is only through international cooperation that we will be able to progress these aims, and that is the path that the Australian government are following. So we are already doing what we can in collaboration with our international partners to bring those Australians who commit crimes in the Middle East to justice. In the case of those who are still actively engaged in armed conflict against our national interests, they live in constant danger. I understand, for example, from media reports that Australian ISIS fighter Khaled Sharrouf was killed in a coalition air strike only last month.

Though it is important to investigate Australians who have committed these crimes and to prosecute them where their involvement is suspected, what is more important is to prevent more of these crimes being committed in the future and to provide support to those who have been victims. To do that, we must destroy ISIS and bring an end to the conflict in the Middle East. We are making considerable progress. The coalition has retaken Mosul and is beginning the work of taking Raqqa. Australia remains a fully committed member of the coalition and under the defence white paper we continue to increase our defence spending to ensure that we have the resources we need to maintain that commitment.

We're also doing what we can to support the victims. In total, our committed humanitarian and stabilisation assistance for both the Syria and Iraq crises since 2011 is over $500 million, while we've committed another $220 million going forward to respond to the Syrian conflict.
In Iraq, Australian aid has delivered food and shelter to one million people each month and, in particular, provided access to health services for over 200,000 women. The additional $10 million the government allocated to aid for Mosul's civilians provided food, medical assistance and temporary shelter as well as support to women and girls. Of course, in the final resort, we also have one of the most generous refugee settlement programs in the world and are accepting an extra 12,000 people out of Syria.

Sexual violence, whether in war or in the home, is deeply abhorrent. It is a crime against humanity and an affront to what makes us human beings. We must do what we can to stamp it out and to help those whose lives it blights. I commend the government for its action to date and am confident the foreign minister will continue to make a difference in this vital task in the future.

Debate adjourned.

Small Amount Credit Contracts

**Mr HAMMOND** (Perth) (18:46): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Government established a panel to review the Small Amount Credit Contract (SACC) laws on 7 August 2015, which provided its final report to the Government on 3 March 2016;

(b) the Government released its response to the SACC review on 28 November 2016, in which it agreed with the vast majority of the recommendations in part or in full;

(c) the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services said at the time that 'the implementation of these recommendations will ensure that vulnerable consumers are afforded appropriate levels of consumer protection while continuing to access SACCs and leases';

(d) the Minister claimed in an interview on Lateline on 28 February 2017 that Treasury was drafting legislation to implement the review's recommendations; and

(e) in response to questioning in Senate Additional Estimates by Senator Gallagher on 1 March 2017, Treasury's head of the Financial System Division confirmed that drafting had not commenced for a bill to enact the SACC review recommendations accepted by the Government;

(2) acknowledges that consumer credit contracts and consumer leases have been shown to cause unnecessary hardship to vulnerable consumers, and that the Parliament should act to protect vulnerable consumers;

(3) recognises that the delay in introducing legislation for consideration by the Parliament, to implement the SACC review recommendations, results in an unnecessary continuation of hardship to vulnerable consumers and their families;

(4) congratulates the consumer advocate groups who attended Parliament House on 27 March 2017 to raise the profile of this important issue; and

(5) calls on the Government to immediately prepare legislation for consideration by the Parliament, to implement the SACC review recommendations.

I don't need a seconder yet? No. I'm glad there are learned heads here, much more learned than I.

*Mr Pasin interjecting*—

**Mr HAMMOND:** I wasn't referring to the member for Barker in relation to that assessment, I can tell you right now!
Mr Pasin interjecting—

Mr HAMMOND: All good things to those who wait, I suggest! In government, Labor enacted the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009. That act implemented for the first time in Australia a national regime for the regulation of consumer credit. Labor strengthened the regime in 2012 in response to concerns about improper behaviour by payday lenders, including by strengthening protections for consumers. Part of Labor's plan also mandated a built-in review mechanism of the new national consumer credit protection regime. That review commenced in 2015. The small amount credit contract review was handed to the government in March 2016 and the government published its response last year.

This will not be a motion where one side or, presumably, the other will spend much time being overly critical of the approach taken by respective major political parties in relation to addressing this crucial issue. I think it's fair to say that, when one looks at the way in which both parties went about unanimously backing the recommendations of the review, there appears to be significant uniform community goodwill in relation to making sure meaningful steps are taken to protect vulnerable consumers who may fall prey to small amount credit contracts.

Let me briefly expand what I mean when I talk about small amount credit contracts. Put very simply, they are more colloquially known as payday loans or rent-to-buy schemes. Both of them have real pitfalls for vulnerable consumers who are spending much more time than any of us would like focusing on just meeting day-to-day needs for them and their families. The reality is these payday loans and rent-to-buy schemes are almost exclusively used by people on low or very low incomes to try to keep their heads above water. We've all spoken to those people in our electorates. We know that people on very low incomes often have little capacity to absorb financial shocks—simple things like a washing machine breaking down, ill health leading to worklessness or a parking ticket. With little disposable cash after bills are paid, and with little savings put away for a rainy day, one of the obvious options is often a payday loan. We have all seen those adverts on TV, often late at night or extremely early in the morning, saying, 'Cash while you wait' and 'Loans via apps'. It all looks very warm and fuzzy until such time as the rubber hits the road and these vulnerable consumers are faced with the spectre of having to pay back those loans plus crippling interest which they hardly foresaw.

There are also rent-to-buy consumer leases, where a consumer will enter into an arrangement in which they rent a consumer good, say a vacuum cleaner or a fridge, from a company for a period. At the end of that period, they get to keep the goods. It's also becoming increasingly common with mobile phones. So while the unconventional arrangements have existed in one form or another for many years, and we all recognise that if properly in check they can play a legitimate role in smoothing out the swings and roundabouts of challenges for low-income families, there is still a systemic and regulatory failure in relation to the small amount credit contracts that see some of our lowest income citizens being trapped in a cycle of debt.

I will use my remaining time simply to implore the government—the time is long overdue for us to make some legislative changes to the laws relating to small amount credit contracts. This is the reason why it's such a shame that we are where we are. The government commissioned this review in 2015; it reported in March 2016. The government's response,
which was very favourable to the review, was in November 2016, and there was light at the end of the tunnel. The minister indicated in February 2017 that drafting was underway. The problem is that the March 2017 estimates revealed that this was not true. Drafting had not commenced, and we haven't seen any evidence yet that the drafting instructions have even been drafted, let alone the legislation. What I'm hoping we will hear from those on the government side today, through this motion, is that there is some real progress in making sure that all sides can wrap around this issue, protect vulnerable consumers and just make sure that their lives can be improved in some small way.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Price): Do we have a seconder for the motion?

Mr Perrett: I second the motion.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (18:52): I thank the member for Perth for bringing this motion to the House. I think the most important thing we need to recognise in this space is that we need to get this process right. As the member for Perth has quite rightly pointed out, for those people in our community who access this type of finance because they can't access finance elsewhere, it is critically important we get it right. In accepting any of the recommendations made in the review, it is imperative that we carefully weigh the benefits and risks to consumers and small business operators within this industry.

As the member for Perth has rightly pointed out, the government has accepted the vast majority of the recommendations, either in part or in full, that were made by the review. The review panel stated:
The recommendations seek to strike an appropriate balance between enabling consumers to access emergency finance when required, optimising their opportunity to improve their financial situation over time, and the viability of an efficient industry.
The government shares that view. That's why it's so important that we get this right for consumers who require access to this type of finance, because more often than not they have no other avenue.

It's just as important to ensure that the smaller businesses in this sector have the capacity to continue to provide the services they currently provide. Because of this, we are carefully considering how these changes are implemented. This government understands that the extent of the reforms being proposed will have a significant impact on the sector and must be implemented following careful consideration. The government acknowledges the significant impact that these changes will have on existing industry participants and, importantly, will put in place appropriate grandfathering arrangements for existing contracts. The government will conduct a further review of the small amount credit contract and consumer lease laws within three years from the commencement of the legislative changes, as we understand the ongoing need to ensure that vulnerable consumers are protected while still allowing appropriate access to finance.

In essence, the government supports four key recommendations made by the review: firstly, retaining the existing price caps on small amount credit contracts; secondly, extending the small amount credit contract protected earnings amount requirement to all consumers, lowered to 10 per cent of the consumers' net income—currently, for those consumers who receive 50 per cent or more income through payments from Centrelink, total SACC repayments are capped at 20 per cent of the consumer's gross income; thirdly, introducing a cap on total payments on a consumer lease equal to the base price of the good plus four per
cent of that price per month; and, fourthly, introducing a protected earnings amount requirement for consumer lease providers of 10 per cent of net income for all consumers, equivalent but separate to the requirements of the small amount credit contract.

The government recognises that consumers of small amount credit contracts and consumer leases are often Centrelink recipients or those with very low incomes and therefore have limited access to mainstream credit. There are other opportunities, like the no-interest loan schemes, but they have limited financial capacities. Half of all consumer lease payments are provided directly through Centrepay, Centrelink's payment deduction system, with the average gross income of a small amount credit contract consumer being some $35,700 per annum.

The government also understands that repeated borrowing in Australia is high, with the average SACC consumer taking more than three small loans each year and then falling into a debt spiral—a clear indication of the financial difficulty they're in. Therefore, it's important that, as we review this process and look to implement solutions, we do provide the opportunity for emergency finance which will allow the lease of a range of consumer goods to help these people through a very difficult situation but so they don't get trapped in a debt spiral.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (18:57): What we just heard from the member for Forde was blah, blah, blah: no action whatsoever from this government, just a lot of waffle without anything in place. I rise to place on the record my strong support for the motion moved by the member for Perth and call on the government to take action on this reckless and out-of-control industry which is ruining the lives of residents not only in my electorate of Oxley but right across this country.

What we have is another case of this government burying its head in the sand and failing vulnerable Australians. We know that this is nothing new for the government, with its cuts to Medicare and schools, and the disastrous rollout of the NBN. It's what we have come to expect. But small amount credit contract providers, or payday loan providers, are ruining lives and running rife through our communities, and they must be reined in.

We've already heard how the government established a panel to review the small amount credit contract laws on 7 August 2015, and it provided its final report on 3 March 2016. Since then 18 months have gone by, and what have the government done? Zero, absolutely nothing—even though in the government's very own response to the review they agreed with the vast majority of the recommendations in part or in full. Yet they have continued to sit on their hands and let the industry run riot. Furthermore, the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services said at the time:

Implementation of these recommendations will ensure that vulnerable consumers are afforded appropriate levels of consumer protection while continuing to access SACCs and leases. But they are yet to act—all talk, no action.

The government were even caught out this year when the minister claimed in an interview on Lateline on 28 February that Treasury was drafting legislation to implement the review's recommendations. However, just three days later, on 1 March, in response to questioning in Senate estimates by Senator Gallagher, Treasury's head of the Financial System Division confirmed that drafting had not commenced for a bill to enact the SACC review
recommendations accepted by the government. I'm not sure what is worse, the outrageous practices that the payday loan sharks employ or the sheer incompetence of the government, who tell Australians they are doing something about it when in fact they are doing absolutely nothing. It's no wonder that we see the government slipping further and further behind with the Australian people, when the people have to put up with this rubbish.

It's absolutely clear that consumer credit contracts and consumer leases have been shown to cause unnecessary hardship to vulnerable consumers. A report commissioned by the Consumer Action Law Centre and compiled by Digital Finance Analytics in October 2015 identified payday-lending hotspots at postcode level. I was informed by the Consumer Action Law Centre earlier this year that my electorate of Oxley was one of the worst areas affected by payday lenders.

I take this issue seriously. I only wish the government would as well. These are vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of every single day, while this government sits back and refuses to act. Next year, they will be entering their fifth year of government.

These are lenders who charge a 20 per cent establishment fee and four per cent monthly fee on the amount loaned. These fees are converted to staggering annual percentage rates of between 112.1 per cent and 407 per cent. This is absolutely outrageous. Furthermore, payday lenders are not subject to the 48 per cent annual percentage rates caps like other lenders. They can charge almost 10 times as much as banks and other lenders—10 times as much as banks! And what's worse is that they take advantage of people who are already struggling financially, who simply cannot afford to make repayments, with many becoming caught in a harmful cycle of repeat borrowing.

The industry has been given long enough to prove they can self-regulate, but they have failed. Rather than responsible lending, the industry has repeatedly shown that it will lend money to pretty much anyone, regardless of whether they can afford repayments. ASIC has repeatedly taken action against big lenders for breaching responsible lending laws, including Cash Converters and Nimble, but we haven't seen any positive changes in the industry. That's why we are here today, calling on the government to immediately prepare legislation for consideration by the parliament to implement the SACC review recommendations and protect vulnerable consumers. Any further delay in introducing legislation for consideration by the parliament to implement the SACC review recommendations will result in unnecessary continuation of hardship to vulnerable consumers and their families.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate to meet with consumer groups who attended Parliament House, and I've met with church leaders, advocacy groups and welfare agencies in my electorate. They all ask me the same thing: 'When will this government get on and actually take action on these practices?' We've got to see action and it's got to happen now.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (19:02): I'm proud to support the motion moved by the member for Perth, and I thank the member for Oxley for his fine words on this topic. I'm proud to join the member for Perth in calling on the Turnbull government to immediately prepare legislation to implement the small amount credit contract review recommendations.

Next week, the coalition government starts its fifth year in office, so it's not as if they haven't had enough time. The government commissioned a review of SACC in 2015 which
reported to the government in March 2016. The government's own response was released in November last year. So the reform plan already exists and has done for a year. Most of the work has already been done. Now it's time to actually act. In fact, Minister O'Dwyer indicated in February that the drafting of the legislation was already underway to implement the SACC review’s recommendations. However, we've now heard that the drafting actually has not commenced. So not only have they been sitting on their hands when it comes to the review's recommendations; they've also misled the Australian people about the progress of these vital reforms.

It's high time the government stopped dithering, stopped focusing on themselves and their interminable division, and started standing up for Australians trapped in these inappropriate small amount credit contracts or payday loans and rent-to-buy schemes.

These small amount credit contracts or payday loans and rent-to-buy schemes are a particular type of loan that is almost exclusively used by people on low or very low incomes who are simply trying to keep their heads above water. They are loans that are not issued by authorised deposit-taking institutions like banks, building societies or credit unions. They are loans for much smaller amounts and shorter durations, and, as the member for Oxley stated, they can have annual interest rates amounting to 100 to 400 per cent or so.

We see the TV ads: get cash in 30 minutes or instant loans on an iPhone app; get your holiday paid for now; go into hock for your wedding. Sadly, with inequality at its highest in 70 years, the number of Australians feeling the squeeze with the rising cost of living and other pressures is rising. This leaves an ever-increasing number of Australians with low disposable incomes and without the capacity to absorb financial shocks like keeping a fridge that's broken down running, repairing a burst pipe or repairing a car so that they can go to work.

In these scenarios, it's easy to see why people turn to the apparent promise of a small loan to relieve this financial stress. In the short term it's attractive, but in the long term you're obviously paying these exorbitant rates. Then there are the rent-to-buy leases where a consumer will rent a product, such as a washing machine or a fridge, from a particular company for a particular period. They appear nice and shiny. They're basically the modern-day version of the old hire-purchase scheme.

Labor remains deeply concerned about the systemic failures and the lack of an adaptive regulatory framework that can respond to these small amount credit contracts, leaving many Australians in a cycle of spiralling debt where they're borrowing to pay the interest on these payday loans. I was proud to be part of a Labor government that enacted the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009 in 2010. For the first time in Australia, that act implemented a national regime for the regulation of consumer credit. Labor's record in government on consumer law and securities reform is strong. We work with small and large business to reduce red tape and inhibitors to business confidence. Over our two terms in government, our reforms in this sector received an abundance of support from the commercial and consumer sectors, something you could hardly suggest this Liberal government enjoys. In fact, we've only had one speaker from the Liberal Party on this motion. We strengthened our own consumer credit protection regime in 2012 as a response to growing concern amongst Australians about improper behaviour by payday lenders, including by strengthening protections for consumers of these products. That's our record, Labor's record. I'm proud to
stand by our achievement in the consumer law sector and look forward to doing even more under a Shorten Labor government.

Part of Labor's plan also mandated a built-in review mechanism of the new national consumer credit protection regime. That review commenced in 2015, and we've been waiting, with cobwebs blowing around and tumbleweeds rolling down the finance street. As I said earlier, we've heard one thing from the minister over six months ago—that the legislation was being drafted—and then another thing from the relevant department, saying that no such drafting had occurred. I certainly hope those sitting opposite might be able to provide Australia with an update on the drafting at the very least, because we need this legislation. Australians who are trapped in these contracts stand to have their lives improved by this parliament acting to fix the problems, only to have our government too preoccupied with internal divisions—yet another example of the legislative inaction that has become too synonymous with this Turnbull government.

So I thank the member for Perth for his motion, and I wish that those opposite had supported the motion and spoken on this important area of work. I look forward to the member for Perth's contribution in the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): The time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:08
**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**

**South Australia: Infrastructure**

*(Question No. 735)*

Mr Zappia asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 25 May 2017:

In respect of the 2017-18 budget document titled 'Stronger Growth to Create More and Better Paying Jobs' in which it states that $3.1 billion will be spent on South Australian infrastructure, what (a) projects will this funding be used for, and (b) is the funding allocation for each project.

Mr Morrison: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has provided the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>AG funding contribution 2013-14 to 2020-21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Road Upgrade (Darlington)</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Road Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Road Planning Study - Regency Road to Anzac Highway</td>
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<td>South Road Planning Study - Anzac Highway to Darlington</td>
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<td>South Road Upgrade (Darlington) Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dukes Highway Upgrade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dukes Highway Upgrade - Phase 2 Roadside Rest Areas</td>
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<td>Dukes Highway Pavement Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>Dukes Highway Roadside Hazard Mitigation</td>
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<td>Dukes Highway - Overtaking Lanes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dukes Highway Dividing Treatment Strategy</td>
<td>3.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managed Motorways on South Eastern Freeway</td>
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<tr>
<td>North-South Corridor Adelaide</td>
<td>1,190.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darlington Interchange (also refer to funding under Asset Recycling Fund)</td>
<td>102.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Torrens Road to River Torrens</td>
<td>380.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Connector</td>
<td>708.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>North-South Corridor Adelaide - Planning and Delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Expressway</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Eastern Freeway - Mount Barker (Bald Hills)</td>
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Road) Interchange

**Road Infrastructure Projects (Funds reallocated from Murray Darling Regional Economic Diversification Programme)**

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA Investment Contingencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for Sentencing and Archival of Plans and Records which are residual from the sale of the Australian National Railways Commission</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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**Sum of Network Project Funding**

1,389.32

**OFF-NETWORK**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Mining and Infrastructure Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anangu Pitjanjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands</td>
<td>85.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marion Road Upgrade Planning Study</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oaklands Crossing Grade Separation at the Intersection of Diagonal and Morphett Roads</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobethal B[Double Route</td>
<td>14.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flinders Link</td>
<td>42.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodwood and Torrens Junction</td>
<td>189.35</td>
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**Sum of Off-Network Project Funding**

373.27

**TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING TO SA**

1,759.59

**ROAD MAINTENANCE FUNDING**

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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<tr>
<td>Indicative Maintenance Formula Contribution 2009-10 to 2013-14</td>
<td>27.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Maintenance Funding 2014-15 to 2018-19</td>
<td>140.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance Funding 2019-20 Onwards</td>
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</table>

**Indicative Sum of Road Maintenance Funding**

195.76

**TOTAL INDICATIVE FUNDING TO SA**

1,955.34

**Black Spot Projects**

| Programme of Works for SA                                                 | 38.43   |

**Heavy Vehicles Safety and Productivity Programme**

| Programme of Works for SA                                                 | 21.98   |

**Bridges Renewal Programme**

| Programme of Works for SA                                                 | 3.97    |

**Asset Recycling Fund Projects -Infrastructure Growth Package - New Investments**

| Black Spot Projects                                                       | 16.00   |
| Roads to Recovery                                                        | 31.48   |

**National Highway Upgrade Programme**

| Stun Highway                                                              | 19.89   |
| North-South Corridor Adelaide - Darlington                               | 393.80  |
Nuclear Weapons
(Question No. 760)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 22 June 2017:
"Why has Australia chosen to boycott negotiations for a United Nations treaty that prohibits nuclear weapons?"

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Australia shares with the international community the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. We believe this goal must be pursued in an effective, determined and pragmatic way. Eliminating nuclear weapons is not a quick or an easy task. It will take sustained, practical steps which Australia has long supported.

The Australian Government declined to participate in negotiations for a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ("ban treaty") after assessing that such a treaty would not be in Australia's national interests.

The Australian Government has a consistent, considered position on the ban treaty, the text of which was adopted on 7 July 2017. In the view of the Government, the ban treaty will be ineffective in eliminating nuclear weapons. Proceeding with ban treaty negotiations without the participation of states possessing nuclear weapons, or without due regard for the international security environment, has not helped create the conditions for further major reductions in nuclear arsenals. The ban treaty risks undermining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other treaties by creating ambiguity and confusion through parallel obligations, and by deepening divisions between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. It contains non-proliferation safeguards that are weaker than those already existing under the NPT. The Government's assessment is that the ban treaty is not an effective measure with which to achieve nuclear disarmament.

On 7 July 2017, the US, UK and France jointly stated that they did not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to this ban treaty. They underlined that this ban treaty does not address the security concerns that continue to make nuclear deterrence necessary and that it cannot result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon.

Seventy-one countries did not vote in favour of the ban treaty in New York on 7 July 2017. At the UN General Assembly last year, Australia was one of over 80 countries which did not vote in favour of the plenary resolution, which mandated these negotiations.
The NPT is the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and of global peace and security. The NPT already has a consensus-based roadmap for the elimination of nuclear weapons, as expressed in the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Australia’s priority is to strengthen the NPT and to implement the Action Plan, as the agreed and most realistic means of achieving progress on nuclear disarmament.

Australia continues to play a lead role in the Non Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, a group of 12 countries: Australia; Canada; Chile; Germany; Japan; Mexico; the Netherlands; Nigeria; the Philippines; Poland; Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Through this cross-regional group and other dedicated efforts, Australia continues to take forward the NPT Action Plan.

Consistent with the NPT Action Plan, the Australian Government promotes and is actively progressing other initiatives to advance nuclear disarmament. For example, we have long promoted the global norm against nuclear testing established under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

To advocate universalisation and entry-into-force of the CTBT, I (Ms Bishop) co-chaired a ‘Friends of the CTBT’ event involving the UN Secretary-General and some 80 countries, with 40 represented at Ministerial level, in New York in September 2016.

Australia will continue to push hard for the practical steps and the political will needed to bring about a world without nuclear weapons.

**Australia's National Networks of Commonwealth Marine Reserves**

*(Question No. 780)*

Ms Sharkie asked the Minister for the Environment and Energy, in writing, on 08 August 2017:

When will the management arrangements for Australia’s National Network of Commonwealth Marine Reserves be completed and operational.

Mr Frydenberg: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

To provide certainty for all Australians who rely on and enjoy our marine parks, we are seeking to finalise management arrangements as soon as possible.

The draft management plans were released on 21 July 2017, asking the public to have their say. To make sure everyone has an opportunity to consider the plans, the consultation period will run for 60 days (double the statutory requirement of 30 days). Feedback and submissions can be provided until midnight on 20 September 2017. The Director will consider feedback, before providing final plans to the Minister for the Environment and Energy for approval. The plans will enter into effect for 10 years from a date specified by the Minister for the Environment and Energy, after they have been tabled in both houses of Parliament.

The Government committed an additional $56.1 million over four years to manage Australian Marine Parks. This will resource the Director of National Parks to establish and manage parks, enable industry assistance for any commercial fishers directly affected, and increase engagement of marine users in the management of marine parks.

**Payphones**

*(Question No. 800)*

Ms Sharkie asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications in writing, on 17 August 2017...
(1) Will the Minister be implementing the recommendation of the Productivity Commission report Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation (28 April 2017) to wind back Telstra's obligation to provide payphones; if so, how will this ensure that unemployed Australians and regions with little or no mobile phone coverage will not be worse off.

(2) Is the proposed funding program for some form of community telecommunications (which could involve payphones, mobile charging stations, and public WiFi) to replace the payphones Universal Service Obligation, being designed; if so, (a) who by, (b) what is the outline of the program design, (c) when will it be delivered, and (d) who will be delivering it.

Mr Fletcher: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

"The Government is now carefully considering the Productivity Commission's recommendations relating to the telecommunications Universal Service Obligation (USO), including its recommendations on the payphones USO. Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications and the Arts, has established a taskforce within the Department of Communications and the Arts to develop the Government's response.

In considering changes, if any, to the payphone USO regulatory environment and contractual arrangements, the Government will be particularly mindful of the needs of regional and remote communities including unemployed Australians and other vulnerable groups that have limited access to other telecommunication services."