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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST 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, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Andrew William Hastie MP, Mr Kevin John Hogan MP and Ms Maria Vanvakinou 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—Mr George Robert Christensen 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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<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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### 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 Laing  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<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>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Steve Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Keith Pitt MP</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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<td>Minister for Justice</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Minister for Local Government and Territories</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Minister for Sport</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islanders</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy</td>
<td>Ed Husic MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Tim Hammond MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment and Water</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
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<td>Hon Linda Burney MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security and Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodmann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Industry and Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development (1)</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for TAFE and Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
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Monday, 21 November 2016

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

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Members Sworn

Ms Clare Ellen O'Neil made and subscribed the oath of allegiance.

COMMITTEES

Petitions Committee

Report

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:02): I present the fourth report of the Petitions Committee.

PETITIONS

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:02): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Pensions

Reasons: To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: The Government, along with the Greens Party have cut $2.4 billion from 330,000 Australian pensioners. This means single pensioners will lose as much as $8,000 a year and some couples will lose as much as $14,000 a year, leaving pensioners worse off. National Seniors Australia said: "These cuts, in isolation, are simply a budget quick fix. They're not part of a broader strategy or the result of discussion amongst policy experts."
(National Seniors Australia, Press Release, 23 June 2014). Australian pensioners have worked their whole life and they deserve a secure retirement. Request: We therefore ask the House to: reverse the Government's cuts to the pension, and restore funding as to not leave middle-Australia worse off. Additionally, we ask that the Government's decision to force Australians to work until 70 years of age be reversed.

from 30 citizens

Lake Burley Griffin

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Parliament of Australia Petition for the Protection of Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape This petition is from Lake Burley Griffin Guardians on behalf of the Citizens of Australia. Draws to the attention of the House the lack of heritage protection of Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape, that Lake parklands are being appropriated for private apartment and business development and the lack of adequate, transparent community consultation. Request: We therefore ask the House to prevent the appropriation of Lake parklands by amending the National Capital Plan to withdraw the West Basin Precinct Code, re-establish Acton Park in West Basin, ensure a whole of lake masterplan and management plan, undertake a Commonwealth Heritage assessment of the whole of Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape so that management can be carefully administered under the control of the Commonwealth.

from 8 citizens
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme: Fletcher, New South Wales

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition from residents of Fletcher, NSW, and surrounds, draws the attention of the House to the fact this community is without reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits by a pharmacist approved under Section 90 of the National Health Act 1953. This community of more than 12,000 residents has been denied reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits due to an unintended consequence of the application of the Pharmacy Location Rules. The current level of one supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits to this community does not provide the population of more than 12,000 residents with reasonable, timely nor adequate access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The current level of supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits does not allow residents to improve their health outcomes through access to, and quality use of, medicines in a timely manner. Request: We therefore ask the House to give the community of Fletcher and surrounds reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits by requesting the Minister for Health exercise the Discretionary Power under subsection 90A(2) of the National Health Act 1953 to approve the pharmacy premises at Shop 11, Fletcher Village, 221 Minmi Road, Fletcher, NSW, 2287.

from 833 citizens

National Broadband Network

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
The Australian Government's myBroadband website details many parts of the Cowan electorate as having 'D-E' grade broadband internet quality. Many residents in areas such as Greenwood are unable to access ADSL and are relying on costly and data limited mobile broadband services, this whilst the myBroadband shows Greenwood to have an A rating for ADSL availability. The construction of the NBN is not scheduled to commence in parts of the electorate such as Greenwood until 2018. As the NBN rollout schedule indicates the start of construction and not its availability to consumers, residents of this area will thus have to wait even longer (estimated to be 18 months) to gain access to good quality internet. This is of deep concern to those who do not currently have access to quality broadband services, especially when areas with better quality existing broadband internet are recieving the NBN sooner. Request: We therefore ask the House to: 1. Most importantly reschedule the rollout of the NBN to prioritise the construction of the NBN in areas that currently have poor quality internet, such as Greenwood, ahead of areas that have satisfactory access to broadband internet. 2. Have the copper for the FTTN network independently inspected and tested entirely in Greenwood for its immediate and future NBN capability. 3. Update the myBroadband data to reflect more accurate information for the electorate of Cowan.

from 33 citizens

Palestine

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition of citizens and residents of Australia draws the attention of the House to the parlous situation currently being suffered by the Palestinians. It seeks to address the national and civil rights of the Palestinian people following years of failed diplomacy. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem now extends to 49 years and the relentless expansion of settlements calls into question the sincerity of Israel's negotiating position. Request: We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to formally recognise the state of Palestine.

from 1339 citizens

House of Representatives: online petition system

It has come to our attention how poorly the House has attempted to implement an online petition system for the House in its website such that we, the citizens of Australia particularly concerned with the continuing digital illiteracy of the Australian Government, petition our representatives to try again.
An online petition system should have a clear entry point, a friendly and short URL. It should contain a simple work flow that guides citizens through the primary tasks of creating, finding, and sharing petitions online. It should work seamlessly across desktop and mobile devices without failing to load correctly in some parts or with validation checks being unable to count words accurately. Importantly an online petition system should not prioritise walls of text before the function of actually petitioning our representatives and accessibility design considerations for those with a disability must be paramount. On all these counts the House's new online petition system fails.

from 25 citizens

**Single Parent Families**

As of March 2016 92,906 single parent families unable to find employment or who are under employed are surviving on Newstart assistance rates while plunging into poverty and increased risk of homelessness.

from 92 citizens

**Asylum Seekers**

Australia is quickly becoming known as a racist hateful nation because of the treatment of asylum seekers by our governments. A simple solution would be to treat the asylum seekers as people. Request: We request the offshore detention centres be closed immediately and consideration be given to a plan devised by Tony Magrathea to use asylum seekers to help build canals from the Ord River scheme south to Adelaide and Perth and from the Burdekin Dam south to the Darling River system. Asylum seekers would be taken from a central staging post, for example Java and flown directly to Australia thereby cutting out the deadly boat trafficking of peoples. Processing of asylum seekers would be done at the construction camps. The people would be paid Australian wages for the work they do and funding would come from the billions of dollars currently provided to keep the camps open and from the sale of irrigation licences along the canals and solar power generated by the anti-evaporation systems proposed. The English language would be taught to all and considered a must for people seeking to work and live there. Movement to major cities would be limited for an initial period of 5 years, The European Union could be asked to contribute to the costs and we could consider taking some of their millions of refugees and asylum seekers. The schemes would eventually take 60 million people and be a food bowl for a billion more creating great desert cities.

from 46 citizens

**National Holiday**

Australia is in need of another National Holiday that supports our commercial markets; this will help boost our economy nationwide. Request: This is why I am requesting that the House creates (a) new public holiday(s) on October 31st and/or November 1st for Halloween. Many citizens of Australia also desire this and it would encourage the celebration of the holiday in our country which would without a doubt stimulate substantial revenue for retailers and other organizations Australia wide.

from 10 citizens

**Labour Hire Casualisation**

To the Honourable, the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives: Removing Long Term Labour Hire Casualisation will guarantee Stability for all citizens for the right to benefit from long term employment, enabling people to have certainty to borrow for housing, allowing families to enjoy holidays. Reducing stress factors, depression, breakdown of the family unit. Fairness and Equality for each and every employee. Also increasing the stability of the Federal Reserve Bank with lending increasing, Hospitality and Tourism increasing due to families partaking in vacations without fear of losing their job. Decreasing non reported injuries/incidents within the workplace, Allowing adequate
sick days reducing overall illness within the workplace. Request: Remove long term Labor Hire Casualisation within all industries nation wide. Placing restrictions on employers to not exceed 5 months casual employment to ensure all employees are receiving same benefits and longevity by offering permanent employment. Implementing clauses that will ensure employers cannot dismiss casual employees without showing just cause and restricting employers from further employment for a twelve (12) month period once dismissing employees under the clause of no longer requiring staff.

from 1945 citizens

**Indue Welfare Card**

To the Honourable, the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives: I am writing this letter to you on behalf of the people in Ceduna who have fallen victim to the Governments welfare card trials against their will. I say victim because that is how most of us feel. The people here forced to use the Indue card, firstly have to accept the terms and conditions of a card before being given the right to see the card contract. The conditions allow for fees to be introduced or increased provided 20 days notice is given, however the consumer has no power to cancel the contract. ALL people who receive any kind of government Pension, including retired public servants, ex armed forces, police, ambos, etc, given that at least their pensions, and also a percentage of their super come from the taxpayer pocket, and to not include them is a clear cut case of discrimination, and a violation of human rights, and, in certain parameters, a violation of the constitution Request: We request that the trialing of the welfare card be halted until such time as its legal standing in the implementation has been resolved.

from 67 citizens

**Abbott, Hon. Tony**

To the Honourable, the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives: Mr Abbott was born in Britain on 4 November 1957 to a British father giving him under their law automatic British citizenship. Mr Abbotts mother filled in a request for Australian citizenship by descent for Mr Abbott and this was granted on 2 July 1981 giving him Australian and British citizenship. This was to comply with the Rhodes Trust which had granted him a scholarship. In October 1981 Mr Abbott entered Oxford University as a British citizen in contravention of the rules of Rhodes Trust and Scholarship he had just received. There is no record of Mr Abbott ever having renounced his British citizenship. The National Archives of Australia holds the Immigration Department file 81/10264 showing the granting of Australian citizenship. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet FOI disclosure log 2015/048 shows an FOI request indicating Mr Abbotts renunciation papers do not exist. Request: The petitioners request the House demand Mr Abbott show he complies with S44 of the Australian Constitution in that he is solely an Australian citizen and not also a citizen of another country. Failing this, the petitioners request the House remove Mr Abbott from parliament and refer the matter to the Attorney Generals department to determine if charges of fraud for signing false declarations for the AEC can be put. Should Mr Abbott be removed for breaching S44 of the constitution the petitioners request Mr Abbott repay all salaries, expenses, allowances and travel expenses and his parliamentary pension and travel gold card be removed from him.

from 1020 citizens

**Gambling Advertisement**

To the Honourable, the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives: Gambling is a destructive addiction like drugs and alcohol. Gambling agencies are increasing their user base Request: We would like to see legislation introduced to remove the advertisements.

from 8 citizens
Pensions

With the world economies continuing to build unsustainable debt to support current living standards we in Australia must reign in Government spending (other than spending for the purposes of economic expansionary spending initiatives). The Government employees and Politicians have $150bn held in the Future Fund to support future pensions, however another $750bn (approx) is needed to fully fund this expense. I have a relative that has recently retired from the public service on a pension of $2000 per week non-taxable, and he is undertaking part time work. This is unsustainable and I recommend the following be implemented asap; 1. Pensions as described should be taxed and not tax-free 2. Entitlements to be means-tested 3. Pensions should be reduced by 75%. The above changes would result in a minimum saving in excess of $500bn which is desperately needed to pay down existing Government debt.

We therefore ask the House to review and vote on the above 3 points I have outlined for the benefit of all Australians and not just the few.

from 21 citizens.

Marriage

We believe it is past time for the marriage equality debate to end and legislation to be enacted.

We request that the House proceed with discussion and voting on one or both of the bills titled "Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2016", and encourage all parties to allow a free vote on the bill.

from 69 citizens.

Human Rights

Our children deserve to know they are loved and accepted. All of them. We have the fourth highest suicide rate among comparable countries:


Further debate serves only to harass a vulnerable group in our community. The overwhelming majority of Australians support or at the very least tolerate this. Singling out a group to deny human rights is discrimination and against the Australian culture and the spirit of our laws. Same-sex couples already raise children in our society, the dwindling primary vote for our major parties reflects the gap between Australian's expectations and what our parliament does. We are all Australians. We are all people. Our society treats each other with respect and love. Our politicians should, too.

from 18 citizens.

Political Donations

Politicians are too often now pushing legislation purely for the benefit of the entities that donate to their party/campaign. This often leads to the detriment of most Australians and the benefit of the elite few who donate. Politicians are also bribed with gifts (scholarships for their children, flights and accommodation etc.) Further more politicians make around 6 times the average Australian wage and claim expenses from their over indulgences (e.g helicopter from Melbourne to Geelong.) The budget for politicians whims could better serve the public perhaps provide the public better transport options, for those who can't afford a helicopter.

Requesting that the house act to ban corporate/non private funding of political parties and implement a watchdog to ensure political agendas are not being pushed by private donators, this watchdog should also ensure that politicians are not receiving bribes in other forms aside from money and that politicians expenses are relevant, and reasonable.

from 25 citizens.
from 32 citizens.

**West Papua**

We have long been concerned about the denial of the West Papuans’ right to self-determination, which was broadly acknowledged within the international community in the 1950s and 60s but crudely over-ridden by an agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The agreement was organised by the US government in 1962 to dilute Cold War tensions, but also to secure a majority interest in what was to become the Freeport gold-and copper mine in Timika (West Papua). We are also very concerned about the grave human rights abuses that have been committed by Indonesian police and military in West Papua. There are now 1.3 million missing West Papuans, and the living remainder are often tortured, beaten or harassed, displaced from their land, and subjected to discrimination. This is a tragedy right on Australia’s doorstep, similar to the genocidal policies of the Indonesian administration in East Timor. The Pacific Coalition for West Papua was formed in July 2016 after West Papua’s resistance and nation making endeavors were recognized by the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Pacific Islands Forum.

We are calling on the house to support our neighbor, West Papua, by agreeing to support the motion put to the UN General Assembly by The Pacific Coalition for West Papua to relist West Papua on the UN Decolonization List, showing that Australia upholds core principles of justice and human rights for all.

from 1204 citizens.

**Marriage**

There have been many attempts to gain momentum for amendments to the Marriage Act to recognise same gender couples. It seems quite obvious over the course of time that the elected representatives of the people are unable to bring the Parliament to a decision on this matter. This question is closely tied to the question of the social fabric of Australia, and as such is an emotive and divisive subject that makes it difficult for Representatives seeking re-election to be courageous in their approach to this important matter. In this case it seems quite appropriate to allow the Parliament to identify the Australian people's view on the subject, without the filter of of Party politics and individual representatives morals and beliefs.

We request the House of Representatives to progress the establishment of a Plebiscite into amendments to the Marriage Act to consider the question of same gender marriage to allow Parliament to identify the will of the majority of Australian individuals free from political manoeuvring.

from 89 citizens.

**ePetitions**

The Federal Government made a commitment to support online petitions, however the platform developed to meet this commitment doesn't match the sophistication of digital platforms like We The People (US), Petitions.Gov.uk (UK), or E-Petitions (Canada). This is even though services like We The People are available in Open Source and a broad community of interested individuals exists in Australia who would contribute to the development of a solution.

We thereby ask the House to direct the Department of Parliamentary Services to work collaboratively with the broader community to implement a true Web 2.0 ePetitions platform, equivalent to the best of breed internationally and embedding best practice design principles such as from the Digital Transformation Office.

from 41 citizens.

Petitions received.
PETITIONS

Asylum Seekers

Responses

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:02): I present the following ministerial response to a petition previously presented:

Dear Ross Vasta

Thank you for your correspondence of 12 October 2016 enclosing Petition PN0001, concerning children in immigration detention. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

As a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (the Refugees Convention), Australia takes its international obligations seriously. Australia is committed to providing protection to refugees consistent with the obligations set out in the Refugees Convention and other relevant international treaties to which Australia is a party.

The Australian Government views immigration detention as an essential component of strong border control. Immigration detention supports Australia's well-managed migration system and is used to identify individuals and manage potential risks to the Australian community, including national security, health and character risks.

Immigration detention is subject to both administrative and judicial review, and to full parliamentary scrutiny for accountability. The length and conditions of detention are subject to regular review by senior Department of Immigration and Border Protection officers and the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Whereas Australia's immigration detention population previously comprised mainly illegal maritime arrivals (IMAs), the current profile indicates that visa overstayers and those who have had their visas cancelled under the character test of section 501 of the Migration Act 1958 predominate. Of the last group, many have been found guilty of serious criminal offences.

Significant headway has been made over the past year to reduce the number of children in held detention. From a peak of 1,992 children as at 31 July 2013, the number of IMA children in held detention was reduced to zero as at 1 April 2016.

There will be occasions where children transit through immigration detention; this can be due to airport turnarounds, people who are in the final stages of removal from Australia, or due to criminal or security issues. The Department will continue to work to resolve matters involving any children and their families in held detention as quickly as possible and, where possible, will progress their release into the community as a priority.

Health care services for detainees are comparable to those available to the Australian community, under the Australian public health system. Services are provided through on-site primary and mental health clinics with referral to allied and specialist health providers, as required. Acute care is provided by hospitals.

In line with state and territory government legal requirements, all school-aged children living in the community are required to enrol in school. This includes IMA children living in the community on a bridging visa or in community detention.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention. Yours sincerely

PETER DUTTON

CHAMBER
PETITIONS

Statements

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:03): For the information of the House, I note that seven of the petitions originally presented on 7 November are being re-presented due to a technical issue with the signature count. I also present an amendment to the second report of the Petitions Committee to correct detail of presentation and petitions and ministerial responses.

BILLS

Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Christmas) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:04): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Christmas) Bill 2016 is to protect young workers from the Christmas grinches. Christmas Day is a special day of the year. To many people in this country Christmas Day is special, not because of its Christian origins but because Christmas means time shared with family and loved ones.

This year I am looking forward to spending my Christmas Day with my family, and a first Christmas Day with my new baby, as well as the rest of the family. I am in the fortunate position that I have not had to work on Christmas Day for several years, but there are many Australian who are not in this position and whose job will require them to work this Christmas Day, 25 December. These are people who keep our city and community up and running. They work at the hotels that we stay in; they serve us at the cafes, bars and restaurants we have our Christmas lunch in; they help us grab that last-minute Christmas gift at our local retail shops; and they are the nurses who keep our hospitals open and care for people who are spending Christmas Day in hospital ill or recovering. These people will be required by their employers to spend their Christmas Day away from their family and loved ones and will instead work hard to help make Christmas Day special for the rest of us. This is why we have public holiday penalty rates. They are a compensation for the sacrifice of sharing special time with family and loved ones. It is a good thing that in Australia if you have to work unsociable hours you are compensated for it. It is a principle of our industrial relations system. Special conditions for public holidays are set out in national employment law and they form part of our National Employment Standards.

This year Christmas Day, 25 December, falls on a Sunday. When a public holiday falls on a weekend state and territory governments can choose to declare that the official public holiday falls instead on a regular business day. Across the country almost every state and territory have recognised that Christmas Day is a special day and declared that Sunday, 25 December will be a public holiday. They have also declared that Tuesday, 27 December will be an additional public holiday, because Monday, 26 December is the Boxing Day public holiday. Every state and territory around the country has declared that because Christmas falls
on a Sunday this year the public holiday will fall on another day, but if you work on the Sunday that is a public holiday as well—in every state and territory, except Victoria.

In Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews and his Labor government have, like every other state and territory, declared Tuesday, 27 December a public holiday but, unlike the rest of the country, the Victorian Labor government has not declared Christmas Day itself as a public holiday. What this means is that the people in my home state of Victoria who work on Christmas Day this year will be unfairly denied their public holiday penalty rates, thanks to Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and Labor. In every other state and territory in Australia people working on Christmas Day will be paid public holiday penalty rates, but thanks to Daniel Andrews and his Labor government Victorians won't be. Daniel Andrews's Christmas gift to Victorians is a pay cut for people who have to work on Christmas Day. He has turned out to be the ultimate Christmas grinch. There has not been a worse gift from a government since the former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah, and the former Treasurer tried to cut people's paid parental leave on Mother's Day. Earlier this year Labor Premier Daniel Andrews declared Easter Sunday a public holiday, so he has form for recognising that specific days are special days and should be made public holidays, even if they fall on the weekend. So why hasn't the Victorian Labor govern declared Christmas Day as a public holiday? It could be because they have been feeling the pressure from certain sections of the business community who oppose more public holidays. Especially since the declaration of the day before the grand final as a public holiday there has been strong opposition to that. So in response to that opposition, Daniel Andrews is taking away Christmas Day. When Labor promised people an extra public holiday on grand final eve they did not tell people that it would be at the cost of Christmas Day. It seems that Victorians working on Christmas Day are set to lose out because the Victorian Labor government does not have the spine to stand up for young workers.

But Christmas Day does not have to be ruined. The Greens are working to fix Labor's failure. We were hoping that the Victorian Labor government would recognise that they were wrong and quickly move to relegate this planned Christmas pay cut as a ghost of Christmas past, but they haven't. They have issued a mea culpa, but have let the Christmas nightmare live on. Right now, Victorians who will be working on Christmas Day are still not set to receive public holiday penalty rates. Ensuring people are paid their public holiday penalty rates on Christmas Day does not require a Christmas miracle. It requires people to be willing to stand up and say, 'We believe that Christmas Day is a special day, and if you are required to work on Christmas Day instead of sharing precious time with your loved ones you deserve to be properly compensated'.

Today I am introducing the Greens' protecting Christmas bill. With this bill the Greens will protect people's public holiday penalty rates from current and future state government grinches by amending the National Employment Standards set out in the Fair Work Act to ensure that people who work on Christmas Day and New Year's Day receive their public holiday penalty rates, regardless of whether a state or territory has declared these dates public holidays. The bill amends the National Employment Standards within the Fair Work Act to ensure that people who are entitled to receive public holiday penalty rates who work on Christmas Day, 25 December, and New Year's Day, 1 January, will be paid public holiday penalty rates.
penalty rates for working on those days, regardless of whether the state or territory in which they reside declares these states as public holidays.

Clause 3 of the bill inserts additional subsections at the end of division 10 of part 2-2 of the act. It extends the conditions applying to public holidays set out in the division to 25 December, Christmas Day, and to 1 January, New Year's Day, even if another date is substituted for Christmas Day or New Year's Day as a public holiday. It requires employers to pay employees their full rate of pay for a public holiday, should the employee perform work at their employment on 25 December and 1st January, even if another day is substituted for Christmas Day or New Year's Day as a public holiday. This is a simple bill protecting a simple idea. If you have to work while everyone else is spending time with their family and their loved ones, you deserve to be compensated for the special time lost.

The member for Maribyrnong, the opposition leader, has taken a swipe at his Victorian counterpart by saying:

I believe Christmas Day should be a public holiday. Full stop.

So I am hopeful that in this place the Labor opposition will support our bill to protect Christmas. I invite the crossbench and the government to support this bill. Most Australians would find it astonishing to know that if you work on Christmas Day you do not have to get paid as if it was a public holiday and, if they knew that it was the case, they would want this parliament to fix it.

Sadly, the Labor opposition and the government do not have a strong history of protecting people's penalty rates, but many people in this country depend on penalty rates to make ends meet, especially young Australians. So far it is the Greens that have been the only party fighting to protect people's weekend and penalty rates by enshrining existing penalty rates in law. Labor has talked tough on penalty rates, but they have refused to get behind the Green's move to protect penalty rates in law. Instead, they seem happy to let people's penalty rates be cut by the Fair Work Commission, should it decide to do so. What that means is that, when it comes to protecting people's penalty rates, the Labor opposition's position is essentially the same as the government's. The same government previously introduced Work Choices. The same government brings us here in this final sitting fortnight to attack unions and people's rights at work. Labor has adopted the government's position and has said, 'If the Fair Work Commission changes people's penalty rates we will not step in and intervene'. Well, that is the wrong position. There are many, many people in the community who are unhappy with that.

Even if Labor does not want it to come to that, the opposition should come to us and support this simple bill. This simple bill will mean that if you work on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, regardless of what your state or territory government does, you get paid public holiday penalty rates. If we do not pass this bill before parliament rises, thousands and thousands of workers in Victoria will be forced to work on Christmas Day and not get paid properly. That is a situation that the Greens find intolerable. That is why the Greens are moving legislation to protect Christmas Day and New Year's Day. I urge the government and Labor to get behind us and support this bill.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Wilkie: I second the honourable member for Melbourne's bill and reserve my right to speak.
Debate adjourned.

Renew Australia Bill 2016
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:15): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

I rise to introduce the Renew Australia Bill 2016. This bill establishes Renew Australia, an authority to plan and drive the transition to a new clean energy system. It comes barely days after Australia has participated in the latest global climate change summit, where the US representative at that summit came and told the rest of the world that ice is melting so rapidly around the globe that at the moment even if we stopped all pollution tomorrow sea levels may rise by 1½ metres by 2050. In other words, according to the US government over the last few days, when a child born today reaches their 30s they will experience sea levels 1½ metres greater than what we are experiencing at the moment.

We are in the middle of a climate emergency. The security of our nation is at threat, and our way of life needs to be protected. We need to act and we need to act urgently.

But the good news is that approaching the enormous challenge of climate change is also an opportunity to remake our economy and ensure our future prosperity. By powering the new economy with clean energy, we will make a new future where economic growth is decoupled from pollution.

The Greens have a plan to renew Australia by powering the new economy with clean energy. Our plan will ensure energy generation for electricity is at least 90 per cent renewable by 2030 and that our energy productivity is doubled. We will establish a $500 million government authority, Renew Australia, tasked with planning and driving the transition to a new clean energy system and to leverage $5 billion of construction in new energy generation over the next four years. We will create a $250 million clean energy transition fund to assist coal workers and communities to transition, with the total amount spent rising to $1 billion over the decade.

An energy transition is already underway in the electricity sector. The International Energy Agency says we will need to retire unabated coal fired stations over the next two decades if we are to have any chance of meeting the goals of the Paris agreement and that needs to be reflected in action around the world.

Here in Australia we have seen the closure of a number of coal fired power stations and the announcement of the retirement of Australia’s dirtiest, Hazelwood, by early next year. But we cannot leave this transition to the chaos of the market, because it will undermine energy security, it will undermine the transition to clean energy and it will impact on workers and communities in affected regions. We need a government plan.

For the past month witnesses to the Senate inquiry into the retirement of coal fired power stations, including Australia’s largest power companies, have been calling for a plan. Australia’s largest polluter and coal fired power company, AGL, fronted up to the Senate and
said, 'We want a plan for the orderly retirement of coal fired power stations in this country.' They and the others say that a national plan for the orderly retirement of coal fired capacity in the electricity market is vital to remove barriers to exit for our oldest generation and to allow investments to be made in clean energy.

This bill will implement pollution intensity standards to enable the gradual staged closure of coal fired power stations, starting with Australia's oldest and dirtiest. This is critical. We have to get off coal and onto renewables if we are to have any chance of meeting the challenge that climate change has laid down to us. But as we do so we need to ensure that no-one is left behind, that the workers in those coal fired power stations and their communities are looked after and that supply is continued so that the lights stay on as we make this transition.

Our plan aims to electrify transport and industry, including new industries that want to access cheap and clean energy. As a result of that, even with a doubling of energy efficiency, energy production for electricity in Australia actually needs to increase by about 50 per cent by 2030. So the Green's plan is actually to grow the amount of electricity that we produce in this country but to make it clean and green. The future of the energy market is going to continue to be a mix of private, public and community infrastructure, but government needs to grab this issue by the scruff of the neck. Government has established electricity networks and generation capacity before, and it needs to do it again.

Central to the implementation of our plan will be Renew Australia, the authority that this bill would establish. Government needs to be the midwife of our clean energy society. Renew Australia, the statutory authority, will drive Australia's transformation into a clean energy powerhouse and will utilise a combination of mechanisms, including driving down costs and creating a highly-skilled clean energy workforce through a staged pipeline of construction projects over the next 15 years. This will be the Snowy Hydro for the 21st century, accessing capital raised by the Commonwealth's publicly owned and operated clean energy assets and contracting with clean energy companies to build these renewable energy power plants.

Renew Australia would also run reverse auctions for the construction of lowest-cost clean energy assets, with a preference awarded towards community owned energy projects and those projects that commit to buying their materials and employing people locally. I am told that there is 20 tonnes of steel in a wind turbine. Why shouldn't that be Australian steel? Why shouldn't government be saying, 'Let's build those wind turbines and create the jobs locally and sustainably.' Australia would encourage workers to purchase energy infrastructure through their superannuation funds, which hold billions of dollars available to be invested in nationally significant infrastructure.

The bill that I am introducing today will establish Renew Australia and put in place the legal machinery to enable it to do this important work. I will turn now to the important elements of this bill in detail. Part 1 of the bill sets out the starting date for the bill, its objects and a number of other related details. The objects of the bill are: to help reduce Australia's greenhouse gas pollution by transforming Australia's electricity system; to create a new statutory authority to oversee the transformation; to achieve new energy objectives to ensure a transition plan for affected communities; and to ensure that the closure of coal fired power stations happens in a planned manner.
Part 2 of the bill establishes Renew Australia as an authority and outlines its functions. The general functions of Renew Australia are set out, including law reform, advice, renewable energy projects, support to affected communities and workers and other functions that are conferred to it. Clause 11 outlines some of those functions, and it is worth examining them closely. Clause 11(1) lists Renew Australia's law reform functions:

(a) to review Commonwealth, state and territory laws relating to electricity generation and to propose changes to those laws for the purpose of achieving the new energy objectives; and

(b) to consult with Commonwealth, state and territory governments about the proposed changes; and

(c) after consulting as mentioned in paragraph (b), to recommend to the minister changes to Commonwealth laws for the purpose of achieving the new energy objectives; and

(d) to publish the results of reviews mentioned in paragraph (a), and the changes recommended under paragraph (c), on its website.

One of the first tasks of Renew Australia will be to review our national energy laws and come up with draft legislation to explain how we will make this transition and reform the national energy market, which is in dire need of change.

Clause 11(2) lists new energy objectives for Renew Australia—and, indeed, for the country—which will drive the decisions of the authority. The new energy objectives, which will be enshrined in legislation, are to:

(a) to achieve a transition in generating electricity in Australia, so that by 2030:

(i) 90 per cent of electricity generated in Australia is derived from renewable energy sources;

(ii) electricity generation capacity in Australia is increased by about 50 per cent;

(b) to phase out the generation of electricity in Australia from fossil fuels;

(c) to maintain supply of electricity in Australia while the transition mentioned in paragraph (a) is achieved;

(d) to lower energy costs to households and businesses, including by enabling them to become generators of electricity from renewable energy sources;

(e) to make Australia a destination of choice for industries seeking reliable and clean energy; and, lastly,

(f) to have a national electricity grid that is suited to the transition mentioned in paragraph (a) and to which generators of electricity from renewable energy sources have a right to connect.

That last one, like many of the others, is vital. People should know that when they generate renewable electricity, whether it is on their rooftop or whether they are building a new wind farm or solar plant somewhere, they will be connected to the grid.

The bill goes on to outline Renew Australia's responsibilities to lay out a timetable for the planned closure of coal fired power stations and for principles of investment in the new national electricity grid. Importantly, in clause 11, Renew Australia is to develop laws that will proceed by complementary legislation between the states and the Commonwealth, but, if
the states are not going to come to the party, then the Commonwealth needs to step in and set a new direction for our national energy market.

We can do it, constitutionally. But unless government steps in and acts, we are not going to see the replacement of coal fired power with renewables in the time frame that we need and in a way that is fair to workers and communities.

This is one of our last chances to ensure that we tackle dangerous global warming and do not leave the world worse for the next generation than we have had it ourselves. To do that, Australia needs to retire coal fired power stations and get onto renewables. This bill will set out an orderly way to make that happen.

**The SPEAKER:** Is the motion seconded?

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

Debate adjourned.

**Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Protect the Eureka Flag) Bill 2016**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Ms Catherine King**.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Ms CATHERINE KING** (Ballarat) (10:26): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Introduction**

I rise today to introduce the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Protect the Eureka Rag) Bill 2016, an important bill, not only for the electorate of Ballarat but for across the nation.

This bill proposes an amendment to the Electoral Act in relation to logos used by political parties, and for related purposes.

From the outset I will say that this bill is not just about the Eureka flag—it is about making sure that any logo and symbol cannot be appropriated by any one political party without adequate consideration of their historical, and cultural significance.

The Eureka flag has particular significance in my electorate of Ballarat.

The Eureka flag is the iconic symbol of our great city and region that I have the honour to represent.

We see ourselves in Ballarat very much as the custodians, not only of the flag itself—it sits with the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka—but also of its history.

It is a symbol of the fight for justice on the goldfields and, by extension, has long represented the campaigns of working people in Australia.

In Ballarat we want people to see the Eureka flag and understand its place in our history and in our democratic traditions. The events of 3 December 1854 were part of a significant political and social movement that developed across the world. While the battle itself was over very quickly it had huge political ramifications that are the underpinnings of our
democracy today—no taxation without representation, working men's suffrage, and eventually women's.

The Eureka flag of course is used by many groups, not just in my electorate but across the country, as we celebrate and honour the democratic traditions and fights of our past. It is often seen as a symbol of protest both on the right and the left and we in Ballarat welcome that. I may not always agree with the views about any one group's use of it but it is part of the beauty of this flag and the democratic traditions that it represents that any debate about the flag always excites great passions and great disagreements.

But the recent registration of the Eureka flag as the party political logo of an extremist, right-wing organisations is, frankly, a step too far. Its attempt to use the flag to promote agendas which are a complete contradiction of what the great flag represents—our democratic tradition of debate—is not something that should pass without note.

**Australia First Party and the Australian Electoral Commission**

Most recently, the use of the Eureka flag has been highlighted by the approval of the New South Wales branch of the Australia First Party to register the flag as their official logo.

On October 14 the delegate of the Australian Electoral Commission approved an application by Australia First New South Wales for a party logo which includes the Eureka flag.

This approval was made under the existing provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Despite legitimate objections the AEC had no choice but to approve the application.

Given the outcome of this consideration by the Electoral Commission it is clear that there needs to be changes in the law and the way it is applied.

Importantly, as I said, this is not just a bill about this decision or about the Eureka flag itself.

The decision in relation to the Eureka flag has exposed a deficiency in the Commonwealth Electoral Act which I believe must be addressed.

It is the intent of this bill to address this deficiency.

Unfortunately, the AEC is not able to consider the historical or cultural context of any flag or symbol when it is considering approval of political logos. This bill gives the AEC that power.

I believe that it does need to be able to consider whether a political flag or symbol proposed by a certain party political logo is consistent with the cultural and historical relevance of that flag or that symbol. I am not saying that it should be banned, but that the AEC in fact needs to take that into consideration.

**The history and cultural context of the flag**

Before I go into the specifics of the bill I would like to further establish what is meant by the historical and cultural context.

I should also point out that the City of Ballarat is seriously concerned to ensure the appropriate use of the Eureka flag, and that it was one of the objectors to the original application.
The Ballarat Regional Trades and Labour Council also strongly objected to Australia First's logo application.

One of the most compelling submissions came from the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka, which is where the flag is housed.

The original flag of the Southern Cross—the Eureka flag—is held by MADE under an arrangement involving governments, the City of Ballarat council, the Art Gallery of Ballarat and the family of Trooper King.

Trooper King is no relation of mine, but of course notoriously tore the flag down and bayoneted the flag at the original Eureka Stockade. Trooper King's family held the flag in its custody and originally loaned the flag to the city in the late 19th century through the art gallery. It was really not seen on public display until the 1970s, and I would say that it was poorly treated.

In its submission to the Electoral Commission, MADE argued that:

- The Eureka flag is an extremely important historic and cultural symbol that was expressly created to represent and promote the values of equality and democracy.
- The flag itself is truly iconic, it is a national symbol that does have a unique place in our history.

The Eureka Stockade is one of only three civil uprisings which saw the government actually turn its troops on its own citizens: one in New South Wales; one in the Northern Territory—it was not the Northern Territory at that stage; and, of course, in Ballarat. And each one of those uprisings has given rise to some of the democratic traditions that we see today.

In Ballarat, when people actually see the flag we want them to think about our democracy and think about its traditions. We do not necessarily want them, when they are going into a polling booth, to think about the sorts of values that Australia First espouses.

The historical and cultural value and symbol of something like the flag or any other symbol or flag must be considered when you are considering allowing a political party to use it solely as its logo.

This is not to say that it cannot be used—but that its rich history and symbolism must be taken into consideration when determining its registration.

**The Bill**

Now to the specifics of this bill.

According to its statement of reasons when approving the Australia First application to include the Eureka flag on its logo, the AEC said it had, 'No discretion to consider historical and cultural claims regarding the use of the Eureka flag'.

This immediately exposes, unfortunately, a flaw in the legislation.

It was only able to evaluate the use of the flag against the existing criteria in section 129A of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, such as whether the Australia First logo was obscene or could cause confusion between political parties.

This bill will add the historical and cultural context of flags and other symbols as a criterion under section 129A.
This will allow the AEC to consider whether the use of a flag or symbol in a political party logo is consistent with its broader meaning.

It will be able to consider whether a flag associated with the union movement should be used by far-right parties.

Concurrently, it will be able to consider whether a symbol of cultural importance to a right-wing organisation should be used on the logo of a political party of the left.

Importantly, the provision would apply retrospectively, so that the AEC could reconsider its ruling on Australia First's logo or any other existing political logo which might be challenged.

Anyone who believes that the use of a flag or symbol in the logo of a registered political party is inconsistent with the history or cultural significance of that flag or symbol will be able to object in writing to the Electoral Commission to the continued use of the logo.

If the Electoral Commission believes that there is an inconsistency, it must uphold the objection and notify the political party.

Under the amendments contained in this bill, the Electoral Commission must alert the political party that it will be deregistered within a month, or if it makes an application under section 134 but that application is refused.

The Electoral Commission will also be required to give the parties to an objection under this section written notice of the reasons for its decision if it upholds the objection and to publicise those reasons.

It is important to state that the bill will absolutely do nothing to affect the status of the Australian flag as our national flag under the Flags Act 1953.

It is an important opportunity to improve the Commonwealth Electoral Act and to make sure that we can protect those very historic and culturally significant symbols that we have in our nation and that they are not used in a party political way that is inconsistent with the views that they have in the history and their cultural heritage.

They are flags and symbols which have some historical or cultural context which reflect activities, events or developments which are unique to these institutions or regions.

They should not be taken away and used by any one political party for its benefit, particularly when that use is totally inconsistent with the relevance of the flag or symbol.

That is, unfortunately, what has happened in the case of the great Eureka flag which means so much to my regional community and so much more broadly.

As I said at the outset, this is not about banning the use of the Eureka flag as a party political logo but it is about asking the Australian Electoral Commission to understand and take into consideration its historical and cultural significance.

In Ballarat we do want people to come to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka. We want them to see the original flag that flew over the stockade on 3 December 1854. We want them to understand the history of how our democracy has developed, the role of that, in essence, civil uprising where people felt they were pushed so far that their only choice was to take up arms against their own government to have their voices heard, because they had no right to a vote.
We want people to understand that history, and we do not think that this flag should be used by Australia First or any political party that does not have a view consistent with that significant role that it plays in Australia's history.

I commend this bill to the House.

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

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

Debate adjourned.

High Speed Rail Planning Authority Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Albanese.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (10:37): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

If you want to create a better future, you need to imagine a better future.

And once you identify where you want to go, you need to act to make it a reality.

That is the thought behind this bill.

It would create a High Speed Rail Authority to advance planning and corridor acquisition for the construction of a high-speed rail link between Brisbane and Melbourne via Sydney and Canberra.

A feasibility study conducted by the former Labor government found the project was viable, returning, for example, $2.15 in economic benefit for every dollar invested on the Sydney to Melbourne section.

It is time to stop talking about high-speed rail and to start working on the project.

This bill does not propose that we start construction tomorrow, but it does create a vehicle to advance the project—a planning authority that would work with the governments of Queensland, NSW, the ACT and Victoria.

It would capitalise on the work of the feasibility study I mentioned earlier to begin that detailed planning.

Importantly, it would begin to secure the corridor for the project before urban sprawl makes the project unviable.

The former Labor government proposed the creation of such an authority in 2013 and allocated the funding.

Regrettably, in 2013 the incoming coalition government scrapped that allocation.

That was a disappointing decision.

It has also been disappointing that on the three occasions that I have introduced this private member's bill since the change of government in 2013, the government failed to bring it on for debate.
But that is in the past.

I come to the parliament with this bill again today because I am as convinced as ever that there is a strong case to proceed with high-speed rail.

But I also note recent strong indications that those opposite are coming around to a position of support for this visionary concept.

This is partly due to the strong interest being shown in an Australian high-speed rail project from the private sector, including overseas companies with experience in the technology.

Barely a month goes by when I don't receive a visit from companies from nations like Japan, China and Korea, as well as European countries.

Prior to the 2 July election, Labor announced it would mandate the High Speed Rail Authority envisaged in this legislation to call for expressions of interest from international consortiums to participate in the project.

The consortiums would bring their expertise and their investment.

It is clear that a portion of the funding for this major project could come from value uplift, which has been used for infrastructure projects for more than a century.

However, the study completed by the former Labor government dismissed the idea that this project could be funded solely through this method.

For example, the most expensive component of construction is 67km of tunnel through Sydney, which would have little capacity for any such funding mechanism.

The development of high-speed rail does need to be bipartisan.

The project would cover a period longer than the life of any particular government.

But Australians are increasingly asking themselves: if the Europeans and Americans, as well as countries in our region, can successfully develop high-speed rail, why can't we?

A long road

This is the fourth time that this bill has come before us.

I first introduced it in December 2013 as the first private member's bill before the parliament in the previous term.

It is a shame it was not debated previously.

Indeed, at one stage earlier this year it was literally the only piece of legislation that was before the House of Representatives and the government still declined to bring on a debate.

The project

As infrastructure and transport minister in the former Labor government, I commissioned a two-part study involving extensive consultation with industry and international operators of high-speed rail, as well as significant community input.

The study, published in April 2013, included the business case for the project, consideration of environmental issues, projections of patronage, the proposed route, proposed stations and proposed time lines.

It found that high-speed rail down the east coast of Australia was indeed a viable proposition.
Once fully operational across the Brisbane to Melbourne corridor, high-speed rail could carry approximately 84 million passengers a year.

At speeds of 350 kilometres per hour, people would be able to travel from Melbourne to Sydney, or Sydney to Brisbane, in less than three hours.

As this technology is being rolled out across the world the cost is becoming smaller and the technology is becoming better and more efficient. Emerging new technology offering even faster speeds offers even shorter trip times.

The report found that Commonwealth leadership and coordination would be essential, given the number of jurisdictions involved.

High-speed rail would also be an engineering challenge, requiring at least 80 kilometres of tunnels, mainly in Sydney.

But despite these challenges, the experts said that high-speed rail had huge potential, particularly if we consider where our society is headed over coming decades.

We can anticipate significant population growth over coming decades along the route of this proposed line.

We can also anticipate that growing pressure for a carbon constrained economy will drive the economics of this project ever more positively over time.

We can also anticipate that if we fail to act soon, delivery of high-speed rail will be made more difficult and more costly, perhaps even impossible, because parts of the corridor will be built out by urban sprawl.

That is why this bill proposes to create an 11-person high-speed rail authority to bring together all affected states and territories as well as rail and engineering experts to progress planning and, critically, focus on the corridor.

The authority's roles would include consideration of:

- land use planning relating to the corridor;
- safety;
- measures to minimise environmental impact;
- public consultation; and
- intervention to purchase the corridor.

As minister, I insisted that such a large project be the subject of intense and non-partisan examination.

I appointed a High Speed Rail Advisory Group that included former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, the Business Council of Australia's chief executive, Jennifer Westacott, and the late Bryan Nye, representing the Australasian Railway Association.

These were serious people having a look at a serious issue on the cold, hard facts.

They endorsed high-speed rail on the basis of the evidence.

**Vision**

To best understand the potential of high-speed rail, we need to look well beyond 2016.
In coming decades, our population will be significantly larger, and much of the growth will be concentrated on areas along the proposed route. We need to take pressure off the capital cities in particular and grow the regional cities along the route. There is no doubt that high-speed rail will assist that.

According to the study, travel on the east coast of Australia is forecast to grow by about 1.8 per cent every year over the next two decades and to increase by 60 per cent by 2035.

The study said east-coast trips would double from 152 million trips in 2009 to 355 million trips in 2065.

That is why a project of this size and importance requires that policymakers exercise vision.

When it comes to high-speed rail this is critical, because high-speed rail's greatest strength will be its contribution to regional development.

Travelling between capital cities by rail in just a few hours would be fantastic.

But consider the possible benefits of high-speed rail for the regional cities along the route of the line, including Australia's largest inland city, Canberra, where we are right now, but also the Gold Coast, Casino, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree, Newcastle, the Central Coast, the southern highlands, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga and Shepparton.

The project will position these centres to take some of the population growth pressure off our capital cities. It will transform these regional communities.

New businesses means jobs: jobs for today's kids and jobs for their kids.

There is a role for government in investing in the infrastructure that underpins jobs growth.

Building high-speed rail would do just that, particularly in regional Australia.

**Conclusion**

Australia is in a state of economic transition.

The decline in the investment stage of the mining boom means that we need to develop new industries and strengthen existing sectors—a process that will take many years.

As that process continues, we need to keep the economy moving.

We need to keep Australians at work.

Investing in good infrastructure projects that provide a return for investment must be part of that process.

Reserve Bank Chair Philip Lowe and his predecessor, Glenn Stevens, have both noted in recent speeches that monetary policy can only go so far in stimulating the economy.

Both men have indicated that investment in good infrastructure projects will have a positive role in economic stimulus, provided the projects stack up in boosting productivity.

What the study showed was that high-speed rail does indeed stack up.

The research has been done.

It is time to progress this visionary nation-building project.

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

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

Debate adjourned.
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

UNICEF 70th Anniversary

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (10:47): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) celebrates its 70th anniversary on 11 December 2016; and

(b) it is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and expand opportunities to reach their full potential;

(2) acknowledges the work of the UNICEF which now operates in over 190 countries and territories and provides a range of important services including child protection, education and child survival needs (such as nutrition and sanitation);

(3) notes that the Government provides $21 million a year in core funding to the UNICEF’s regular resources as set out in the Strategic Partnership Framework 2016-2020 signed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 27 April 2016;

(4) acknowledges the Minister for Foreign Affairs' October 2016 announcement of $1.5 million in funding for the UNICEF following Hurricane Matthew in Haiti; and

(5) congratulates the UNICEF and its staff around the world for all the good work they do and wishes them well into the future.

It is my great pleasure to rise to speak on this very important motion. UNICEF celebrates its 70th anniversary on 11 December 2016. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories. It focuses on child protection and social inclusion; child survival, including nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene; education; emergencies; and humanitarian action, as well as issues such as gender equality.

There were some very significant results from UNICEF’s work in 2015. Last year, 55 million children were vaccinated for DTP3—that is, the three doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccines—40 million people gained access to improved drinking water sources and 18 million people to improved sanitation, three million children were treated for severe acute malnutrition, 15 million children received learning materials and 10 million births were registered.

In humanitarian situations, 43.5 million children were vaccinated against measles 7.5 million children were reached with formal and non-formal basic education, which we know is absolutely critical, 3.1 million children were reached with psychological support, two million children and women were reached with interventions to prevent and respond to sexual violence, and a staggering 13.8 million people were reached in support of handwashing practices as part of UNICEF’s work in relation to sanitation and hygiene.

Australia has a very significant relationship with UNICEF. Australia works with UNICEF because of its strong global presence and support for Australia’s aid program priorities, including health and education, humanitarian responses, girls’ empowerment, disability-inclusive development and innovation.
The Australian government very proudly provides $21 million a year in core funding to UNICEF's regular resources. That is $84 million over four years, and that has been agreed between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and UNICEF in an agreement of April 2016 as signed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This funding is used to support UNICEF's core priorities, as set out in UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

This strategic partnership framework sets out a shared commitment to assisting developing countries, working in Asia and the Pacific, and promoting a more effective UN system. It follows a positive multilateral performance assessment and some successful high-level consultations in February 2016.

UNICEF is also at the forefront of humanitarian disaster response activities and is one of our key humanitarian partners. For example, funding was provided rapidly in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Winston in Fiji in February of this year and the foreign minister recently announced $1.5 million in funding for UNICEF following Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. This $1.5 million to UNICEF will improve access to clean water and sanitation in Haiti to help combat the cholera epidemic and threat of other water-borne diseases. This follows an international appeal by the United Nations to intensify efforts to reduce the transmission of cholera and provide support to Haitians most affected by the disease.

Of course, this is a very significant anniversary. On behalf of the Australian government, I want to sincerely congratulate UNICEF and its staff around the world for all the extraordinary work that they do, and I want to wish them all the very best for the future.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:52): I second the motion.

I rise today in support of the motion from the member for Corangamite. It is an important motion because UNICEF is an important institution. As we have heard, it operates in 190 countries and territories to ensure the survival, the protection, the development and the empowerment of children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child—every child—has a right to survive, to thrive and to fulfil their potential. Few would disagree with this ambition, but in light of the challenges we face as a global community it would seem an optimistic one.

Today, the twin drivers of humanitarian need—violent conflict and the impact of climate change—have put a greater strain on the rights of the child than UNICEF has ever had to contend with. Its 70th anniversary is a moment to recognise what it has achieved since 1946—enormous achievements since 1946—and what still remains to be achieved.

The number of children trapped in humanitarian crises around the world is both staggering and sobering. Nearly 250 million children live in countries affected by violent conflicts. It is a statistic that is shocking, and because it is so shocking it is impossible to comprehend its scale—250 million children living in countries that are affected by violent conflicts. But every now and then, we are reminded of the children that help to make up that statistic, despite that shocking, large number.

On 14 April 2014, the world reacted in horror at the news that over 270 schoolgirls had been abducted in the night from the government secondary school in the town of Chibok in
north-east Nigeria. These girls were targeted because they were girls, and this school was targeted because it was teaching them.

Education is one of the basic rights in a child's life. Education empowers individuals to take control of their future, to drive their independence and to unlock their potential. And all too often education is one of the first casualties of conflict—particularly for girls.

Since 2014, Boko Haram has uprooted at least 1.3 million children across four countries in the Lake Chad region—1.3 million children over the last two years—and the majority of these children are girls. More than 1,800 schools have been closed, damaged, looted, set on fire or converted into refugee camps.

The ongoing violence has created a hellish scenario. Teachers fear teaching and students fear studying. And as a result, more than 670,000 children have not been to school in over a year. It is fair to say that this challenge is daunting. It is fair to say it is intimidating—it is overwhelming—and yet we cannot simply assume the challenge will inevitably be met once peace prevails.

The right of a child to an education is one we must never take for granted. The effects of war and conflict hurt children and they hurt adults. Quite often, the scars of conflict extend for a lifetime. Around the world, 59 million primary-aged children are not in school. UNICEF estimates more than a third are in countries affected by war and conflict. Yet despite this enormous challenge, UNICEF's work on the ground has seen remarkable results.

Last year, over 250,000 children were able to return to schools in conflict-affected areas in north-east Nigeria. The rights of a child to a decent education are supported by the right to health, and UNICEF's immunisation program saw the complete eradication of polio in India in 2012. And in 2015—just last year—Africa celebrated its first year without any reported polio cases.

The number of children dying before their fifth birthday has declined from 12.7 million in 1990 to 5.9 million in 2015. That is still 5.9 million too many, but the work that UNICEF has done has significantly reduced that mortality rate and made significant improvements in terms of equality.

I congratulate UNICEF and its staff around the world and thank them for all the good work they do. And I wish their work was easier; it is so hard to fathom the challenges that UNICEF confronts, but their work is to be congratulated. I commend them and thank them, and wish them continued success over the next 70 years.

**Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (10:57):** I rise to speak in support of the motion by the member for Corangamite.

Today, I would like to focus on just one country that UNICEF does its tremendous work in, and that country is the new country of South Sudan. The reason I focus just on South Sudan, when UNICEF operates in 190 countries and territories around the world, is due to the fact that this work in South Sudan is often spoken about in my electorate of Groom. Our city of Toowoomba is home to around 2,000 former Sudanese nationals, many of whom have heartbreaking stories to tell.

Toowoomba Regional Council became the third local government area in Queensland to become a refugee welcome zone, and we continue to be a large refugee resettlement area. It is through meeting and talking with these new Australians that I have had a greater
understanding of the humanitarian works undertaken by UNICEF and how the work they do is so often the difference between life and death for some individuals.

UNICEF has operated in Sudan since 1952 and is the largest UN agency dedicated to supporting women and children, a role that is vitally important given that the country has faced civil war, drought, disease and a lack of basic infrastructure in many areas. It is estimated that more than two million have died and that more than four million have become refugees as a result of the various civil wars.

To talk to our Sudanese is truly a sobering experience. They tell me about the atrocities they witnessed, about their flight to freedom, about their years in refugee camps and now the joys that they have in living in Australia. One of my constituents, whose parents were shot by rebels, was forced to become a child soldier before escaping and crossing the entire country on foot. He lost his entire family but now leads a productive life in Australia where he and his wife have started a family of their own. He has firsthand knowledge of the works of UNICEF and the works that they do for those that they assist.

In the face of high rates of child and maternal mortality, UNICEF is improving primary health care across Sudan to reduce the risks faced by mothers and children from preventable diseases. UNICEF also tackles the underlying causes of malnutrition through support to community-based services. With water-based diseases a major cause of child mortality, UNICEF is working to increase access to safe water and sanitation and to improve household hygiene practices. These are services we take for granted in our country, and I am proud that I am in a government that contributes $21 million a year in core funding to UNICEF's works in countries like Sudan.

Then, there is another aspect of UNICEF's work in Sudan that I am staunchly behind: the development of quality, accessible education for all children with a special focus on girls. I have one son and five daughters and my wife is a teacher. I, therefore, have a very special interest in education. My daughters are in tertiary education and some are now embarking on their own careers, such that they will have all sorts of opportunities before them in this transforming world economy that we live in. I cannot truly comprehend a world without learning, a world without books, without teachers and I applaud, therefore, the works being done around the world by UNICEF.

UNICEF celebrates its 70th anniversary on 11 December, and the idealist in me hopes that in some future time there will not be a need for their future services, but the realist can see, though, that the world will continue to need their services. It is essential that we continue to applaud UNICEF and its works, and I, for one, would like to thank their staff all around the world for the good work that they do. They supply so many services, but, above all, they supply hope in the hour of greatest need for so many people around this world.

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:02):** The motion rightly acknowledges the important work of UNICEF in protecting and supporting children around the world since 1946. Child abuse and exploitation continues to be a blot on humanity. Every day millions of children around the world are mistreated, abused and suffer, despite the work of UNICEF and other worthy organisations, and despite countries where the abuse occurs being signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Today, I want to draw attention to two matters which UNICEF has reported on in recent times, and I commend UNICEF for doing so. The first is the treatment of children in Palestine. A report titled *Children in Israeli Military Detention*, prepared by UNICEF after conducting its own review of allegations of ill-treatment of children who came into contact with the military detention system, states:

…the ill-treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized throughout the process, from the moment of arrest until the child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing.

It is understood that in no other country are children systematically tried by juvenile military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights. The report goes on to say:

The pattern of ill-treatment includes the arrests of children at their homes between midnight and 5:00 am by heavily armed soldiers; the practice of blindfolding children and tying their hands with plastic ties; physical and verbal abuse during transfer to an interrogation site, including the use of painful restraints; lack of access to water, food, toilet facilities and medical care; interrogation using physical violence and threats; coerced confessions; and lack of access to lawyers or family members during interrogation.

Treatment inconsistent with child rights continues during court appearances, including shackling of children; denial of bail and imposition of custodial sentences; and transfer of children outside occupied Palestinian territory to serve their sentences inside Israel…

These practices are in violation of international law that protects all children against ill-treatment when in contact with law enforcement, military and judicial institutions.

They are the words of UNICEF. The report goes on to make 14 recommendations. I do not know what Israel’s response to those recommendations has been to date, but such treatment is prohibited under all circumstances, including security considerations. Children should never be used as a tool of war.

The second matter I wish to refer to relates to Australian children, here in our own country, and a study from the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, of which UNICEF played a key role. The report found that state and federal governments have repeatedly breached the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child over the past 25 years and are likely to continue doing so. The report found that 70,000 children received support from homeless organisations, 43,000 lived in out-of-home care and one in six children lived below the poverty line. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 26 times more likely to be in juvenile detention and, I understand, form some 35 per cent of the children that live in out-of-home care. There are obviously many other statistics that would point to similar trends.

The fact remains that for many Australian children, Australia is not the lucky country. If you are an asylum seeker child in this country, you are even more unlucky spending, on average, 457 days in a detention centre. Research released by UNICEF in April showed Australia ranks 27th out of 35 countries in healthy, quality outcomes, and 24th out of 37 in education equality results for children. Those figures are damming of how children are treated right here in our own country, and I have no doubt that governments over many years have tried to improve the situation for them; nevertheless, the reality is that for many children life in this country is still not good. I commend UNICEF for everything it has done over the last 70 years, but equally for its own reports of what is happening here in Australia and, I hope, that by bringing those matters to the public attention, they will not continue to be ignored.
Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:07): First, I would like to congratulate the member for Corangamite for bringing this motion, because the work of UNICEF over the last 70 years is something we should celebrate. We have seen reductions in childhood poverty and child mortality greater than at any time in human history. We have witnessed, in our own lifetimes, an unparalleled level of advancement in global living standards. By virtually every measure—be it food, sanitation, life expectancy, child mortality, literacy, education, travel or communication—life has significantly improved, faster than at any time in mankind's history.

But more needs to be done—much more. Despite the great progress we have made over the last 70 years, across the globe today there are still over 385 million children living in extreme poverty, and there are still 24 million children today who will never have the opportunity to enter a classroom for even a single day in their life. Without further improvements it is estimated that, by the year 2030, more than 70 million children under the age of five will die largely from preventable diseases.

As we formulate the policies to tackle these problems, to improve on these numbers and to alleviate poverty, we know what works. It is not demands for social justice or sustainability, or rants about inequality; the historical record is crystal clear as to what works to alleviate poverty. Firstly, it is the maintenance of peace—a peace that often must be won and protected at the point of a gun. We also should remember not only UNICEF but all those serving in United Nations peace missions around the world that contributed to that peace. Secondly, it is freedom—economic and personal freedom. It is freedom: the encouragement of free enterprise; freedom of trade; protection of private property rights; governance by the rule of law; and, of course, freedom of speech. It is these freedoms that have been the drivers of wealth creation and sustained economic growth. And the historical record is unambiguously clear. It shows that, by implementing policies that protect these freedoms, those, in turn, drive sustained economic growth. And that is the most effective way of reducing poverty and increasing opportunities for children across the planet.

The evidence is clear. The countries that adopt high levels of economic growth grow more rapidly and have greater decreases in their levels of poverty and greater improvements in their health and mortality rates—especially amongst children. We have seen the evidence recently in a country like Venezuela: it has forgotten about the importance of economic freedom and now has a higher level of child mortality than even war-torn Syria. In the years to come, we cannot lose focus on what has worked in the past and the ways we have had these enormous successes.

As the member for Corangamite rightly points out, UNICEF will celebrate its 70th anniversary on 11 December 2016. We stand here to congratulate them for their work. We congratulate them for the great achievements in the reduction in poverty over the past 70 years. But we should refocus ourselves on continuing to tackle those 385 million children who are living in extreme poverty today. We should focus on what has worked in the past. Those two most important things are: the maintenance of peace and the protection of freedoms. I commend this motion to the House.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (11:11): As co-convenor of the UN parliamentary group here in the Australian parliament, I am very pleased to rise in recognition of the extraordinary contribution that UNICEF has been making to the health, wellbeing and opportunity of children everywhere since 1946. The United Nations International Children's Emergency
Fund was established 70 years ago in the aftermath of World War II. Its mission was to deliver the emergency response to the millions of children who had been damaged and displaced by war. Since then, its role has evolved in line with our understanding of children's issues and how they are best addressed. There was a growing understanding that, if an issue affects a community, it necessarily affects the children within it—and thus virtually all issues are children's issues.

This recognition of the deeply interconnected and complex nature of the problems impacting young people increased the breadth and complexity of UNICEF's remit significantly. Rather than just responding to the direct impact of issues on young people, the organisation expanded its focus to include some of the absolute first-order challenges facing human society—things like poverty; hunger; disease; access to food, shelter, water and education; sanitation; exclusion; and economic and political stability.

It is no exaggeration to say that UNICEF has contributed to some of humanity's greatest achievements: achievements like the complete eradication of polio in India in 2012, and Africa's first year free from reported polio cases in 2015—both incredible feats—or the 45 per cent drop between 1999 and 2012 in the number of primary-school children not enrolled at school; or the halving of the under-five mortality number from 12.7 million in 1990 to six million in 2015.

UNICEF also continues its original mission as a leader in emergencies, disaster relief management and humanitarian crises. When Cyclone Pam pummeled Vanuatu and the Pacific islands in March last year, it was UNICEF workers who were on the ground making sure that children had access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene and health services. UNICEF also performs a tireless global policy and advocacy role, campaigning strongly for the rights of children, speaking out about breaches and engaging deeply with governments to drive policy and programs that will improve the lives of children.

The organisation has also helped to write one of the most widely accepted human rights treaties in human history—the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets out the political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children and requires signatories to always act in the best interests of the child. This legally binding convention, which has now been ratified by 196 countries, has played a major role in creating a better world for young people.

But, while so much has been achieved, there is clearly a lot of work to be done. In its recent annual report, UNICEF Australia also identified violent conflict and the impacts of climate change as the two most urgent and pressing issues that need to be addressed. As the report points out, nearly 250 million children now live in countries affected by violent conflict, and climate-related emergencies will endanger the wellbeing of hundreds of millions of children in areas prone to natural disasters like floods, fires and cyclones. UNICEF will also play a key role in helping to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals—a clear set of aspirational targets to end poverty, protect the planet and help all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

But the reality is that, if we are going to achieve these ambitious goals, the global community will need to dig deep to support them. Sadly, in Australia we have been going backwards in our foreign aid commitment, slashing it a further $224 million in this year's budget alone. While I recognise the government's contributions towards UNICEF that are
noted in this motion, I would like put on the record some words from UNICEF Australia's then CEO Adrian Graham, who responded to the Turnbull budget in May by saying:

In response to unprecedented levels of global humanitarian crises and more people displaced by conflict, 22 wealthy nations are increasing their aid contribution, while Australia and Portugal are the only two countries swimming against the tide.

He said:

Cutting funding from the poorest and most marginalised children is not effective, ethical or fair. It's time to rebuild, we can do better.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (11:16): As chair of the Population Growth and Population Development Committee, I have recently had the opportunity to visit Papua New Guinea, where I saw the work of many groups all working toward the advancement of women and children, their protection, their rights, their education and their potential. Given that yesterday was the United Nations Universal Children's Day, which was established on 20 November 1954 to promote international togetherness and awareness among children worldwide, and improve children's welfare, it was gratifying to see many different groups in PNG all working together to achieve the same goal.

It is fitting then that today we acknowledge the work of UNICEF as it celebrates its 70th anniversary on 11 December 2016. Three score years and ten has a certain ring—of determination to achieve with dignity and positivity, and that is exactly what UNICEF has done. We in Australia need to honour the principals established back in 1954 that were mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their needs and to expand opportunities for reach one to reach their full potential. I believe this should be to the best of our ability in our own communities, our nation and, where possible, for other nations as well.

Australian aid is an integral part of this call to action. With our increased participation in places such as PNG, we are truly reflecting the advocacy for women and children. This advocacy is particularly important, and we should again thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for her announcement of $21 million a year in core funding to UNICEF’s regular resources, as set out in the strategic partnership framework.

UNICEF now operates in over 190 countries and territories, providing a range of important services including child protection, education and child survival needs, such as nutrition and sanitation, often in partnership with Save the Children projects, Oxfam and World Vision. All such groups are impressive in the work they do to achieve their individual goals.

In PNG the delegation had the chance to meet also with Olushola Ismail from UNICEF, along with other representatives Koffi Kouame from United Nations Population Fund, Dr Pieter Van Maaren working in PNG with the World Health Organization, Jennifer El-Sibai from Save the Children Fund, Catherine Bedford from Voluntary Services Overseas PNG, Anna Byron from CARE, co-ordinating support for the Coffee Industry, and the wonderful Alma Lance, the first female extension graduate for the CARE-PNG Coffee Industry Support project initiative—just to mention a few.

UNICEF was originally created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 to provide emergency food and health care for children in countries that had been devastated by
World War II. The Polish physician Ludwik Rajchman is widely regarded as the founder of UNICEF. He served as its first chairman from 1946.

UNICEF relies on contributions from governments and private donors. Two thirds of their funds are from government contributions. Private groups and some six million individuals worldwide contribute the rest through the national committees. It is estimated that around 92 per cent of UNICEF revenue is distributed to program services. UNICEF's programming emphasises developing community-level services to help in the nations where they are working. Often, Australia pitches in for additional essential emergency funding, such as the recent contribution announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of $1.5 million for UNICEF after Hurricane Matthew in Haiti.

UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake, in his message on Universal Children's Day yesterday, highlighted the plight of millions of children around the world. As head of the United Nations Children's Fund, he called on everyone to recommit themselves to protect the rights of every child. He said:

When we protect their rights, we are not only preventing their suffering. We are not only safeguarding their lives. We are protecting our common future.

Yesterday also marked the day in 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The human rights treaty changed the way children were viewed and treated—as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity. The following are also words from his wisdom. He said it was time to:

… confront the uncomfortable truth that around the world, the rights of millions of children are being violated every day—

even in our own backyard. And it is an addendum. He said that children's rights were:

… being violated around the world, in every country, wherever children are the victims of violence, abuse and exploitation, violated wherever they are deprived of an education.

We absolutely have to pour accolades on such organisations as UNICEF and all their staff in their tireless efforts to make the lives of women and children that much better for all of us.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): I call the cricketing great member for Moreton.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (11:22): You might be guilty of misleading the House there, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I do thank you for the call! I am very happy to support the motion by the member for Corangamite. 'Protecting the rights and wellbeing of every child'—that is the UNICEF motto and, surely, all of us who are privileged enough to be members of this parliament should make it our personal motto as well. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, has been working for the past 70 years to create 'a world in which every child has a fair chance in life', be it the children in the gallery above me right now or children anywhere in some of the world's poorest countries. UNICEF is a global humanitarian and development agency specifically focused on the rights of children. The world is indebted to it for the work it does, work that is important and, sadly, often very dangerous. Recently, UNICEF led a multi-agency humanitarian convoy into the Iraqi city of Mosul, the first to enter the city in over two years. The convoy included enough emergency supplies to last 15,000 children and their families for a month.
UNICEF is a creation of the United Nations. Australia can be proud to have played a very important part, through Doc Evatt and others, in the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, which, in turn, allowed UNICEF to be formed. In 1945, as leader of the Australian delegation, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt—’Doc’ Evatt, as he was most commonly known—travelled to San Francisco to meet with world leaders. That meeting eventually resulted in the Charter of the United Nations. In December 1946, just one year after the charter was adopted, UNICEF was created by the United Nations to provide food, clothing and health care to European children facing famine and disease after the horrors of World War II. UNICEF became a permanent part of the UN in 1953, extending its mandate indefinitely. Doc Evatt was elected President of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the only Australian to have ever held the position. During his tenure as president, he presided over the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, surely the cornerstone of human rights protection throughout the modern world. It is timely to remember the example set by Doc Evatt. Faith Bandler, who led the 1967 referendum, which formally recognised Indigenous Australians, described Doc Evatt in 1979 in this way:

Dr Evatt fought for the oppressed, he fought for our political rights and civil liberties, our freedom of thought and action. We would not find it possible to be as outspoken today as we are if Dr Evatt had not fought for us as a judge, as a politician and as an Australian.

We have much to thank Doc Evatt for, not the least of which is his part in creating UNICEF, which we are acknowledging today. All politicians should follow Doc’s lead in being be courageous, fighting for the rights of those who are vulnerable and acting as leaders.

Sadly, the Turnbull government is not leading when it comes to our international aid program. Despite 25 years of economic growth, Australia’s international aid program has been drastically cut since the coalition took office in September 2013. The Abbott-Turnbull governments have cut the overseas aid budget by $11.3 billion. That included cuts of 40 per cent to international programs such as UNICEF, as I am sure the member for Corangamite would know. In the 2016 budget, there were further cuts of $224 million from foreign aid spending. These cuts amount to a 20 per cent cut to Australia’s aid program in 2015, followed by a further 7.4 cent cut in 2016. Australia’s foreign aid ranking has collapsed. Our aid program is now the weakest it has been in our history. At a time when we have unprecedented global humanitarian crises and more people displaced by conflict, only Australia and Portugal are reducing their aid contributions. The other 22 wealthy nations in the world are increasing their aid contributions. The most recent budget cuts were so harsh that UNICEF Australia called the cuts ‘seriously concerning’ and said the budget as a whole was deeply disappointing for the wellbeing of the most disadvantaged children in our region. The Chief Executive Officer of UNICEF Australia, Mr Adrian Graham, said after the 2016 budget:

International aid cuts are undermining the effectiveness of programs that are making a huge difference in the lives of people experiencing acute poverty and disadvantage.

We all know the important work that organisations such as UNICEF carry out. As a good global citizen, Australia should be playing its part in helping reduce poverty and inequality and in assisting vulnerable children who need our help. As a prosperous nation, we can and should contribute more to organisations such as UNICEF. We should not let fear and ignorance and populism fuel the fires of racism and greed and selfishness.

Debate adjourned.
BILLS
Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 [No. 2]
Second Reading

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

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (11:27): During the previous parliament, the 44th Parliament, some members of the Liberal and National parties thought it was a very canny move to promise a plebiscite during this parliament. I suppose for some of them it was an attempt to push it into the future, far enough away that they did not have to worry about it—and, hopefully, if the plebiscite occurred they might be able to win the argument that there should not be marriage equality in this country. I do not doubt that during this parliament, now that the proposed plebiscite legislation has been voted down, there would be some members of the Liberal and National parties who would be thinking that is a very canny development as well—that now the whole matter has been pushed off even further into the future, something for a future government in a future parliament to address.

I suggest that the judgement by those members of the Liberal and National parties is flawed, because the result of that strategy by the Liberal and National parties has been, in effect, to squeeze every last bit of political heartache and political misery out of the issue. The fact is that a great many people in this country want the 2004 amendment to the Marriage Act overturned. They want Australia to join all other developed countries by allowing two men, if they love each other, to marry, or two women, if they love each other, to marry. But, no, what these members of the Liberal and National parties have hoped to do is push it into the future. I make the point again: they have squeezed every last bit of political misery and heartache out of the issue.

People just want this dealt with. They just want it over. The big majority of the community is, frankly, sick and tired of the ongoing discussion and debate about marriage equality in this country. Yes, there is a significant group of people who oppose marriage equality and there is a very significant group of people who are in favour of marriage, and there is an enormous number of people who are not all that fussed; they just want the matter dealt with. They just want people like ourselves and other members and senators to move onto other issues—to deal with this now, in the chamber.

We are a representative democracy. We are not a participatory democracy. It is our job. We were all elected to represent our community. We were all elected with our communities knowing what we stood for and what our positions were on a broad range of issues, including marriage equality. In Denison, in Melbourne and in Indi, everybody knew that we stood for equality. We all stood for an end to the legislative discrimination in the Marriage Act and that if we were elected we would come to this place and do what we could to ensure that marriage equality was finally achieved in this country and that finally we would become an equal with all other developed countries, because all of them have already embraced marriage equality.

Unfortunately there is this ongoing narrative that if the Liberal and National parties were to now support a vote in this parliament, it would somehow be the end of the Prime Minister. That is just not the case. Prime Minister Turnbull, to his credit, was true to his word by doing everything he humanly could to ensure a plebiscite occurred. Well, the plebiscite is now not
going to occur despite the Prime Minister's best efforts, so the situation has changed and that
demands a different policy response from the government and from the Prime Minister. In
fact, by bringing this matter into the parliament, voting on it and dealing with it once and for
all, it may well be the saviour of the Prime Minister because that will be the end of the matter
and we will not spend the next two years debating it. We will not spend the next two years
asking questions of the Prime Minister and of the members of the Liberal and National
parties; we will actually spend two years addressing other issues, two years talking about how
we re-engineer the budget, how we end disadvantage in this country and how we have an
even better foreign security policy—that is what we would be focusing on. The decision in
this place, perhaps as early as this week or next week, will have been lost in history. It may
well be the saviour of the Prime Minister.

I call on the government and I call on the members of the Liberal and National parties to
understand that the vast majority of people in this country just want this matter dealt with and
dealt with in this parliament. It can be dealt with in this parliament decisively if we were to
debate, to vote and to decide on the cross-party bill that is before the House at the moment,
which would bring about marriage equality. *(Time expired)*

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (11:32): I support this Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
[No. 2]. It is interesting that we have Cathy McGowan, the federal member for Indi,
representing rural Australia; an Independent, Andrew Wilkie, the member for Denison,
representing regional Australia as in Tasmania and Hobart; and Adam Bandt, the member for
Melbourne, representing inner urban Australia. We have come together with a plea to the
government to please listen to what most of the people in Australia are saying: do something,
act now and sort this out.

I am not going to go over the arguments that the member for Denison has so eloquently put
forward. What I want today is to talk about why the people of Indi have asked me to come
and have their voices heard. I was at a meeting yesterday when there was this rousing cheer
when I said that we were going to reintroduce this bill. The people of Wangaratta said: 'Cathy,
that's just fantastic. Know you've got our full support.' These are people in Wangaratta, not
Melbourne, not Hobart, but your solid, really good people in rural and regional Australia, who
are saying: 'Deal with it. Make marriage equal. Stop the discrimination. Give the
people in rural and regional Australia, in Melbourne and the other parts a chance to do what they know
they want to do, which is stand up in public, proclaim their love and be accepted like
everybody else.' That is what they are asking of us. It is no big deal.

There are two particular voices I want to bring to the discussion today. One is the Bishop
of Wangaratta, the very Reverend John Parkes. He wrote to me in September asking me to
make representation on his behalf to the Prime Minister saying that this division is causing
such tension and worry that could we please address it quickly and sort it out, and not go to
the next election with this hanging over our head because, if we were worried about what the
plebiscite might do, having it as an election issue in two or three years time is really going to
cause damage to large numbers of people. The bishop, as leader of the Anglican synod for
Wangaratta, which covers all northeast Victoria across to Albury, made a unanimous decision
for us to please address this issue. Bishop, I have brought your comments here on behalf of
your congregation. The Anglican synod of Wangaratta is normally not a radical, outrageous
group of people. They are solid, good Christians, and they want this issue dealt with.
I would also like to talk about a young person in my electorate—Harry. Harry is 16 and a year 10 secondary student at Wangaratta. This month, as part of the debate in his English class, he offered his opinion that legalising marriage is a step in the right direction. I would like to bring some of Harry’s words to parliament. Harry asks: ‘It doesn’t affect anyone directly except for same-sex couples or gay or trans or other LGBTI people, and who are we to say that their love isn’t valid enough to be married? It’s not like these people are in any way subhuman, so why are we treating them as if they are?’

Surely two adults who love each other should be able to get married regardless of gender, and by preventing them from doing this we are letting an archaic mentality and belief dictate others’ lives.

He argues that Australia is being left behind by other countries, and says that other countries are leagues ahead of us with regard to equality. To see these countries pulling away from Australia in terms of acceptance, he says, as a 16-year-old living in Wangaratta, ‘Is frankly embarrassing for our once progressive and open country,’ and says:

If these countries who have a fundamentally devote Christian voter base have no problem with gay marriage then why are we still opposing it? More importantly, it is a necessary step our magnificent country must take in order to move forward and advance.

In closing his argument, Harry offers this:

Your religion, personal beliefs or preferred political party shouldn’t be able to dictate another person’s life, their happiness, future or legitimacy. And if you’re selfishly allowing an antiquated book or a gut feeling to make your decision maybe you need to take a step back, re-evaluate your position, put yourself in other people’s shoes and love your neighbour as yourself.

I bring to this parliament a call from the people of Indi to bring this legislation on to debate, to make a conscious decision so that people can freely stand up and do what they need to do, to sort it out and enable our country to get on with the business of government, which is what our people really want to do. *(Time expired)*

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (11:37): I welcome the opportunity to speak today on this Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 [No. 2], which has been co-sponsored by the member for Melbourne and the Independent members for Denison and Indi. I am grateful to speak on the matter of marriage equality as I have not previously had the opportunity. I would agree wholeheartedly with the members for Denison and Indi and their sentiment, here, this morning. This matter should be dealt with right away so that we might save ourselves an odious debate that would not progress this nation any further.

We are fortunate to have a legal system that has as a core principle the right of every person to be treated equally before the law. But Australians in same-sex relationships are not equal before the law. The law does not allow them to marry. We do, however, have the opportunity to rectify this inequality, to ensure true equality for same-sex couples, by ensuring they are legally equal to heterosexual couples.

By amending the Marriage Act to define marriage as a union of two people we can make the right to marry—a right taken for granted by most Australians—available to all Australians. We can amend the act and put an end to marriage inequality. Marriage is a celebration of love and commitment, which is important to many couples, their families and their friends. It is a celebration that is denied to tens of thousands of Australians, thanks to a ‘relic of legal prejudice’ as the Leader of the Opposition so rightly put it.
Tens of thousands of families are discriminated against for the most personal aspect of themselves: who they love. We can change this, right here, in parliament by doing the job we were each elected to do. We can put this relic of the past where it belongs: in the history books. In this day and age, when countries around the world have moved ahead of us in marriage equality, it is disappointing that this government continues to refuse equality to same-sex couples in this country.

In my first speech I quoted the great Western Australian essayist Sir Walter Murdoch, who once said he felt 'like kneeling down daily and praying to be delivered from this shameful fear of change and praying that my country may be delivered from it'. Well, this country and its people have left its conservative leaders behind. The people of Australia have faith in themselves and in their communities and are willing to forge a progressive path toward marriage equality. This government is holding them back, and I pray that this country might be delivered from this regressive government.

A primary function of our parliament is to make and change laws, and it might be a surprise to some opposite that this is true even when it relates to marriage. This government has decided it cannot introduce a legislative change to parliament without first putting it to a non-binding plebiscite, the true function of which is to save the Prime Ministers' job. This non-binding plebiscite, a political tool, favoured by the government would not change the definition of marriage or even guarantee a debate in parliament on this important issue. What it would do, though, is open the floodgates for opinions to flow freely on other people's lives. This is principally what it is about: other people's lives.

Some of us, myself included, believe other people should be able to live their lives as they choose, as part of a peaceful community that is committed to basic order and rule of law and freedom to enjoy an equality of rights. Others, somehow, think they need to be involved in other people's lives, that they need to be the moral guardians of other people's lives and make decisions on what rights other people should have the privilege to enjoy. These people should stop it. They should stop prying into other people's lives and their loves and stop passing judgement on them.

To these prying moral guardians I say: it is none of your business, and it would help the accord within our community if you could stop encouraging others to broadcast opinions on other people's private lives. Some members opposite have presented the idea that marriage is an institution between a man and a woman for the reproduction of children, that somehow this is the 'right' view of marriage and all that it is. I disagree with this view. How small this view is, how terribly sadly small.

This government and many of its members, sadly, do not care for the collateral damage the public debate they have sought to encourage and fund will have. It will hurt many. It will hurt me, my husband, my sister and my friends. Basically, the proposed plebiscite debate will hurt anyone who has a life that is different from their traditional, idealised and, frankly, unreal view of marriage. Marriage has always been and will continue to be much more than an institution that requires conservative forces to protect it.

For the majority of people who decide to marry, they do so because of love and not to conform to some kind of restrictive definition. I support the right of same-sex couples to celebrate their love through marriage. I look forward to the day when Australia joins the long list of countries around the world where same-sex marriage is recognised. I look forward to
the day when every Australian, regardless of their sexuality, can experience the same freedom to express their love and commitment that is afforded to the majority of people.

If this parliament is allowed to work as it should, that day, hopefully, is very close. I also believe—as the members do who spoke previously—in a representative democracy. We should be allowed, in this parliament, to do our jobs, not to put out for public opinion the rights of other people's lives.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas):** 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**

**Middle East**

**Ms VAMVAKINOU** (Calwell) (11:43): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) 500 to 700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year;

(b) Human Rights Watch reported in April that arrests of Palestinian children by Israeli forces had doubled in the preceding six months;

(c) Defence for Children International research, based on 429 affidavits from Palestinian children, indicates that 97 per cent of children had no parent or legal counsel available during interrogation and 75 per cent endured some form of physical violence following arrest;

(d) the United States State Department's 2014 human rights report on Israel states that military courts have more than a 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants;

(e) UNICEF has reported that ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process; and

(f) Australia raised concerns with Israel about the treatment of Palestinian minors in 2011 and 2014, however there has been little improvement concerning the treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli forces; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to raise concerns with the Israeli Government about the treatment of Palestinian children.

In moving this motion I express my deep concern for the growing number of Palestinian children who are being detained by the Israeli government under military laws. Israel is the only country in the world that automatically prosecutes children in military courts, and only Palestinian children, passing laws that legalise the imprisonment of children under 14 years of age.

While the Australian government has, on multiple occasions, previously committed to the issue of the treatment of Palestinian children in detention, by raising concerns in 2011 and 2014, this brutal issue is far from being resolved. In 2013 significant changes to the application of military law to children were made, such as reducing the time spent in remand, issuing summonses instead of night raids, and using Arabic in documentation and interrogation of Palestinian children. However, the impact, in practice, of these measures appears to have failed to have made any significant improvements.
Instead, as recently as 2015, the Israeli Knesset amended the Israeli Youth Law to impose mandatory minimum jail sentences for rock-throwing offences—but which can carry penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment—and strip parents of convicted children of their welfare benefits. This has seen the imprisonment of Palestinian children as young as 11 years of age, and many children are held without charge. Further, reports from human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, Defence for Children International and even the US State Department, indicate that Israel continues to fail to implement the necessary protections for Palestinian children. It is estimated that between 500 and 700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year. In April this year, the Israeli Prison Service reported that there were 414 Palestinian children in Israeli prisons, an increase of 250 children from the year before.

More children are being subjected to what human rights groups have consistently noted are instances of abuse, torture, ill-treatment and failure of due process. UNICEF has described the detention of Palestinian children as a system of 'widespread, systematic and institutionalized' ill-treatment. In May this year, the UN Committee Against Torture noted that there continue to be 'many instances in which Palestinian minors were exposed to torture or ill-treatment' while under detention in Israel. Most alarming are the allegations that children have been subjected to torture to coerce confessions and have not been afforded adequate food, water and toilet facilities.

The systemic deprivation of important legal and procedural rights and opportunities to Palestinian children is also very deeply concerning. Children are often not provided with legal assistance, are denied the ability to communicate with their parents—or their parents are not notified of their arrest—and are made to sign confessions in Hebrew, indicating that the child may not fully understand the confessions he or she has made. Additionally, children are taken out of the West Bank and detained in prisons within Israel, separating them from their place of residence and where their families live. Not only is this a contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits transfer of civilian detainees from their country, but, like the other abuses, this practice is also significantly counterproductive to managing the conflict and anger in the Palestinian communities.

Currently, Palestinians living in the West Bank are subject to Israel's military legal system and are policed by its security forces. It therefore applies different laws, judges, and courts to Palestinian children compared to children in Israel. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has previously condemned the application of different laws, arguing that it is effectively discrimination against Palestinian children on the basis of their nationality. In 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion that stated that the rights contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child apply to every child within the Israel's jurisdiction, which includes the West Bank.

Despite its assertions to the contrary, Israel owes the same obligation to Palestinian children as it does to Israeli children, including upholding the prohibition against torture and degrading treatment, the right to prompt and appropriate legal assistance, the right to request a parent to be present while under police custody and, importantly, to be treated in a manner
consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth. Significantly, Israel continues to fail its obligations to protect and extend the human rights of Palestinian children.

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

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:48): I second the motion and I will speak on it. I commend the member for Calwell on her motion today.

I accept the right for the Jewish state to exist and I believe the people of Israel are entitled to live in peace and protect their way of life. However, the treatment of Palestinian children is of great concern. Currently, they can be detained by soldiers and they can be interrogated by soldiers, and now they will be dealt with by a military court. As it stands, Israel is the only country that I am aware of that automatically prosecutes children before a military tribunal. Clearly, this is a discriminatory policy where Palestinian children and Israeli children are treated differently. The Israeli parliament recently passed a bill legalising the imprisonment of children under the age of 14. Amnesty International reports that children as young as 11 are being imprisoned on the West Bank and subject to physical and mental intimidation. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, recent proposals suggest Israeli authorities might even now be considering allowing life sentences to be handed down for children as young as 14.

All these developments give rise to grave concerns in relation to Israel's international obligations, particularly as they relate to the rights of the child. I refer to one incident reported by Human Rights Watch concerning a boy named Ahmed, who was 16 years of age. Israeli soldiers arrested him at about seven o'clock at a friend's place. He was blindfolded, handcuffed and taken away to the police station, where he sat outside on the cold ground until 12.30 am. Afraid and shaken, he asked if he could call his father, but he was told that his parents would not be allowed into the interrogation. He was allowed to speak briefly to a lawyer by phone before the interrogation began well after midnight. The boy was accused of having a knife, which he denied, and then he was taken to a military compound. There, Ahmed says, six or seven soldiers forced him to lie on the ground and he was kicked and beaten. He spent the rest of the night on a chair in the courtyard in the cold night air. The next day, he was transferred to a detention facility. He was released after six days without charge, after the DNA test failed to link him to the knife in question.

Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Israel ratified in 1991, requires court procedures to take into account the age of child defendants. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Israel also ratified that same year, elaborates on this requirement and directs that states ensure children are 'not compelled … to confess guilt.' However, here the opposite appears to be occurring. Interestingly, UNICEF reported that in 168 of 208 Palestinian children's affidavits collected in 2013-14, they said that they were not informed of their right for a lawyer and they were not informed of their right to remain silent during interrogations. Children said that they were subjected to physical violence in 171 cases.

In November 2015, the Israeli government authorised longer prison sentences for children convicted of throwing stones. But interestingly, as well as that, they allowed for the suspension of the social welfare payments to their families where a child is serving a custodial sentence. We need to be pressuring the Israeli government to look to detaining children only
as a last resort and, where children are detained, the authorities must ensure that their safety and their welfare are prioritised and that they be given a fair trial.

We have recently witnessed the public outrage in this country over the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, which resulted in a royal commission. The physical and psychological punishment of children is abhorrent and should never be tolerated. Therefore we strongly urge the Israeli government to hold true to its international obligations respecting the rights of a child.

I would like to conclude with the words that Pope Benedict used in 2009 after he visited the Israeli-Palestinian region. He concluded: 'Let the two-state solution become a reality and not remain a dream.' We must hold true to that notion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): 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 a later hour this day.

BILLS
Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016-2017
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017
Assent
Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.
Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Bill 2016
Customs Tariff Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016
Customs Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016
Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.
COMMITTEES
Treaties Committee
Membership
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (11:54): The Speaker has received a message from the Senate acquainting the House that Senator Sterle had been discharged from attendance on the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, and Senator Kitching had been appointed a member of the committee.

Economics Committee
Report
Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (11:55): On behalf of the Senate Standing Committees on Economics, I present the following reports together with the minutes of proceedings: Review
of the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Annual Report 2015 (Second report); Review of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Annual Report 2015 (Second report); Review of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Annual Report 2015

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

Mr COLEMAN: I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the reports.

Leave granted.

Mr COLEMAN: At the public hearing on 14 October this year, APRA explained its regulatory agenda over the course of the year and in particular its activities to improve the resilience of banking institutions. APRA discussed with the committee its measures to strengthen bank capital and bolster the stability of bank funding. In particular, APRA noted the importance of developing a loss absorption framework to reduce the need for taxpayer support in the event of an institution being affected by financial or other economic crisis. APRA has continued to prioritise the supervision of lending standards of all authorised deposit-taking institutions, which appears to have improved lending standards in the industry. The committee will continue to monitor APRA’s progress to embed these raised standards into industry practice.

Executive accountability and risk culture within APRA regulated institutions was a major discussion topic at the hearing. The committee and APRA share the view that having a sound culture within regulated institutions in relation to risk management is important in order to both maintain the viability of institutions and to ensure fair outcomes for customers and investors. The committee notes APRA’s recent report on industry practice in risk culture and continues to focus on this area. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the chairman of APRA, Mr Wayne Byres, and his colleagues for appearing at the public hearing on 14 October 2016. I commend the report to the House.

I now turn to the committee’s review of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission annual report 2015. At the public hearing, also held on 14 October, the ACCC outlined its principle responsibilities under the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 as a competition and consumer regulator. The committee scrutinised the performance of the ACCC and examined its roles, recent activities and priorities for the coming year. The committee was particularly interested in hearing about the ACCC’s existing powers, the impact of proposed changes to competition law and the more general topic of competition in the banking sector. The committee heard that financial services is the one area where the ACCC is not the principal consumer regulator. The ACCC stated that its focus in the financial sector is on mergers and cartels as well as on any activity that causes a significant lessening of competition.

The ACCC advised the committee that it had relatively recently initiated a program of conducting market studies into particular sectors of the economy and that this is consistent with the practices of other competition regulators internationally. The committee noted the ACCC’s work in this area. However, it was concerned that the ACCC had not initiated a market study into the banking sector given that the ACCC has expressed concern in the past that competition in banking is less than robust.
The ACCC also pointed to a number of sectors which are of concern including telecommunications, the operators of various Australian ports and market concentration in the supermarket sector. The committee noted the ACCC’s views on the potential impacts of introducing an effects test into section 46 of the act, as suggested by the Harper review. The ACCC reiterated its position that the existing provisions are poorly crafted and that an effects test will support more competition and innovation in various markets including in the financial sector.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the chairman of the ACCC, Mr Rod Sims, and his colleagues for appearing at the public hearing. The ACCC plays a vital role in seeking to ensure Australia's markets function fairly for both businesses and consumers, and the committee will continue to provide oversight of this function into the future. I commend the report to the House.

I now turn to the committee's review of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission annual report 2015. Also on 14 October the committee held its first public hearing with ASIC, to examine its role in corporate, market and financial services and consumer credit regulation, recent surveillance activities and enforcement activities and ASIC's priorities for the upcoming year. Of particular interest to the committee were ASIC's investigations into the life insurance and financial advice sectors. ASIC outlined to the committee its primary role under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001, the Corporations Act and a range of other pieces of enabling legislation. This role includes promoting confidence by investors and consumers in the financial system, maintaining and improving the performance of the financial system and facilitating efficient registration of financial services providers.

The committee was concerned by evidence of practices of denying claims in the life insurance sector and sought an update from ASIC on its investigations following the release of its report *Life insurance claims: an industry review* in October this year. The committee heard that, in many cases, claims were denied on technical or narrow contractual grounds that did not meet a policyholder's reasonable expectations about their coverage when they took out a life insurance policy. The committee notes that, as a result of this review, ASIC has proposed a number of key areas for action to improve claims-handling outcomes for consumers. The committee expects that insurers will work closely with ASIC and the government to implement these recommendations without delay.

The committee also sought evidence on ASICs investigation into the financial advice sector, following a number of cases where consumers were adversely affected by unscrupulous financial advisers. Many of these advisers were employed by the major banks, either directly or through subsidiaries. The committee heard that these investigations are complex and ongoing and looks forward to further reports from ASIC on its surveillance and enforcement activities across the sector.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the chairman of ASIC, Mr Greg Medcraft, and his colleagues for appearing at the public hearing. ASIC has, of course, an important role to play as Australia's corporate watchdog, protecting consumers, investors and creditors. The committee will continue to provide oversight of ASIC into the future. I commend the report to the House.

I move:
That the House take note of the reports.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (12:02): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Criminal Code Amendment (War Crimes) Bill 2016

Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016

Report from Committee

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (12:02): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present advisory reports on the Criminal Code Amendment (War Crimes) Bill 2016 and item 28 of the Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016.

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

Mr SUKKAR: by leave—I am pleased to present the committee's advisory report on the Criminal Code Amendment (War Crimes) Bill 2016.

The bill amends several of the war crimes offences in division 268 of the Criminal Code to introduce the concept of 'organised armed group' in non-international armed conflicts. The proposed amendments draw a distinction between civilians and members of organised groups.

The bill also introduces the principle of 'proportionality' in relation to attacks on military objectives in non-international armed conflicts.

The amendments are consistent with international humanitarian law and will provide legal certainty for the Australian Defence Force in operations that target members of organised armed groups, such as Daesh, with lethal force.

The committee heard that organised armed groups like Daesh operate as state-like entities with military forces similar to state entities. In armed conflict, it is therefore crucially important that members of these groups do not benefit from the protections against attack that are afforded to civilians.

The committee carefully scrutinised the key aspects of the bill, including how membership of an 'organised armed group' would be defined. The committee concluded that the amendments in the bill would provide appropriate protection for civilians while maintaining the capacity to strike against legitimate military targets.

Importantly too, the bill will harmonise Australian law with the interpretation of international humanitarian law applied by our key allies and coalition partners.

In its bipartisan report, the committee has recommended that the bill be passed by the parliament.
The second report I am tabling today fulfils the committee's statutory obligation to review any bill that amends the list of criminal law enforcement agencies in the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979.

Criminal law enforcement agencies are able to apply for warrants to access stored communications (such as emails or SMS messages), issue preservation notices to a telecommunications carrier requiring it to preserve communications, and authorise the disclosure of telecommunications data to support investigation of serious contraventions of the law.

The committee has stated previously that, given the intrusive nature of such powers, the range of agencies able to obtain such warrants needs to be carefully circumscribed.

In this instance, item 28 of the Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016 will remove the New South Wales Police Integrity Commission from the list of criminal law enforcement agencies and replace it with the newly formed Law Enforcement Conduct Commission or LECC.

The LECC will bring together the functions of the former Police Integrity Commission, the Police Division of the New South Wales Ombudsman's Office and the Inspector of the Crime Commission to streamline police oversight in New South Wales. The LECC will have similar powers to other integrity bodies in Australia to investigate serious misconduct and serious maladministration.

The committee was satisfied that the inclusion of the LECC in the list of criminal law enforcement agencies is appropriate and accordingly recommends that item 28 of the bill be passed.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their contribution to both of these inquiries.

I commend both of the reports to the House.

Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016
Second Reading

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

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (12:07): I rise today to speak on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016. From the outset, I acknowledge that the opposition will be supporting this legislation, because it does acknowledge the unique nature of service and does look to extend support to many who need our help. This bill gives effect to three veterans' affairs budget measures that seek to extend the eligibility for non-liability healthcare treatment, pay interim incapacity payments at 100 per cent of normal earnings, and align the cut-off age for incapacity payments to the increasing pension eligibility age.

The extension of non-liability healthcare treatment for certain conditions was indeed welcomed by the veteran's community earlier this year. Non-liability health care means that veterans are not required to demonstrate that their condition is related to their service and enables treatment for certain conditions to be separated from the compensation claims process of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I have spoken to a number of organisations who have
acknowledged the importance of non-liability health care, particularly in relation to mental health. As member may be aware, early intervention in mental health treatment can result in better outcomes for the clients. I saw firsthand in my previous job working as a psychologist the importance of early intervention.

As we know, wounds are not just physical; they can be psychological as well. Psychological injuries are just as incapacitating as physical injuries and if left untreated can lead to complex social problems. Mental health is one of the impacts of war and it is a challenging area with wideranging impacts. It is vital that support is available to current and ex-serving defence personnel as soon as it is needed. Access to appropriate services can prevent problems reaching crisis point. It is important that we are able to support our veterans before they reach this tipping point, not only for them but also for their families.

Currently, non-liability health cover for veterans covers the following conditions: post-traumatic stress disorder; depressive disorder; anxiety disorder; alcohol use disorder; substance use disorder; cancer—malignant neoplasm; and pulmonary tuberculosis. However, for these conditions, there is a qualifying period of three years continuous full-time service and a diagnosis upfront. The legislation before the House today will expand the eligibility for mental health conditions and alcohol and substance use disorders. This extension means that veterans no longer need to have served three years continuous full-time service and will no longer have to lodge an application with a current upfront diagnosis prior to accessing treatment for mental health and alcohol and substance use disorders. Veterans will have to have only served one day of full-time service and will now have six months to obtain a diagnosis. It is estimated that these changes will affect around 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the ADF, who will now become eligible to receive non-liability health care. In addition, this includes victims of abuse in the ADF who may have previously been excluded due to the length of their service.

The process itself has also been improved to assist applicants. These changes mean former ADF personnel will be able to access support immediately by calling or emailing the department and requesting treatment. They will then have six months to provide a diagnosis to the department. This is a highly logical change which recognises the importance of early intervention and enables people to begin treatment as soon as practical.

Mental health is a challenging and complex area with wide-reaching consequences, and I am pleased to see the government is extending this additional support to our veterans. The extension of non-liability health care has been welcomed by ex-service organisations, with a number of the ESOs highlighting to me how this has assisted and will assist their clients. While there is still a way to go in relation to mental health, with regards to access to specialist services amongst other issues, I am pleased to see this positive development in this important area.

The second significant change proposed by this legislation relates to the payment of interim incapacity payments. These amendments seek to change the amount which incapacitated ex-service personnel are paid while the actual amount of their compensation is being determined. As it stands, incapacitated ex-service personnel are paid at the national minimum wage while their claims are being processed. Understandably, this amount can be less than what they were earning at the time of the injury and, as a result, during this time that their claim is being determined, can lead to financial hardship. The amendments allow for payments to continue
at 100 per cent of the ex-service personnel's normal earnings that they were receiving at the
time of the injury until their claim is finalised.

For these claimants, whose circumstances have rapidly changed, the last thing they need in
addition to their injury is to wonder how they will meet their financial obligations. This
change will help both the claimants and their families to focus on what is next and not how
they are going to get by while their application is being processed. These amendments will
assist both veterans and their loved ones to focus on getting the help they need to reorient
their lives.

This part of the legislation required some additional teasing out, as concerns were raised by
ex-service organisations about whether there was a risk that incapacity payments would
exceed the compensation payments and therefore leave individuals with an amount owing to
the department. I raised these concerns with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and I have
been assured that this is a highly unlikely situation given the types of payments that are being
made. While I appreciated that the chances were unlikely, I asked the department to
investigate if this had occurred previously and if, under the proposed changes, there were any
times when this could have occurred. I am advised there has been no record of this having
occurred since 2014 and that, if we were to review the last 12 months as though these changes
were already implemented, there were no times when this would have occurred within this
time period. In addition, we received assurances around the processes of recovering the
interim payments from the ComSuper payout, insofar as these amounts have always been
recoverable. I would like to thank both the minister's office and the department for their
assistance in working through these concerns. It is because of this work that we are in a
position to support this bill. I would also like to acknowledge the RSL and ADSO for their
assistance in relation to this legislation. They provided feedback on the proposed changes.

The final amendment relates to the increases in age pension eligibility. This is a logical
alteration which is required due to changes in the Social Security Act. This change increases
the age of pension eligibility by an increment of six months starting in July 2017 and lasting
until 2024, which will bring the new pension age to 67. Currently, incapacitation entitlements
cease when the veteran reaches 65 years of age or, if they occurred on or after the age of 63,
after a maximum of 104 weeks of incapacity payments have been made. However, with the
changes to the Social Security Act, which increases the pension eligibility age, we need to
amend the act to prevent a gap where injured veterans are unable to access an incapacity
entitlement or the age pension.

This schedule will align the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 to ensure
that veterans are not left without income support. These changes will also automate the
process and align the legislation with the defined pension age as detailed in the Social
Security Act, ensuring that we are not required to make amendments every six months.

We certainly see this as a logical amendment and one that we do support. Our veterans
deserve world-class care and support, and delivering this remains a priority area for Labor.
We will continue to work with the government over this term of parliament to ensure that
veterans and currently serving Defence personnel are supported and valued. As such, we will
provide bipartisan support for this bill. I firmly believe that it is our duty to assist our veterans
who have put their lives on the line, and therefore I commend the bill to the House.
Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (12:17): I rise to speak on this bill because this government continues to honour its commitment to veterans and the veteran community by recognising the unique nature of the military service. The Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016 contains three measures to support veterans. It gives me great pleasure to speak to these measures and hear the support that exists in the chamber for these very well thought out and straightforward practical measures that are being introduced by government. These measures increase access to non-liability health care, allow interim incapacity payments to be paid at 100 per cent of their normal earnings and bring into line the cut-off age for incapacity payments to that of the pension age—all very simple measures.

In the 2016-17 budget, our government committed $0.2 million to these measures. It will allow the interim incapacity payments to be paid to former ADF members immediately upon discharge at the level that matches their regular salary. What was happening was that members of the Defence Force would retire or leave, and it could be a number of weeks—sometimes months—before the incapacity payments would take place through a rather rigorous assessment process. This measure allows for a more fluent transition as they move from full time into that pension period, where the payments are effective immediately. This is significant because current interim incapacity payments can only be equivalent to the national minimum wage, and when a member is discharged from the ADF there can be a period of time—sometimes for several months—before the incapacity payment amounts can be determined while superannuation entitlements are finalised. They are the measures that I spoke of before. Some members can go through financial hardship during this period of time because the government is not making payments. We all know that there will be commitments in and around mortgages. Food still needs to be put onto the table. This measure speaks directly to addressing the financial hardship that would have inadvertently been incurred by some of those ADF members. The amendment will allow veterans to receive their predischarge salary during this period. The Department of Veterans' Affairs will make an adjustment to the person's incapacity payments after the superannuation component has been finalised.

Escalating access to non-liability health care is a vital element of mental health treatment for current and former members of the ADF. In the 2016-17 budget, this government committed no less than $37.9 million to extend eligibility for non-liability health care to all current and former permanent members of the ADF for five mental health conditions: post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder is such a terrible disease. I have some former members of the ADF in my electorate who, at face value, when you meet these guys, are physically fit. They are strong men—strong in character. I remember one member who suffers. During the 2010-11 Lockyer Valley floods their years of training kicked straight back in and they took charge of a community. Their military skills, when it came to systematically going through, street by street, using grid reference mapping, ensured that their community was safe. They took command in an environment where there was turmoil and chaos. These people suffer with these terrible demons of post-traumatic stress disorder, and it is worthy then to see the assistance that is available to these people. I did not know about the disease until these guys came to me and shared with me their symptoms and how it plays on their marriages. I
commend their wives for the stress that they are put under. Anything we can do in this place to assist those terrible illnesses has my full support.

In addition to expanding the range of conditions for which nonliability health care may be provided, accessing this treatment has also been made easier. There is no need to lodge a formal application; a veteran can now call or email the Department of Veterans' Affairs and ask for treatment. There were a number of hurdles that were quite laborious in the past but we are reducing that and making it easier. Just one day of continuous full-time service means a person can access this treatment; there is no longer the requirement for a person to have had either three years continuous full-time service or operational service to be eligible for nonliability health care. That is an enormous amount of red tape reduction. There is no need for a formal diagnosis at the time of requesting treatment. The machine will actually pick up and go through a process of diagnosis. The treatment is known as nonliability health care because it need not be linked to a condition arising from the service of the eligible person.

Further, it is completely separate from any claim for compensation.

The government committed $5.5 million to this measure in the 2016-17 budget, to improve support for veterans by increasing the incapacity cut-off age to align with age pension eligibility. This will enable veterans to continue to receive incapacity payments up until they become eligible for the age pension. Approximately 120 veterans per annum will benefit from this change.

Currently, payment of incapacity entitlements under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 ceases when an employee reaches 65 years of age or, if the injury occurred on or after the age of 63, after a maximum of 104 weeks of incapacity entitlements have been received. This amendment keeps pace with the scheduled age pension increases, to ensure injured veterans may not be without adequate means of financial support upon reaching 65 years of age once the age pension eligibility changes take effect.

In a nutshell, this bill will support our veterans in real and tangible ways, from increasing access to vital mental health treatment, to better financial support for ADF members transitioning to civilian life and ensuring access to incapacity entitlements through to pension age.

This measure has been well received right throughout my RSLs and more recently at Remembrance Day over at the Lockyer Valley and at Gatton. I had the opportunity to catch up with a number of our past-serving diggers. The president over there is no less than Les Nash. We had a wonderful lunch afterwards at the RSL, and these measures were spoken about. These measures are being well received by those former-serving ADF members.

I would also like to take the opportunity to throw a bouquet to Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Hassall, who serves in one of the Defence facilities in my electorate, the Canungra army warfare training centre. He recently gave a speech on behalf of the ADF at a swap meet for military enthusiasts who brought along their tanks and jeeps—anything that was green was at the Beaudesert showgrounds. He gave an incredibly stirring address. He spoke passionately about the means of communication and transportation and how it had changed through the ages, from horseback right through to the world-renowned Bushmaster armed personnel vehicles used in Afghanistan. They are so well regarded by our allied forces that, when they are being shuffled around, the Americans and other allies would much prefer to be travelling with us because of the safety element in those machines. Aaron, I believe, is going to be
taking up an office not dissimilar to West Point in the US, where he will be training Lieutenants Colonels for the American Army for the next two years—a very honourable position—and we should be proud as a community to know that we are sending the best of our soldiers to train the next generation of leaders for our allied forces in the Americas.

I also acknowledge the member for Ryan, who will speak on this bill. She is an enormous advocate for the Defence Force. She has the Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in her electorate. It was just recently that we were speaking—in my capacity on the capital works committee—about some of the work that we will be doing in that area and how acute the member is with the programs. She is also a proud mother of a son who serves in the Australian Defence Force. Any contribution that you make in this place, member for Ryan—I know you do it with a sense of loyalty and advocacy for the Australian Defence Force, and you should be commended for your support in this space.

Again I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the opposition's support for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (12.28): I today rise to represent the 2,000 veterans and their families, and the 1,300 Australian Defence Force personnel who live in my electorate of Macquarie and to support this bill.

We are united in our respect for the many sacrifices these service men and women and their families make to serve our nation, regardless of whether they are deployed in active duty, in peacekeeping forces, in training, or logistical support at home bases. However, our support has not always translated into ensuring that our service men and women, and our veterans, are adequately cared for and protected.

With the indulgence of the House, I would like to recount some truly frightening statistics. The Department of Veterans' Affairs states that, as at March 2016, veterans serving in East Timor, on average, had 2.56 health conditions per veteran. For the Solomon Islands it was 2.10. For those who served in Afghanistan: 2.9. For those who served in the Iraq conflict: 2.56. Post-traumatic stress disorder tops the list in all conflicts, with nearly 3,000 veterans having ongoing issues with PTSD. Physical diseases are often easier to see. If we factor in all common mental illnesses and addictions—alcohol dependence and abuse, depressive disorders, adjustment disorder, anxiety disorder and psycho-active substance abuse—it is no small matter, and our veterans are facing serious issues when it comes to the prevalence of mental health conditions.

Even more worrying is the fact that the reporting of mental health issues relative to other conditions is so low, so the chances are that there are many more vets and personnel out there suffering from mental illness but not reporting it. This is not good enough. These men and women have put their life on the line for the defence of our country. In many cases, they are not getting the support and assistance they desperately need and deserve. I have many RSL sub-branches in my electorate from Richmond and Windsor, up the mountains from Glenbrook to Katoomba, and I also have the Blackheath and Mount Victoria Sub-branch, which I am very honoured to say I am patron of. I have the Springwood-based Vietnam Veterans Association in my electorate. I also have St John of God hospital at North Richmond, which is highly regarded for the incredible work that it has done over many years in helping veterans deal with their mental health issues.
Not an event occurs, whether it be Anzac Day, Vietnam Veterans Day, or most recently, Remembrance Day, without a conversation occurring around the impact of mental illness on the lives of families and returned service personnel. The same is true of interactions that I am unfortunate enough to have with the personnel at RAAF Base Richmond and RAAF headquarters Glenbrook. Twenty-two per cent of the ADF, or one in five, have experienced at least one mental health disorder in the last 12 months, and more than half have experienced mental illness during their life. This is a rate significantly higher than the rest of the community. More shockingly, 24 per cent of the individuals with an ICD-10 mental illness in the ADF reported feeling that in the previous 12 months life was not worth living. This is particularly concerning when your electorate has such a large number of personnel and returned personnel living in it. The Richmond RAAF base is the core part of the community. In the Hawkesbury, most people would be related to, know of, or be friends with members of someone in the ADF, or their children would go to school with the sons and daughters of Defence personnel. It would be much the same case in the Blue Mountains, and we have a very large number of young people who are part of cadets wanting to be part of the Defence Force as they get older.

So for me and my community, the issue of prevalence of mental illness in veterans and service people is not one that we discuss abstractly. It is an issue that can have wide reaching and devastating effects in our local area. It is an issue which affects not only the service personnel or veteran in question, but their friends, their family and our community. That is why I am so passionate about ensuring that our service men and women are given the best access possible to mental health services and preventative procedures. We owe it, not just to them, but to our communities to take action.

In May this year, I stood at McQuade Park in Windsor to honour the coming home of the remains of 33 veterans and dependants who died in the Vietnam conflict. Two veterans of the Blue Mountains were among those repatriated: Corporal Bob Bowtell and Private Ron Field, both educated at Katoomba High School. In August, I was privileged to attend, along with more than 200 people, a gathering at the Lawson War Memorial, a welcome home commemoration for them. What remains most vivid for me was the moving account of one of the mates of Bob Bowtell, who died from a lack of oxygen in the underground labyrinth of a Viet Cong tunnel in South Vietnam while on duty with the 3rd Field Troop of the Royal Australian Engineers 50 years ago. The memories of that night are clearly not far from their mates' minds. It remained a heavy burden for his friend to carry.

If you include all mental illnesses, the total list of Vietnam vets suffering from mental illness reaches more than 30,000 people. That is one mental illness for every two vets, a prevalence rate of 50 per cent. To quote Major General John Cantwell:

We cannot underestimate the damage that we might be doing to our people through constant stress. We must do everything we can to help them out psychologically with medical care, with everything. These people are putting their lives on the line, they do this without question. They don't flinch and when they hurt, when they are hurting as they will down the years, we've got to keep stepping up as a society and look after them.

He is right. We owe this to our veterans. We owe this to their family and friends.

The ADF has been engaging in a constant consultative process to devise best practice responses to mental illness amongst deployed and domestic personnel. However, these
attempts are worthless unless we pledge to make the necessary legislative changes. So many ADF personnel simply do not seek help. The reasons they give—27 per cent say they do not want to be treated differently, and another 27 per cent say they do not want it to harm their career. These were the highest rated perceived stigmas. The highest rated barrier though to seeking help at all would be that it reduces deployability. We need to provide tangible support to assist the ADF and veterans so that they have easier access to mental health facilities and prevention strategies. This bill certainly goes some way to do just that and I am, therefore, very proud to support it.

The provisions within schedule 2 of the bill extend the eligibility for non-liability health care, allowing personnel to take part in early intervention strategies sooner. It does away with the need for personnel to have engaged in three years continuous full-time service. They do not need to lodge an application and receive a diagnosis before accessing the appropriate support. Under these changes, groups of veterans who did not make three years’ service—and that includes women who face sexual and personal harassment in the ADF and, as a result, left before three years of service—will now be able to access mental healthcare services. Essentially, ADF members no longer have to jump through bureaucratic hoops, as a result of the provisions within schedule 2. This is a good first step to ensuring that ADF personnel are able to access mental health services in the first place and that reporting rates may be improved. This will make a real and positive impact in my electorate, and it is a change I strongly welcome.

This bill is particularly important in the context of Remembrance Day, where this year we not only marked the anniversary of the guns falling silent on the Western Front—which is, in itself, a significant day for me, as I had two grandfathers fighting on the Western Front: Leslie Robert Templeman and Herbert Raymond Axtens—but also ensured the day highlighted the suicide rates of veterans and Defence Force personnel, which is a significant step to lifting the stigma on mental illness that makes it so much harder to address.

I commemorated Remembrance Day at Glenbrook, Colo Heights, Freemans Reach and Windsor, as well as at the service that we had here the day before Remembrance Day. Now, more than ever, I am reminded that Remembrance Day must be more than just a mere token; it must be more than a minute of silence, and more than just a fixture in our calendars. I hope it continues to be a day to honour those who have served, and to wholeheartedly pledge to ensure that our current and future generations of service men and women are cared for and protected in return for their service to our nation. Our commemoration for those soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice means nothing unless we actively seek to ensure that those who serve and survive do so with good health, both physical and mental.

I am proud to support this bill, in the name of the serving and former personnel in my electorate and their families, friends and loved ones. I am proud to support it on behalf of RSL sub-branches all across my electorate. This bill will ensure that 67,000 additional members of the ADF are able to access quality health care for mental health conditions. No longer will they need to jump through an obscene number of hoops; nor will they be excluded from NLHC coverage because of the length of their service. This is a priority area for Labor, and we will continue to work cooperatively with the government in this parliament to explore what more can be done to support those who have served and fought for our country. I urge all members to support this bill.
Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan—Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services) (12:39): I rise to speak on the Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016. This bill and the topic of our veterans are very dear not only to me but also to the wider community of the Ryan electorate. We are all here today, no matter what our political creed, as a result of the freedoms afforded to us by our veterans. With Ryan proudly home to the Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera, the second-largest military base in our country, this bill is of great interest to many in my electorate.

It is only fitting that this bill provides further measures, a result of the 2016-17 budget, that seek to improve the lives of our service men and women. This bill contains three measures: firstly, to pay interim incapacity payments at 100 per cent of normal earnings; secondly, to extend eligibility for non-liability healthcare treatment for certain mental health conditions, to cover all current, former and future ADF members; and thirdly, and finally, to align the cut-off age for incapacity payments to the increased pension age as defined in the Social Security Act 1991.

I have seen and continue to see firsthand the struggles faced by our veterans. Importantly, through this bill, the coalition government is paving the way to a system that supports all veterans in need of assistance—former, current and future personnel. Currently, when a member is discharged from the ADF, there can be a period of time before incapacity payments can be determined while superannuation entitlements are finalised. I, along with my coalition colleagues, appreciate the immense financial pressure this can cause some discharged members. So, by enabling interim incapacity payments at 100 per cent of normal earnings, veterans will receive their pre-discharge salary during this period of time. I note that this measure will be available immediately upon discharge at a level commensurate with the member’s regular salary.

The number of cases of mental health conditions amongst the Defence community is ever-increasing and illustrates the horrors that many have seen and experienced. The non-liability healthcare measure within this bill extends eligibility to all current and former permanent members of the ADF diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety, depression, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. Further to the expansion of the range of conditions for which the NLHC may be provided, the treatment will also become more accessible. There will be no need to lodge a formal application. Simply telephone or email the Department of Veterans' Affairs and ask for treatment. To be eligible for NLHC, members will only be required to have just one day of continuous full-time service to access treatment. And there is no need for a formal diagnosis at the time of requesting treatment. A diagnosis is, however, required within six months.

It is estimated that, under these changes, 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the ADF will become eligible to receive NLHC treatment for a mental health condition. The NLHC facilitates fast access to mental health treatment and encourages early intervention to offer the best chance of recovery.

By aligning the cut-off age for incapacity payments to the increased pension age, the coalition government is improving support for veterans. This amendment will enable veterans to continue to receive incapacity payments up until they become eligible for the age pension.

The Defence community instils a sense of family that is unsurpassed. This is evident through none other than the RSLs in my electorate. Gaythorne RSL, Sherwood Indooroopilly
RSL, Kenmore Moggill RSL, Toowong RSL and The Gap RSL all play an important role in the support of our returned service men and women and their families. And I digress for a moment to congratulate the RSL on successfully obtaining the next Invictus Games for Australia. These RSL organisations help provide support through their financial and other assistance to the Defence family. They provide a local place of remembrance and significance, of importance to those who have served as well as to newer generations. I urge not only the members here today but all Australians to support their local RSL, whether it is through a visit for a meal or perhaps attending the many significant ceremonies held every year.

Let us not overlook the pivotal role our schools play to ensure the everlasting memory of our servicemen and women. I recently attended the Ferny Grove State School Festival and while there I was pleased to revisit a memorial garden funded through the Anzac Centenary grants program. The memorial garden, shaped like a Flanders poppy, gives students a place to sit and reflect on the Anzac tradition, its values of service, sacrifice, selflessness, mateship and bravery. I know that future generations—not just those attending Ferny Grove State School—will also benefit from the many wonderful memorials and dedications in their own schools and communities.

I would like to place on the record my acknowledgement and appreciation to all those who are currently serving in Australia and around the world, and also to their families, who make great sacrifices. Often our community members do not appreciate the impact it has on them.

Let us all remember that the very democracy that elected us to this place is a benefit derived from our veterans. The measures in this bill are not only timely but a reminder that we as a country should always support the selfless work of Australia's Defence personnel. These measures are a step in the right direction for which so many veterans and their families, of whom many are constituents of the Ryan electorate, have awaited.

I thank the opposition for their support and commend this bill to the House.

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (12:46): My electorate, the electorate of Herbert, has one of the highest veteran population percentages in Australia, and is home to the largest army base in the country. I am proud to support this bill.

I believe the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, said it best when he stated: 'As a nation, we are better at honouring the memory of our dead than looking after our living.' The honourable Jeff Kennett was very passionate in his address on the 11th of the 11th, 2016, at the War Memorial where he clearly stated the devastating reality of mental ill-health in the veteran and ex-service personnel in our communities. We have a long way to go to adequately look after and support our veterans and ex-service personnel, but some of the amendments mentioned here today start to rectify this situation.

As a result of Townsville being home to the largest Defence presence in our country and also due to our glorious weather and relaxed lifestyle, many personnel choose to retire in our community. We have approximately 6,500 ADF personnel. Add to that a further 3,500 to 10,000 family members. There are approximately 5,000 DVA clients as well as 4,000 to 9,000 family members. These figures do not include the potentially thousands of veterans who are not registered with DVA who also reside in Townsville with their families.
In recognising that our veteran, ex-service personnel and Defence community plays a vital role to the greater Townsville community, I established the Townsville Defence Community Reference Group. This high-level and committed group has been established to ensure that federal government policy reflects the needs of our Defence community, and these amendments do just that. Supporting veterans and their families should not be embroiled in politics, especially considering that we are talking about the people who have given courageously and selflessly of their lives to ensure that we enjoy the freedom that Australia offers to our citizens.

The Leader of the Opposition was in Townsville on Tuesday last week where he hosted an open town hall forum. At that forum Bill Shorten was asked by a veteran if he would 'fight for veterans'. The Leader of the Opposition did not hesitate to declare his support, and that is exactly what Labor is doing here today. Labor will always encourage and support measures designed to ensure that existing programs take account of mental health requirements for veterans and ex-service personnel.

Before commencing my career in parliament, I was the CEO of a community-managed mental health organisation. I have worked in the mental health sector for approximately 14 years. During that time, I have given evidence to a number of Senate committees about the improvements that could occur for contemporary mental health services.

Mental Health affects one in five people in any 12-month period, and no-one is exempt. It is positive that this issue has come to the surface, as it also further highlights the need for a strong stigma reduction campaign. Veterans and ex-service personnel living with mental ill-health and distress are not the only ones bearing the dreadful impact. This also impacts on their families and friends. As a result of mental ill-health, these people are also not engaged in work. Our veterans and ex-service personnel are often homeless, living in poverty and experiencing sever family breakdown. This is simply unacceptable when we consider that these people have put their lives on hold to serve our country. Our veterans, ex-service personnel and their families deserve nothing less than world-class contemporary care and support.

Veterans' mental health continues to be an issue of significant concern, and an area in which Labor is committed to identifying where more support can be provided. This bill seeks to make three specific adjustments. The amendments to schedule 1 provide for payments of interim compensation to incapacitated current or former ADF members while the actual amount of compensation is being determined. Current applicants are paid at the national minimum wage amount while their claims are being processed, which can be less than they were earning at the time of the injury. When suffering from an injury, this adds a lot of stress and mental anguish for our current or former Defence personnel.

We do not need to add to this anguish and stress by adding financial hardship as well. The strain of financial hardship often creates a significant downward spiralling effects, and that is one additional stress that our veterans and ex-service personnel simply do not need. These amendments will at the very least ensure that we do not add financial stress on top of what is already a difficult and stressful situation. I have said, and I will always say, that where possible early intervention and prevention is prudent and can result in better outcomes for people.
Prior to these amendments, ADF members were required to have had either three years of continuous full-time service or operational service, have lodged an application with the Veterans' Entitlements Act and have a diagnosis. In my electorate, this would be probably one of the highest complaints that I receive from veterans and ex-service personnel. When a person is living with mental ill-health, things that would normally be taken for granted can become incredibly hard and overwhelming. Stigma is definitely one of the most significant issues that people living with mental ill health face, and the perceived shame often prevents people from reaching out for help. Our veterans, ex-service personnel and serving personnel experience things that a lot of us cannot even begin to comprehend. Often their mental health conditions are quite complex and cannot be diagnosed simply by ticking boxes. Under these changes, people will be able to access NLHC immediately and only need to have served one full-time day. These amendments will change the lives of an estimated 67,000 current and former permanent personnel. These members will now become eligible to receive NLHC. This includes victims of abuse in the ADF who may have previously been excluded from NLHC coverage due to the period in which they served or the length of their service. Although these extensions are limited to post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder, this is a first step in the right direction. Further changes align the incapacity payment cut-off age with that of aged pension eligibility. This schedule ensures veterans are not left without income support prior to being able to access the aged pension and will benefit approximately 120 veterans per annum.

Defence, veterans and ex-service personnel issues are a high priority for me as the member for Herbert and remain a high-priority area for Labor. We will continue to work collaboratively with the government over this term of parliament to explore what more can be done to support those who have served and fought for our country. Just as our veterans and ex-service personnel stood up and fought for us, it is now my turn to stand up and fight for them. I am proud to support my veteran and ex-service personnel community in speaking to and supporting these amendments.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (12:54): I thank my friend the member for Herbert for her contribution and acknowledge her involvement and engagement with the Defence community around her electorate, the importance that they have in her mind and her service of the needs of the Defence community. I am pleased to participate in the debate on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016 and offer Labor's support for this legislation. As a former Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I see some people in the advisers box with whom I used to work closely. I thank them for the work they have done on the legislation because I think it is very important. It is a continuation of work which has been ongoing for a number of years.

The bill will allow for interim incapacity payments at 100 per cent of normal earnings to be paid until a final incapacity payment can be determined. It will extend access to non-liability mental health treatment to all past and current members of the Australian Defence Force irrespective of how long or where they served or their type of service. It will align the end date for veterans' incapacity payments with the incremental increase in the age pension age to 67 by 2024. These are important amendments. Whilst, to the outside observer, they might seem rather pedestrian, they are in fact not. They will have a measurable and important
positive outcome for the veterans community, and that is something which I know all members in this House would support.

As I say, I come to this debate as a former minister in this space, and I think it is fair to say that, over the last decade or so, there has been an evolution in the way in which we deal with veterans, veterans entitlements and, indeed, existing members of the Defence Force community. One of the things that I think it is very hard for us to understand—those of us who have not served, particularly since 1999—is that there has been such an intense effort by the defence forces over this period that active service has meant active service. Many veterans have spent some years away in uniform fighting for the causes for which we have asked them to fight. That is important because, in the period post Vietnam, we suffered from not treating people correctly—indeed, shamefully so, I think. That came back to haunt us in many ways, but, most importantly, it came back to haunt us in the ways in which veterans exhibited, over time, mental health issues and other health issues which have meant that they required treatment.

I have always taken the view that, as a potential Defence Force recruit, once you march into Kapooka to do your basic training you are the responsibility of the nation till the day you die. You should immediately be recognised as a potential client of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs because you may, for example, have an accident whilst you are training, which will be seen as part of your service, and you and your family, therefore, may be impacted until the day you die. We need to accept as a nation that, once people put on that uniform, we have a responsibility to them and for them until they pass—and, indeed, for their families. As we know, a significant proportion of Veterans’ Affairs clients currently are widows. In a small number of cases they are widowers, but they are mostly ageing widows of Second World War veterans and Vietnam veterans and widows of veterans of the most recent engagement we have had overseas.

I contemplate what has happened since 1999. In the period of peacetime we, of course, had veterans who had issues as a result of their service, but, importantly, in the period post 1999 and post East Timor, there has been an ongoing intensity in the rate at which people have been asked to serve overseas and be involved in some horrific conflicts. That has an enormous impact upon them and their families. When I had a position of responsibility, what came to me was the fact that we are asking people to do six, seven, eight, nine and even 10 tours of duty. This is particularly so for special forces soldiers. It is all right whilst you are in the team and you have all your mates around you and you are serving, but once you leave the security of that uniform and you transition out a lot of things change. Part of what we are now dealing with in the general community is a rising awareness of mental health issues, which have emerged as a result of service. I am pleased to say that the defence department and, indeed, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs are both very much alive to this.

One of the issues which we have been able to start to grapple with is not only how to amend legislation to meet the needs of contemporary veterans now and into the future but also how to make sure that their separation from the Defence Force and the transition process is more seamless and that they are being cared for and counselled whilst they are in the departure lounge, so to speak, and when they leave. Now there are on-base advisory services from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs on most Defence Force bases around the country, and these advisory services are to work with current serving people around what entitlements
they may have as a result of having served as veterans and as a result of their service. That is important—that is very important. What we require them to do as they transition is understand the nature of the services that are available to them through the Department of Veterans' Affairs upon their transition. That is an obligation that the Commonwealth accepts and should accept. Where there have been changes in the way that the Department of Defence is dealing with its personnel—for example, through having an electronic health record—will significantly impact on the way in which the Department of Veterans' Affairs deals with those veterans post-service because their records will be a lot easier to access. The timeliness of claims against the Department of Veterans' Affairs for incidents that have happened during service will change dramatically, and that is very important. It is a very positive outcome that will happen, in my view, as a result of the electronic health record being introduced in the Department of Defence.

It is that separation which starts to cause us concern. I mentioned to you earlier about the prospect of people having served six, seven, eight or nine tours overseas—fighting on our behalf in that great Australian uniform under our flag—and when they come back, they may or may not have had a physical injury, but they may have acquired, over time, a mental health issue, which they themselves do not recognise yet, and may not become obvious to them for some time after they separate. That is an issue—that is a real issue for us. I know there has been a Senate inquiry which has looked at suicides over the last 12 months, and that is important, but we need to understand the way in which Defence personnel behave once they leave.

One of the issues which is really difficult to track—you might not believe this, but I am sure you do—is that when some people leave their uniform, they do not want to have a bar of it. They have had it. They have had a gutful and it is time to leave—'I don't want anything to do with my previous unit or the RSL, or anyone else; I just want out of here,'—and we lose track of them. We lose contact with them. Some of these people may, in the future, as a result of their service have an issue around their mental health, which they themselves may or may not recognise. Because they have lost contact and because they are not with their mates, who they had previously, or their unit, or because they are not associated with the RSL, Soldier On or Mates4Mates, or any one of the other organisations that exist, they fall through the cracks. These are the people we should be most concerned about because these are the ones that I know—at least I think I know—will have the most difficult way ahead. When we are contemplating this legislation, we should not see it in isolation. We should see it as a part of a broader canvas, which is designed to deal with the current and ongoing needs of Defence Force personnel and potentially their families. That is important for all of us.

I know from my own observations and experience that the Department of Veterans' Affairs team, despite the negative press that sometimes they are given by particular people who live in other parts of this parliament, are, in fact, dedicated to what they do and work extremely hard to get a beneficial outcome for Defence personnel and their families, including providing the best of medical care that is available, whether it is because of their physical health or because of their mental health. That is important. There has been an increase in recognition of mental health issues as a result of a report which was initiated by Labor during its period of government when I was then the minister—the Dunt review into veterans and the mental health support coming from the Department of Defence and, indeed, veterans affairs, which
was involved in looking at suicides. It was very important work which provided a framework for Defence moving forward.

That is not to say it is perfect, because it is not by far, but we need to recognise that things are happening and things have changed. In 2012, the then Labor government initiated the Bravery Trust, which was formerly known as the Australian Defence Force Trust. It was established with a grant of $14 million from the Commonwealth. Its purpose is to provide financial support to veterans, current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, and their families who have suffered injury or illness as a result of their service and are experiencing financial hardship. That is important. It is important recognition that there are sometimes people who, despite the best efforts of themselves and their families, are unable to manage and need support. This trust provides them with the capacity to get access to their support. It is very similar to the SAS Resources Trust, which is, in itself, a perpetual trust. In fact, the Bravery Trust was established to mirror the SAS fund and to provide that ongoing support.

The RSL has a significant role and an ongoing significant role in working with serving veterans and veterans who have left the Defence Force to make sure that they have access to services. This has been a significant challenge for the RSL, because a lot of younger veterans have seen the RSL as a place for old codgers to hold up the bar. We know that is not the case. I can well recall an annual meeting of a particular branch of the RSL where the then RSM of the Army got up and said, 'You have got to do more. You have to understand current serving veterans and their requirements.' That remains the case.

Significantly, we have seen the development of new organisations that are aimed at contemporary veterans, Soldier On being one of them—and a very good organisation it is—and Mates4Mates being another. These are important initiatives, but they go hand in glove with what government does and what government support is available. So whilst this legislation we are discussing today is important there is a much bigger picture, and we have to understand that bigger picture and our role in it.

We have to understand that there are people who are hurt—immeasurably hurt—as result of their service to this country, and they may not recognise it themselves for some years past their service. We have to be available for them to provide the support they need on an ongoing basis, and we need to be alive to the fact that some of them will not want to talk to us. We have to find a way to connect to them and make sure they understand the services that are available to them and their families. If we can do that we will make a difference and maybe, just maybe, we will address the issues of the suicide, self-harm and abuse among far too many of those who have served this great country.

We have an obligation in this place to support this legislation. But we have a broader obligation to all serving men and women, and all past veterans and their families, which will be with us till the day they die. It is something I am personally committed to.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:09): I also wish to speak in support of the proposed amendments to the veterans affairs legislation. I acknowledge my colleague the member for Lingiari and his years of dedication to not only improving government services for veterans, for Defence personnel, but also working in a collaborative way with the ex-service community to make sure that the people who have served us, and their families, have the best possible support. They certainly deserve it.
Although we have seen older veterans pass and the Vietnam vets are doing their very best to reach out to the younger group of veterans coming through, we will see more and more of these younger veterans seeking support. That is why this legislation is so important. It used to be three years you had to have spent in the service before you were eligible to seek support. You do not have to have served for three years to be trained up and deployed to a war zone wearing the Australian flag on your shoulder—that can happen in a shorter time. You also do not have to have served for three years to have had difficulties, mental-health problems, as a result of your service. During my service I lost some mates. It was not in a war zone. It was during training. It can happen. You can be put in positions where you see your mates seriously injured. So this legislation is great, because you only have to have spent a day in uniform to get some support. Families also deserves the best care. They have long periods where their spouse or someone in their family is deployed, and they are without the support at home of that family member. When a service member has difficulty adjusting back to civilian life sometimes their family too has difficulty working through that.

The name change from the VVCS, Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service is a good thing. In my electorate, in Darwin and Palmerston, Vietnam veterans are about supporting all veterans, not just Vietnam veterans. That is excellent. I want to acknowledge the work of Peter Mansell, past president of the NT Vietnam Veterans Association; the current president, Bob Shewring, for his work; and the current vice president, Ray Palmer, and his wife, Pam, who themselves lost a son in Afghanistan, and they are keen to support young patrons as they transition into civilian life.

There has been a bit in the media over the last week or so about supporting members of the Defence Force and veterans as they transition into civilian life, particularly the ones who need support, who might be struggling a bit moving from this incredibly supportive organisation that the Defence Force is into civilian life. All that is very positive. I know when I transitioned into civilian life I missed Defence. You miss your mates. You miss that supportive environment. Out in the civilian world you can come across employers and other members of the community who, through no fault of their own, do not appreciate the skillset you have or the experiences you have had in life.

Having the engagement of industry, having a broader conversation in our community about the importance of helping veterans through that transition, is a good thing. We need to focus more on helping people with mental-health issues in Defence, and this legislation is important in enabling that. But the overwhelming majority of people who are moving from Defence are just 'good to go'. They are really solid operators who you can depend upon to get a job done. They are skilled up. They are disciplined. They have pride in themselves and their country. As they transition into a more normal or civilian work life there is a bit of an adjustment that goes along with it. I can only say that if you get an opportunity to employ an ex-service man or woman it is a good thing to do because having someone who is so mission focused, can get on, have a bit of independence of mind, show some initiative and get stuff done will help your organisation.

I want to quickly reflect on my electorate in the Northern Territory and the veterans that we have in our community. We have around 1,900 registered; there would be more who have not come into contact with DVA. It is probably a good thing that we encourage people to put in claims, not so they go down this track of potential dependence—although some people really
need that because of the wounds or illnesses that they have—but so they can get what they are entitled to for their service. My father had some injuries from serving in Vietnam and he never claimed for them for decades and decades. He certainly said to me and my brothers who have served, 'If you've had some injury from your service, then claim it.' That is what our country is committed to; when we have people who represent us in the armed forces, they are entitled. This legislation today means that the scope of people who are eligible for that support will be extended.

Overwhelmingly, what we want to do is support veterans as they move into independent civilian life as productive members of the community with so much to offer. I think the importance of these ex-service organisations is that they allow an ongoing connection to a Defence environment whilst also moving into civilian life and getting on with things. I will talk about where we are at in the Territory with some of those organisations shortly, because we have been doing a lot of work and it is starting to bear some fruit.

In the Territory, we also have veterans working fly in fly out in the mining sector and other sectors. We want to be able to support them while they are with us in the Territory, and we hope that they stay and move to the Territory permanently. We also have grey nomads, usually Vietnam veterans or Korean veterans who are travelling around Australia. They come in, particularly when we have meetings with the Vietnam vets in Bees Creek. We had a meeting there yesterday, and they are always extremely welcome. Often veterans who are only in the Territory for a short amount of time need assistance. We have dedicated volunteers that are giving that assistance.

I spoke with Vice Admiral Ray Griggs and Brigadier Dan Fortune this morning. They are outstanding Australians. As Brigadier Fortune moves into civilian life after a distinguished career—DSC and Bar; he is an extraordinary Australian—I want to put in the Hansard that he has served our country not just in Afghanistan but in a whole suite of countries around the world in an absolutely exemplary manner. I wish him all the best with his career. It was great to chat briefly with Vice Admiral Ray Griggs as well.

Defence is doing a lot in this space. Defence really cares about its people. It is doing its best to help people when they are transitioning out of Defence and to make sure that they understand the supports that are out there when they shift out. Defence is an operationally focused organisation that is deployed throughout the world and is working in bases around Australia in support of our national interest. It is good that parliamentarians in this place have a full understanding of what Defence is actually doing for our people because it is significant, and any efforts to increase knowledge in the community about what Defence is doing, what DVA is doing and what ex-service organisations are doing are absolutely vital.

In this place, I want to acknowledge the work of Sir Angus Houston, who is working to make sure that we are plugging the gaps. We know that some veterans are falling through the cracks. We have had more young Australian veterans commit suicide in the last year than we have had Australians killed in Afghanistan over 13 years. It is a problem. As I said before, it is not common, but it is going to increase. This legislation is important in supporting what is sometimes called a tsunami, but let's hope it is not. Let's all actively work so that it is not and so that we can pre-empt difficulties that our serving men and women may have and give them the best care possible.
In the Territory, we have a great example of where veterans' communities and ESOs are at. I have spoken a couple of times in this place now about the need for the Northern Territory's deputy commissioner for veterans' affairs to be reinstated. The reason for that is that our veterans in the Territory deserve the highest level of representation. When deputy commissioners from around the country are called into Canberra to talk about issues that affect the veterans' community, the Northern Territory should be at that table. I look forward to hearing from the veterans' affairs minister on the reinstatement of the position of the deputy commissioner for veterans' affairs in the Northern Territory.

We also have an advocate that I want to recognise. Alex 'Kaz' Kaczmarek, a veteran, is currently a lone advocate working with many of our veterans in the Northern Territory. I want to acknowledge all the work that Kaz is doing. He has been a tireless worker for veterans, but we do not want to see him burn out. He had the strategic vision to get some ATAP training done with the support of some of those other advocates and volunteers—the Advocacy Training and Development Program, or ATDP. That training was recently held in Darwin, where we saw 15 members of our community, mainly from my electorate in Darwin and Palmerston, have two days of welfare training and three days of advocacy training. That training, along with peer-to-peer training and then on-the-job training as an advocate will lead those candidates to hopefully become a level 2 advocate. Not only will this take weight off Kaz's shoulders but it will mean that we can provide more intimate service to those that are going to be putting their hand up. And I think we will be having more people put their hand up in the future.

Last week I met with Soldier On. Soldier On are very keen to establish an office in Darwin. This is great news. It will not overlap with the work that other organisations like Vietnam Veterans NT, RSL, NT Veteran Centre are doing at the moment; it will complement the welfare and advocacy services being provided to veterans. Soldier On will offer assistance to those veterans who need it to get out into the workforce. We have got fantastic employers in the Northern Territory who understand the services and who are keen to employ veterans. I really welcome Soldier On's interest in establishing an office in Darwin so that they can assist some of our veterans into the civilian workforce.

We are very lucky to have so many businesses that are keen to get behind helping our men and women find meaningful employment. As I alluded to earlier, before people finish their time in Defence, they have a really important purpose and a really strong identity. What we want to do is work with them so that that purpose and that identity can be shifted into the civilian realm as they continue to serve our country.

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (13:24): I rise to speak on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016. I thank the member for Solomon, a distinguished serviceman of this country. My state colleagues the member for Willagee, Peter Tinley, and the member for Warnbro, Paul Papalia, have also been proud servicemen who also now serve in our parliaments. As the member for Brand, I am proud to stand up today in support of our military personnel and veterans. I represent a seat which boasts a strong military presence. The Royal Australian Navy's largest base, Fleet Base West, HMAS Stirling, is located on Garden Island just off the coast of Rockingham in the heart of the Brand electorate. It is home to more than 2,300 service personnel and plays a critical role
in the defence of the nation. It is home to the Anzac class frigates and the Collins class submarines along with some 70 other naval units.

Defence personnel from across Australia come to Brand to make their homes in the area and bring great benefit to the whole community. They have brought an overwhelming wealth of positives to the community. We are particularly mindful of the great challenges and sometimes the great tragedies that come with a life in the military. As well as the many serving service men and women and their families who call Brand home, there are also many veterans who live in the electorate who saw active service in the Second World War and in subsequent theatres of war. I stand here today for all those men and women because they were prepared to stand up for this country and were prepared to make sacrifices in defence of our nation and our way of life. I am also moved to support our veterans as the daughter of the former Royal Navy sailor and also the granddaughter of George Harvie Morris, a Royal Marine in the commando units of the Royal Navy. My brother also served in the Australian infantry. All have lived with some kind of trauma related to their service and all continue to pay the price well after their service has ended.

This Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill will never be a cure all to address every veteran’s concerns. There will be more that we can do. Indeed, many of the conditions that we treat today were not always recognised; returned soldiers were expected to just get on with life. The aftermath of the Great War delivered a legion of shell shocked and deeply damaged men back into Australian society with barely any care or assistance. They may have looked physically healthy but their mental injuries were often quite devastating. Today’s returned service people from the campaigns in the Middle East have their own challenges to meet. So while one bill can never solve all the issues, at least this one is a very welcome step forward.

I think you can tell a lot about a country by the way that it looks after its veterans. There is no doubt about the respect and admiration we accord our returned service men and women—you only have to witness the Anzac Day parades and the Remembrance Day ceremonies around the country. But the challenge for us as parliamentarians is to continue to look at what we can do to help those who have done so much for this country. That is why Labor supports common-sense legislation that better serves the needs of our veteran community. We support our veterans and their families in getting the care and support that they deserve and that they need.

This bill is a step forward to further increase support of current and former members of our military. Among the reforms contained in the bill is a provision for the payment of interim compensation payments to incapacitated current or former Australian Defence Force members while the actual amount of compensation they will be afforded is being determined. Currently applicants are paid the national minimum wage while their claims for compensation are being processed. This means they might be forced to live on an income less than the income they received before their incapacitation. This can leave applicants having to cope with financial difficulties as well as with the stress of injury and of having left the service.

We can all imagine the difficulties such a reduction in income would cause. We can imagine the severe financial stress of having income suddenly reduced and the impact it would have when combined with the stress of dealing with a severe injury. In the suburbs of Brand that many defence families call home, unemployment is high and many households are
already under financial stress. Defence families are not immune to the severe downturn hitting the West Australian economy. Defence Force spouses are amongst those who have either lost their jobs or who have had their hours of work reduced. Another hit to the family budget after a debilitating injury could be enough to tip a defence family over the edge into severe financial distress, and this bill will help prevent that from happening. It will help give our service men and women financial certainty when they need it most.

Defence families, like most Australian families, are usually geared according to their income with expenses including mortgage, rent, school fees, utilities, car loans and general living expenses dependent on a continued and consistent income. If your income suddenly falls, how do you continue to pay your bills when they stay at the same rate? How do you pay the mortgage, the rent, the school fees and power bills? This bill allows for payments to continue at 100 per cent of the applicant's normal income at the time of the injury until the claim is finalised. It is a change that makes sense. It is a change that reflects an understanding of the real world and the challenges faced by real individuals and real families. This change may represent a nominal cost to the Australian taxpayer but will mean the world for the small number of people caught up in this situation each year. I am sure future beneficiaries will include families and ex-Defence service men and women living in the electorate of Brand.

Perhaps the most significant reforms in this bill relate to the increasing access to treatment for mental health disorders which, thanks to the good work and support of advocacy services in this field—

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. The member for Brand will have an opportunity to conclude her contribution at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Road Safety: Diplomatic Corps

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:30): Last week a constituent wrote to me about an incident she had had in the car park of her local supermarket. The incident involved a collision between her vehicle and that of a Russian diplomat. It escalated to the point where she had to call the police to calm the situation down. I wrote to the ambassador demanding an apology and demanding that the embassy contact her insurance company, and I was glad when she received an apology. Yet I was saddened when it appeared to be rescinded in a letter to the editor the next day. This is not to target the Russian embassy or any particular embassy. All diplomatic missions have a responsibility to treat their host communities with respect. That respect is not shown by driving dangerously, so I welcome the recent agreement between the ACT government and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The agreement will see the suspension of driver's licences for diplomats who repeatedly break the road rules or refuse to pay traffic fines. It reflects the mutual obligation—and I underscore that; this is a mutual obligation—of those who share the roads to share the responsibility to keep themselves safe. Canberra is a proud and welcoming host to 106 dramatic missions. We take that responsibility very, very seriously. All we ask for is respect, because when you are hit by a vehicle driving way too fast, with a driver way over the limit, your body does not care about the colour of the vehicle's plates.
Chisholm Electorate: Chinese Community

Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (13:31): Every day in Chisholm the colour, vibrancy and warmth of the Chinese culture are evidenced by the Chinese community in their family, community and business life. The number of Chinese-speaking residents is the second highest in the country, with just over half of the 27,000 residents of Chisholm with Chinese heritage being born in China. I am proud to be part of the Turnbull government, which embraces and supports multiculturalism and small business. Australia is the most successful multicultural nation on this earth because of the people like those in Chisholm of immigrant heritage who have built their lives here whilst celebrating their respective cultures in harmony and tradition. And small business is the backbone of this country. The many members and affiliates of the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse, the ABAW, are fine examples of the good, hardworking, family-oriented people in Chisholm, and I am honoured to acknowledge some of these great people from the ABAW today: Tom Zheng, President of the ABAW; Vincent Liu; William Ma; Andrew Yu; Derek Chan; Frankie To; Leslie Wong; Charlie Xu; Jason Tang; Tina Liu; David Tang; Tim Cheng; Joanna Zhou; Jack Ao; Cassie Xu; Eric Gao; and Jonathan Chen. The dedication and commitment of the people of Chisholm to the pursuit of individual enterprise, building businesses and employing many underpin job growth and a strong economy.

Phelan, Mr Seumas

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (13:33): On Sunday, 13 November, Australian journalism lost one of its best. Seumas Phelan died at his home in Bundeena, surrounded by his loving family, just as he would have chosen. Seumas was a Walkley-award-winning journalist, a headline writer and a subeditor of the old school. He came from a long line of storytellers, and as a young child joined his genius vagabond-writer father tramping around the Irish countryside. As a child he met George Orwell, Paul Robeson, Dylan Thomas and other political and artistic figures. Seumas worked on newspapers around the world for more than 30 years. He came to Australia originally for two years, but he fell in love with the place and he became a dual citizen. He taught generations of journalism students at the University of Technology, Sydney. He kept an eye on former students throughout their careers. In fact, the last time I saw him was during the last federal election campaign, at an ALP function in Caringbah. It was typical of this beautiful man that, despite his illness, he was still deeply engaged in current affairs and eager to offer a former student a word of encouragement. He will be deeply missed by his partner, Lizzie; son, Liam; daughter, Amanda; daughter-in-law, Dani Cooper; and grandchildren, Grace, Ruairi, Conor and Rosa.

Mallee Electorate: Storms

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (13:34): On the evening of Friday, 13 November, the area that I represent was hit by a severe hailstorm and small tornado that did a lot of damage to horticultural crops and to houses across the Sunraysia area. Estimates are of damage to $150 million worth of table grapes, $50 million worth of wine grapes, an unspecified figure of dried fruit and almonds as well as grain crops and other horticultural products. Since then I have had the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, come and visit and talk to growers. I have also been in personal contact with the Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews, and the state Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development, Jaala Pulford. I am pleased that
category A of the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements have been made available, but I am also comfortable that the Jaala Pulford is in Mildura today and I look forward hopefully to a further announcement of category B or category C. I am of the strong view that there should be made available clean-up grants so that these producers can begin the work of getting back on their feet. Four hundred and fifty properties have been hit. The very nature of horticulture is that it is done on smallholdings, so when events like this hit, they hit hard. I say to the community: we need to look after our mates, from a mental health point of view. People will have a very difficult time ahead, as they have lost this year's crop and potentially next year's as well.

Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (13:36): The northern regions of Melbourne are facing some significant challenges—in particular, issues around unemployment, underemployment and business growth. The departure of our nation's car industry has brought these issues into sharp relief. One of the groups working constructively on these issues is the Northern Melbourne RDA, Regional Development Australia. Northern Melbourne RDA is one of 55 committees funded by the Regional Development Australia program to bring together local leaders, businesses and stakeholders, as well as state, local and federal governments, to support economic development in our regions. I have always been deeply impressed by the work undertaken by Northern Melbourne RDA, with initiatives like Northern Horizons, which identified local infrastructure priorities, and the Melbourne's North Food and Beverage Growth Plan, aimed at creating 10,000 additional jobs over the next 10 years.

Earlier this year the government initiated a review into Regional Development Australia. The terms of reference included consideration of the number of RDAs and their boundaries, including processes to alter them and whether capital cities and external territories should even be included. It is important that RDAs are retained in our capital cities as well as in rural areas. As our urban populations grow, the strategic location and creation of jobs becomes more and more important and our RDA is a crucial part of achieving that goal. If the government really wants to see jobs and growth in rural and urban regions then we need to continue to support the RDA and the work they do in our capital cities.

Wright Electorate: Rio 2016 Paralympics Medallist

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (13:37): I rise to shine a spotlight on a local Paralympian in my electorate. Claire Keefer is a 21-year-old short-statured athlete from Withcott in my electorate who recently competed in the Rio 2016 Paralympics. She competes in two events—both the shot-put and the discus. Before going to Rio, Claire spoke to some of the local journalists and said that she was looking to land a personal best and land a medal. Fortuitously, she was able to achieve both of those goals. She won bronze in her F41 shot-put with a huge PB—a half a metre better than anything she had thrown before. She said the noisy Brazilian crowd threw her a little at first but then she fed off the crowd in her rounds and came away with an incredible result.

The road to Rio was especially long for Claire, who had qualified for London four years prior to Rio but she was too young to compete, being aged only 16. She trains six times a week, including sessions at the Queensland Academy of Sport. This is an enormous contribution, as she has to travel over two hours to go to that training. Claire is already looking to the future and is firmly focused on Tokyo 2020. It is an honour for me to take this
opportunity to put a focus on Claire for her contribution to the sport and for the incredible
collection that she makes to the community. She is an absolute credit to herself and to her
family, and those who know her revere her for her enormous talent.

Northern Territory Football League

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:39): Last week I was proud to attend the St Mary's Football
Club in Darwin, in my electorate, where we had a celebration to acknowledge a record for the
Northern Territory Football League when Iggy Vallejo, from the St Mary's Football Club,
played his 329th game. As I said, that is a record for the NTFL and it is a real credit to Iggy,
who is an outstanding Territorian and a great Australian. He is not only a talented football
player—he is a strong defender and he can attack—but also a great bloke, as is his brother
Chopper. I want to acknowledge the Vallejo boys, who are from a great family—the Vallejo
family.

Iggy wears the No. 4, which was given to him by Bruno Long, brother of AFL legend
Michael Long. Iggy Vallejo was a Clontarf mentor and is now with the Stars program. The
Stars program, like Clontarf, involves working with young Aboriginal kids at school, keeping
them engaged with school and mentoring them so that they can get through school, but the
Stars program is for young women. I went to the graduation of the Stars program at Casuarina
Senior College with the member for Lingiari last week. The program is amazing, as is the
work that they do, and I commend the program to the House.

Dawson Electorate: Sugar Cane Industry

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (13:41): Despite having crops
already in the ground and the best prices for years, most cane farmers have not signed cane
supply agreements with Wilmar because Wilmar’s proposed agreements deny farmers their
right to choice in marketing of their sugar. Singaporean miller, Wilmar, which own eight
mills in North Queensland, took out a full page ad in the papers last week to complain about
the poor publicity it is getting—but the publicity is completely justified. Wilmar’s ad did not
mention its failure to negotiate an on-supply agreement with QSL. Without this agreement,
canegrowers do not have the choice in marketing that Queensland legislated to provide.
Wilmar claims to be negotiating in good faith but facts say otherwise. Wilmar made details of
its offer to QSL confidential, stopping QSL from publicly pointing out the unfair nature of
that contract. But then Wilmar cherry-picked parts of the ‘confidential’ proposal on Friday and
emailed it to growers. If Wilmar truly believed that it was a fair and honest negotiation, it
would release all of the details of that negotiation.

When farmers asked for a seat at the negotiation table—after all, it is their livelihoods at
stake here—QSL agreed but Wilmar refused. If Wilmar does not give growers their right to
choice in marketing, there will be action. If Wilmar continues its push to turn canegrowers
into peasants, it will force the hand of government and the code of conduct that has already
been drafted will be legislated and enforced to ensure that a foreign corporation can never ride
roughshod over canegrowers in this country ever again.

Lindsay Electorate: Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (13:42): Today I rise to speak about a business organisation in my
electorate of Lindsay, the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce. The chamber has been
operating for nearly 90 years in our community, and hosts popular business networking events
which are incredibly valuable because they encourage the sharing of knowledge, they build a strong collective voice and they contribute to local business success.

It was my pleasure to introduce the chamber to shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen during the campaign and, as promised, I returned last week with our shadow small business minister, Katy Gallagher, to attend a forum to discuss the issues facing small businesses in Lindsay. I would like to thank the chamber members for their warm welcome. I would also like to congratulate the newly elected board: Kerrie Reeder, returned as General Manager; Gina Field from Nepean Regional Security; Wayne Willmington, of Vintage FM; Dianne Wright, from Wright Financial Solutions; and Jo Dickens from Kingswood Florist. They are supported by board members: Amanda Wyllie; Belinda Hill; Cathy Glanville; Mitchell Angel; and Gordon Henwood.

Since before I was elected, I made it a priority to meet with the business chamber executive to cultivate a relationship between myself and businesses in my community. Since then, the chamber has outlined its advocacy strategy, The Valley Vision—Advocating for Our Future, which was a collaboration of all members. It spells out 10 key areas where our community is either underperforming or not meeting the needs of the community or the businesses trying to operate. These are people who know our community best: the people who live, work, raise families and run businesses. Throughout this document there are 10 points of opportunity, and I note that the second Sydney airport was not identified as one of them. I congratulate the Chamber once again on their support for our community.

(Banks Electorate: Zoning Rules)

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:44): I would like to address a very serious issue in my electorate—namely, Canterbury Bankstown Council's proposal to create massive changes to zoning rules across many suburbs in my electorate. The council is seeking to change existing zoning to allow for large-scale high-rise development. We all acknowledge that some development is necessary to accommodate a growing population in Sydney, but it must be proportionate and appropriate, and these proposed changes are extraordinarily disproportionate and inappropriate.

To put that in perspective, under the proposal, the suburb of Padstow could see up to an additional 11,000 residents, close to doubling its size; the population of East Hills could more than double; in Revesby, close to 7,000 additional residents would be possible; and, in Panania, well over 4,000 additional residents could be accommodated under the plan. These are radical changes which will very fundamentally change the character of these suburbs in the southern part of Bankstown. The proposal from the council disproportionately affects the southern suburbs in the Bankstown region, and in my view that is entirely inappropriate.

It is critical that the New South Wales Department of Planning does not allow this bad plan to go ahead. I am asking New South Wales planning minister Rob Stokes to ensure that this excessive plan is not allowed to be implemented. If the plan is implemented, the character of southern Bankstown will change permanently, and that must not occur. (Time expired)

Medicare

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:45): In the dying days of the July federal election campaign, a desperate Prime Minister Turnbull assured Australians that they would ‘absolutely not’ pay any more to see a doctor, because of the Turnbull government’s six-year Medicare freeze on
doctor's MBS payments. The latest Medicare statistics show just how flaky that assurance was, with bulk-billing rates right across Australia falling. When bulk-billing rates fall, it means more out-of-pocket payments by patients or new co-payments are charged. Doctors warned—and keep warning—that doctors' fees will rise if the freeze is not lifted, but the Turnbull government continues to ignore them. Sadly, it will be low-income Australians, pensioners and the chronically ill who will be hurt most by the Medicare freeze, as statistics show that many of those people live in rural and remote Australia. They are already severely disadvantaged and have poorer health outcomes. The ongoing MBS freeze is an attack on Medicare. It is an attack that is hurting patients. The only person who misled Australians about Medicare in the election campaign was the Prime Minister, with his claim that patients would absolutely not pay more to see a doctor because of the government's Medicare freeze.

**Dunkley Electorate: Learn Engage Connect Young Parents Program**

Mr CREWTHER (Dunkley) (13:47): On Thursday, I was honoured to be present at the Learn Engage Connect Young Parents Program graduation ceremony, held by headspace Frankston and supported by Chisholm TAFE, Anglicare, the Local Learning and Employment Network and Youth Support and Advocacy Service. Learn Engage Connect is an integrated VCAL program supporting young and disadvantaged parents with education, family support and early childhood education programs for their babies and toddlers. This program has very positive outcomes, with the program itself and headspace Frankston both being award recipients in the past two years.

For many of these individuals, it was the first time they had experienced a graduation ceremony or significant recognition, so it was truly special to share the celebration with these incredible people, whom I would like to name: Meagan McMurtrie, Jess Stanbridge, Kat Whitehead, Kimberly Jennings, Corrise Tarr, Abby Simmons, Jess Marshall, Lisa Rangi, Taylor Stewart, Patricia Davis, Belinda Pagram, Katherine Smith, Candice Hogg and Raelene Wicks.

Headspace do wonderful work to keep vulnerable young people a part of our society and to ensure that they do not become isolated. I would like to thank Rose-Mary Dowling, the manager of headspace Frankston, for inviting me to be part of this important night and for all the work that they do in Frankston.

**Prime Minister**

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:48): The Prime Minister is not joining us in parliament today. He is not lost; he is in Lima for the APEC forum. But our Prime Minister has been a bit preoccupied in Peru. Instead of working with world leaders to build a prosperous vision for our region, he was looking over his shoulder, telling bemused journalists that the Australian opposition leader was a greater threat to world trade than President-elect Trump. Like Paddington Bear, the PM has been a bit lost in deepest, darkest Peru. He does 'try so hard to get things right', but this PM just does not know where he is going. He might as well have had a sign around his neck for passers-by saying, 'Please lead this Prime Minister.'

He has had a go at being led by the ideological extremists in his party room, waddling along behind Senator Bernardi and the member for Dawson on climate change, marriage equality and the republic. And now reports on the weekend suggest that he might try to waddle along behind the Labor Party on reforms to 457 visas. Well, he has got quite a bit of
waddling to do if he wants to catch up with Labor on the exploitation of temporary migrant workers. We have had a comprehensive policy on this issue since long before the last election. Since then, we have committed to further changes to ensure that Australians have a chance to apply for jobs before they are offered to imported 457 visa holders, who are more vulnerable to exploitation. But Australians who care about jobs should not get their hopes up about our Paddington Prime Minister just yet. As the Wikipedia entry for Paddington Bear says, this kind of story, 'typically ends with him messing things up in some way'. That is the record of our Paddington Prime Minister.

**Murray-Darling Basin**

**Mr DRUM** (Murray) (13:50): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources on his letter to the South Australian Minister for Water and the River Murray on the issue of 450 gigalitres of environmental water that sits within the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. It is on top of the 2,750 gigalitres that are set out within the plan as the allocation to be sent down the Murray River for the environment each and every year.

Quite simply, the letter points out the sheer impossibility of taking another 450 gigalitres of water away from productive agriculture and the communities reliant on that productive agriculture without causing significant social and economic damage. In the plan, it states that this water can only ever be sent down the Murray River if the net social and economic result is positive or no worse off. In Mr Joyce's letter, he points out the social and economic damage that has already taken place with the loss of so much water out of these communities and out of these irrigation systems.

The tirade of abuse from the South Australian water minister towards his Labor Party colleagues was quite unbelievable and, in my opinion, quite unforgivable. However, just as amazing as the tirade itself has been the number of Labor Party people, including the Premier, who have been falling over themselves to make apologies for the water minister from South Australia, saying it was simply 'robust discussion' and that he might have been under a little bit of stress.

**Indi Electorate: Back Roads**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (13:51): Spending by the ABC in rural and regional Australia is an investment, not a cost. I am looking forward to welcoming the chair, the CEO and the board of the ABC to Indi on Friday, 25 November, to celebrate the launch of the second series of *Back Roads* and the enormous success of the first series.

To the CEO, Michelle Guthrie: it is fantastic to have your support for rural and regional Australia and your commitment to spending. I ask that you and the board, when you come to Yackandandah, talk and you listen to the locals and come to understand what a creative, innovative and amazing community it is, and how important investment in rural and regional Australia is in its telecommunications. Come and listen and hear what we do with the wonderful resources that you share with us.

I would particularly like to acknowledge today and thank ABC regional manager Fiona Reynolds and the ABC Goulburn-Murray team: Bronwen O'Shea, Joseph Thomsen, Gaye Pattison, Erin Somerville and Tony Cattermole in Albury-Wodonga; and, in ABC Shepparton, Jan Deane, Matt Dowling, Warwick Long. Thank you for what you do in enabling the voice
of rural and regional Australia to be heard loud and clear. Thank you to Heather Ewart for her fantastic work with the Back Roads production. It is just an amazing appreciation of how fantastic and wonderful rural and regional Australia is. To the local people who have got behind Friday's event: thanks for all your work. You are a terrific team and I really look forward to spending the day with you.

Mates4Mates

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (13:53): I wish to put on record the great work being done by the veterans support group Mates4Mates. Last week I attended the opening of the Brisbane family recovery centre and national headquarters in Milton.

Mates4Mates supports current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members and their families. Their family recovery centres provide a friendly environment for mates and their families to access a range of services. Support for our veterans is vitally important. This year more veterans took their own lives than the entire casualty list of Australians lost in Afghanistan.

Mates4Mates membership has been doubling every year as awareness and demand grows. They have had 25,000 contacts already this year and provided 4,000 psychology consultations. Mates4Mates chief executive, Simon Sauer told me all about the veterans who acknowledge that they would have taken their own lives if they had not sought help from the group.

In related news, I welcome the government's recent announcements on its veterans employment initiative. Our ADF personnel leave the military with unique skills, and they can make a valuable contribution to business. And surely that is especially true given this government's strong vision for the defence industry and the advanced manufacturing and specialist support and service jobs being created here.

We need to do more to consider how ADF personnel and their skills translate to the private sector and how they can best take advantage of the opportunities post service. It is in everyone's interest to recognise the talents of our veterans and encourage the private sector to take advantage of that expertise.

Parramatta Electorate: International Olympiads

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:54): This year, 27 exceptionally gifted high school students, chosen from 150,000 students nationally, represented Australia at various International Olympiads. Of these 27 students, five were from the Parramatta area. I was lucky enough to meet with these five students from James Ruse Agricultural College last week. There were five chosen to represent Australia and all five were medal winners.

Kevin Xian won the silver medal at the International Mathematics Olympiad in Hong Kong. Maxwell Ding and Andre Lo won silver medals at the International Biology Olympiad in Hanoi, Vietnam. Simon Yang won the bronze in Tbilisi, Georgia at the International Chemistry Olympiad. And Daniel Ho won the bronze medal in Mie, Japan at the International Earth Science Olympiad.

Up until 2013, these students would have received the Australian Student Prize which consisted of $2,000, a certificate and much deserved recognition. I know that the cash prize would have greatly assisted their families in the costs associated with their travel. The Australian Student Prize was cut to $1,000 in 2014 and then abolished altogether in 2015.
These wonderful young men and I spoke at length about our education system, and they wanted so much more from it. For all their success at these olympiads, they wanted much more than they got. They were wonderful young men. We talked about music, we talked about space mining and we talked about phosphorus. I also met their mums, who were incredibly proud mothers. I wish these young men all the best for their future.

Boothby Electorate: Patritti Wines

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (13:56): In my maiden speech I noted that it was a particular honour to be elected this year because 2016 marks a number of public and personal anniversaries relating to my electorate of Boothby. One of those is the 90th anniversary of Patritti Wines. Patritti Wines was founded by Giovanni Patritti in 1926. He had left his home in Italy in 1925, bound for America. I am guessing it was somewhat of a surprise to him when he instead landed in Port Adelaide, South Australia.

Mr Patritti began leasing vineyards in Brighton, built a winery in the early 1930s and, by the late 1940s, owned a number of vineyards. In the 1970s, the next generation of Patrittis began making 100 per cent natural nonalcoholic sparkling grape juice from wine grape juice, in addition to a range of wines. Today, this forms a large part of their exports to markets such as China and Vietnam, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister learnt when we toured Patritti Wines.

Today, the third generation of Patrittis still work in the original winery and cellar door and are now the only fully operational, 100 per cent family-owned winery and cellar door located in an Australian capital city.

As Boothby residents and community groups know, managing director, Ines Patritti, is a generous-hearted community leader and, as a successful entrepreneurial business woman, is a personal inspiration to me. I congratulate them on their 90th anniversary this year.

Murray-Darling Basin

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (13:58): All South Australians were deeply disturbed by reports that emerged on Friday that the Deputy Prime Minister is planning to rip up the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. He is walking away from returning an extra 450 gigalitres to the river. This is an absolute disgrace.

The member for Watson, when he was environment minister, did what many thought was absolutely impossible—indeed, I thought it was impossible—that is, to strike the Murray-Darling Basin Plan with the states. It was a plan that would save the river and continue to provide water for irrigating communities. It was an agreement that was in the national interest. It turns to this government to walk away from that plan.

I was sceptical when this Deputy Prime Minister was made Minister for Water. But South Australians gave him the benefit of the doubt. They are not giving him the benefit of the doubt anymore. They are deeply concerned and he needs to come to the dispatch box and say he will not rip up the plan. He will not actually walk away from an agreement that returns 3,200 gigalitres to the Murray River. It is in irrigators' interests that the river does not die. We saw that in South Australia, where irrigators and environmentalists alike joined hand in hand to save the Murray. It is time that the Deputy Prime Minister did the same and protects this plan.
The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:00): The Prime Minister will be away today, and I will be representing him ably and well.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Freedom of Information

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to an FOI request about paid parental leave submitted to the Treasurer's office when he was social services minister. This request was rejected because it would have taken four days to consider the 550 pages of insults in which the Treasurer or his colleagues described working women as double dippers, fraudsters and rorters. Will he now apologise for describing working mums in such abusive and disrespectful terms?

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

Mr Pyne: The standing orders are pretty straightforward about questioning ministers on their previous roles, which they no longer hold, as a minister. As the Treasurer is not responsible anymore for social security, how could he be asked that question?

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned! I want to hear the Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: Ministers are asked when an FOI is put forward as to whether or not they are going to release the information. As Treasurer, that request would have gone directly to him. If you would prefer the question to be redirected to the Minister for Social Services then that can be done as well, but it is certainly the case that the Treasurer, as Treasurer, has made decisions on exactly this matter.

The SPEAKER: The question was about the minister's previous portfolio. I could, on a very strict basis, rule it as being out of order. What I will allow, given it is Monday and it is the start of a sitting fortnight, is an opportunity for the member for Sydney to rephrase the question. There will be one opportunity.

Ms PLIBERSEK: I will redirect the question. My question is to the Minister for Social Services. I refer to a freedom of information request about paid parental leave. This request was rejected because it would have taken four days to consider the 550 pages of insults in which the Treasurer or his colleagues described working women as double dippers, fraudsters and rorters. Will the social services minister apologise on behalf of the government for describing working mums in such abusive and disrespectful terms? (Time expired)

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:03): I thank the member for her question. Those terms that you have raised are not terms that I have ever used with respect to the issue.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!
Mr PORTER: They are not terms that I have ever heard the Treasurer use with respect to that particular issue. It is the case that, when you put in a freedom of information request of that nature, it covers any instance where any minister or any member of the executive has forwarded an article written in the press that has used any of the Boolean search terms that you have raised. It does not surprise me that a puerile request of that nature has been denied because of the outrageous amount of time that it would take to look through documents that include the forwarding of articles written in the media. It does not surprise me that that stunt has been declined by the departments, through advice, because of the amount of time that it would take up.

Water

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (14:04): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the Acting Prime Minister update the House on the investment that the Commonwealth is making into water infrastructure in the Mallee and around the country? Why is it important for hardworking Australians to continue reform that boosts productivity in our economy?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:05): I thank the honourable member for his question. It was great to get down into the Mallee to see the work that this government is doing in upgrading the water infrastructure; to have a look over the new water pumps that are lifting water out—a $120 million investment, of which we invested $103 million; to see the benefit that has for the 2,000 farmers who are going to be taking delivery of that water through the new pipelines which are taking the place of channels; and to appreciate the seven gigalitres of water that we are putting back into the environment as part of our obligations there.

But it is not just there we are working; we are also working in places such as the South West Loddon pipeline, with the construction of 1,200 kilometres of pipeline to connect the west Waranga channel with the Wimmera Mallee pipeline. This is making a real difference. This is a government that is actually delivering on water infrastructure, actually building water infrastructure, actually making sure our nation is a stronger place and making sure that we invest in the record turnaround we have had in agricultural exports. These pipelines—the Wimmera Mallee pipeline and the South West Loddon pipeline—will supply about 780 megalitres of water and will create an extra 130 jobs.

I also went to Gippsland with the member for Gippsland. There we noted what we are doing with the Macalister Irrigation District, with our investment there to work hand-in-glove with the dairy industry, so that we get a better return and a better outcome for those people as well. All through this nation we are hearing what the Australian people are saying, and they are saying they want the tactile delivery of real infrastructure—real infrastructure that takes our nation forward, real infrastructure such as you would see in the Rookwood Weir in the member for Capricornia's and the member for Flynn's electorates. In those areas, too, we know that with the construction of Rookwood Weir will see in excess of 1,000 jobs—well, in excess of 2,000 jobs, actually—and an extra billion dollars a year in income coming in to that district.

This is the story of a government that believes in water infrastructure, that is delivering on water infrastructure, and that has put $2½ billion on the table for further construction of water infrastructure. We are going to make sure that we leave this nation a better place, with the
same vision that we have seen before with the construction of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. One of the ways that this nation and this government can be clearly identified is that we are a government that believes in building the infrastructure for a stronger future and for a greater future; we are the government that has turned around our agricultural exports and the returns our nation has got, and we will be the government that delivers a better outcome for all those in regional Australia.

Paid Parental Leave

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:08): Under this government's latest cuts to paid parental leave, a woman working at Coles would lose 10 weeks of paid parental leave, a loss of around $6,700. Can the Acting Prime Minister explain to mums working at Coles why he thinks that cutting the amount of time they can spend at home breastfeeding their newborn babies is fair?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:08): I thank the honourable member for her question. I say that we are doing so much in this nation to make sure that we are both fair and responsible—because we acknowledge the task that was left to us by a Labor government: it was a previous Labor government that left us hundreds of billions of dollars in debt. And with every decision that we make, we have to deal with that task. The Australian people might have forgotten about the debt that the Labor government left for us, but might I remind them that when Mr Howard and Mr Costello left government, the treasuries were overflowing with money. Yet, through the term of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government, they just squandered it all, sending our nation hundreds of billions of dollars into debt, and now we are trying to deal with this issue. I would now like to refer the question to the relevant minister to finish the answer.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:09): I thank the member for her question, through the Acting Prime Minister. What might be worth explaining to the individuals you have described is the situation that exists at the other end of the Paid Parental Leave scheme. Of course, at the end that you are talking about, 91 per cent of all of the families that are completely unaffected by what we describe we would do are in the private sector—and yes, they are families, often, that work in Coles or Kmart or the like. What might be worth explaining to the kind of person you have described is: why is it fair that that person would be possibly having access to 10 weeks of their own employer scheme and then eight weeks of the government scheme—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PORTER: and yet someone on a median income of $71,000—on a median or average family income of $147,000; indeed, a civil servant who might earn $140,000—can get 18 weeks from their employer and an additional 18 weeks through the taxpayer?

I might also say to that person that you, shadow minister, have said on a number of occasions that the median income of the mothers who would be affected by the government's proposed policy is $43,000. And you have done that deliberately, on a number of occasions, to scare all of the mothers who will absolutely not be affected. Where you have said, for instance in your press release, member for Jagajaga, 'women who will be worse off on a median income of $43,000'—where you have said that, on a number of occasions: that is the median income of the mothers who are not affected at all by what we are suggesting! Not only have you unhitched your wagon from the truth, you have taken a fact and deliberately
misstated its opposite to try and scare mums into believing they would be affected when they would not be.

The SPEAKER: The members for Sydney, Shortland and Griffith will cease interjecting.

Economy

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:12): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline how an efficient and productive construction sector promotes economic growth and creates jobs for hardworking Australians? What is the government doing to ensure that investment in infrastructure and other major projects across Australia is not threatened by lawlessness and dysfunction in the building industry?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:12): I thank the member for her question, because she knows—representing the great state of Western Australia, and a very, very large part of it—just how important efficiency and productivity in the building and construction industry is, particularly to the mining and resources sector. Some $114 billion is the value of the work done in our non-residential construction and engineering construction industry in Australia. And we know that as a result of the lawlessness in the building and construction industry—which is defended by those opposite—the estimates of the increase in costs on investment, which costs jobs and costs wages, is another 30 per cent on top of that, which drives investment away from this country. Today we note that some $100 million in projects—which include the Wheatstone project, which the member is very familiar with—some $29 billion; the Gorgon project—$8 billion, and the North West Shelf LNG site—$2 billion—all affected by the lawlessness and practices of the unions, which are endorsed and sponsored by those who sit opposite by refusing to support the Australian Building and Construction Commission being restored—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat. The member for Moreton on a point of order.

Mr Perrett: Mr Speaker—

Mr Rob Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen will cease interjecting. I am trying to hear the member for Moreton—he knows that; he is about two feet from him. I am watching the member for Moreton. I am not looking across the other side of the chamber. If the member for McEwen does not wish me to hear the member for Moreton, I will happily move on.

Mr Perrett: Mr Speaker, under standing order 92(a)(ii): I consider it offensive that the Treasurer would suggest I support lawlessness on any building site. I would ask that the Treasurer veer away from that.

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton has heard my rulings on the robust nature of question time before. Whilst the member is entitled to make that point of order, if I upheld that there would not be many questions asked, and I do not think the member for Moreton’s colleagues would be pleased with him.

Mr MORRISON: If the member for Moreton is feeling so aggrieved, they can send back the $11 million that the CFMEU sent to those opposite. That is what they can do if they feel so aggrieved and offended at the suggestion about their refusing to support the Australian
Building and Construction Commission being returned: send back the cash. But they will not. They will hold onto it.

But there was a Labor leader who understood that there is a line that has to be drawn when we see the sort of offensive and lawless behaviour that we have seen in the construction sector. It was Prime Minister Hawke, who said this in January of this year:
The unions need to clean up their act and get their house in order … It just is appalling. I mean, I wouldn't tolerate it.

That is what Prime Minister Hawke said; he said he would not tolerate it. Mr Hawke said:
You know what I did with the Builders Labourers Federation—I would throw them out.

This Leader of the Opposition stands with the lawlessness in the building and construction industry and calls them the side of the angels. That is what he does. But an example has been set by former Prime Minister Hawke which he should follow. But we know he will not, because Prime Minister Hawke had the strength which this Leader of the Opposition does not have. He does not have the wit or the stomach to stand up to the union movement, which pulls his chain. He has always had his chain pulled by the union movement, and here they are leading him around the policy environment as he refuses to stand up as previous Labor leaders would stand up—but not this one. This is a weak Leader of the Opposition who does not have the ticker to be able to address these serious issues. So, no, they will not send the $11 million back. They will not deal with the serious issues of making union officials deal with the same accountability as company directors. (Time expired)

Budget

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:16): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. Reports today confirm that MYEFO will be released on 19 December and the deficit will be up. Why has the Treasurer today refused to confirm the government's own budget papers, which show a return to surplus in 2021, and isn't it the case that this government is so chaotic that it would prefer to keep its $50 billion tax cut for big business rather than retain Australia's AAA rating?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:17): I thank the honourable member for McMahon for his question. One only has to reflect on what the alternative is. When the alternative government talk about chaos, I keep on thinking about pink batts, and I think about cash for clunkers, and I think about hundreds of billions of dollars in debt. I think about citizens assemblies. What was that time when they all sat down on the carpet with a notepad to try to work out what they were going to do when they actually got into government—when Prime Minister Rudd sat down, or just Senator Conroy, full stop? When we talk about chaos, how could we go past the Australian Labor Party? How could we go past the whole retinue of madness which parades as an apparent political party with policy? If you want to talk about chaos, how about this: they got their new backpacker tax from Senator Jacqui Lambie. There is your new chief political adviser!

I would like to refer this to the Treasurer, because we have a lot to talk to you about if you want to know about chaos—chaos on your side.
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:18): Thank you, Acting Prime Minister. I thank the member for his question to this side of the House. In fact, on ABC's *RN Breakfast* on 13 May 2010, this is what the member opposite said:

The government—
that is, the then Labor government—

has returned the budget to surplus three years ahead of schedule.

He actually proclaimed a surplus on 13 May 2010, three years ahead of schedule. What I said on ABC Radio this morning is that we will return to surplus when expenditure is less than revenue. That is what I said. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work that out. But those opposite seem to have trouble with this proposition, because they were claiming that surpluses had been achieved when revenue was a fraction of expenditure.

What we have from those opposite, when you look at their fiscal prescription for the country at a time when ratings agencies are keeping a hawk eye on how things are progressing, is that their answer is to increase the deficit not just by $16.5 billion, getting rid of the company tax cuts for small business and everything else, but now by $16.8 billion. It has actually gone up since the time of the last election. So those opposite are wreckers of the nation's finances. The Australian people understand that, because they saw them do it for six long years.

Climate Change

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:20): My question is to the Minister for Environment and Energy. At the recent global climate summit in Marrakech, the United States climate envoy said that, because of rapid melting in Antarctica, current levels of global warming could see 1½ metres of sea level rise by 2050. In other words, even if the world stopped all pollution tomorrow, by the time a child born today reaches her 30s she would live in a world where the sea is 1½ metres higher than now. This is not a green group or climate activist saying this; it is the US government. Minister, given our coastal capital cities, what would be the impacts on Australians' homes, businesses and infrastructure if sea levels rise by 1½ metres?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Minister for the Environment and Energy) (14:20): I thank the member for Melbourne for his question, and I can inform him that this government is taking the challenge of climate change very seriously. In fact, the foreign minister and I recently went to Morocco, and we were representing Australia after having ratified the Paris Agreement and our commitment to a 26 to 28 per cent reduction by 2030 on 2005 levels. On a per-capita basis, that is one of the highest in the G20. Australia was praised for the work it is doing in carbon capture and storage, praised for the work it is doing in innovation and praised for the partnership it has struck with countries like Indonesia to work on deforestation. Unlike those opposite and unlike your party, I say to the member for Melbourne, we are being responsible in our targets. We have one eye on energy security and another on energy affordability, while we are also transitioning to a lower emissions future.

It is okay for the member for Melbourne to sip on his latte in the streets of Brunswick, to put his sandals up on the seat and say—

*Government members interjecting—*

*Opposition members interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. Members on my left and right will cease interjecting.

Mr Husic interjecting—

Dr Leigh interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley! The member for Whitlam!

Mr Bandt: On a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker: it was not a partisan question about policies. If the minister cannot tell us about climate impact on infrastructure, he—

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

Mr FRYDENBERG: I was informing the House not only about how successful we are, having met our first Kyoto target and beaten it by 128 million tonnes, and how we are on track to beat our 2020 target but also about how we have ambitious 2030 targets. But what I was also pointing out was that it is okay for the member for Melbourne to put his sandals up on the seat, sip his soy latte, sit in the streets of Brunswick and say that it is the end of coal—because he put out a press release saying it was the end of coal—and to celebrate the loss of jobs in the Latrobe Valley for the people of Hazelwood. Shame on him, when he joined with the Labor Party when they were last in government to pay $5½ billion to those brown coal power stations to keep their doors open.

The member for Melbourne does not understand that you need a smooth transition, one which encourages the resources sector and understands that coal is an important part of the energy mix. If you want to hear a summing-up about the Greens, you only have to listen to the former Prime Minister Paul Keating, who said, when he launched the member for Grayndler's election campaign:

I’ll tell you about the Greens … They are a bunch of opportunists and trots hiding behind a gum tree trying to pretend they’re the Labor Party.

They do not have to pretend they are the Labor Party, because the Labor Party has now joined them.

Building and Construction Industry

Mr MORTON (Tangney) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister outline to the House any recent examples of activities in registered organisations that would be eradicated through the establishment of a Registered Organisations Commission? What is standing in the way of this important reform?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:24): I thank the member for Tangney for his question and I can tell him that we are introducing a Registered Organisations Commission, because Australia needs an honest union movement so that hardworking Australians have a growing, productive economy based on knowing that they can have faith and confidence in the honest union leaders who represent them.

The evidence that this Registered Organisations Commission is needed is mounting every day. The member for Tangney might like to know in fact that just last Friday, unfortunately, a former secretary of the National Union of Workers, a close friend of one of the members in this House, and a former accounts manager of the National Union of Workers were arrested...
on 172 fraud charges involving the alleged theft of $870,000 from their hardworking members—172 fraud charges between two former union leaders of the National Union of Workers, totalling $870,000 in alleged fraud against hardworking Australians. We on this side of the House want to eradicate that kind of practice. The Registered Organisations Commission will help that happen.

And who is against it? In fact, some of the expenses that were being used by one of these alleged fraudsters would certainly make the former member of this House Craig Thomson blush.

**Mr Champion:** You could have them anywhere—like the Victorian Liberal Party!

**Mr PYNE:** I will not mention him in this House, being a good Catholic boy, but I can tell you—

**Mr Pasin interjecting—**

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Barker and the member for Wakefield!

**Mr PYNE:** if members would like to investigate it—it would make Craig Thomson blush.

**Mr Pasin interjecting—**

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Barker is warned!

**Mr PYNE:** And what is standing in the way of this? The Leader of the Opposition is what is standing in the way of the Registered Organisations Commission bill passing the Senate this week. One has to ask why—why is the Leader of the Opposition opposed to having a commission that assures we have honest union leaders running honest unions? It is about judgement. The Treasurer spoke earlier about weakness as opposed to the strength of Bob Hawke. This Leader of the Opposition lacks judgement. He supports union leaders, like those in the CFMEU, against hardworking Australians. He wants to water down the border protection laws and send messages to the people smugglers to say that we are open for business again. He supports putting Senator Kitching into the Senate when she has been referred to the Commonwealth DPP for investigation and potential prosecution by the trade union royal commission. He has allowed his shadow ministers to put the US alliance in doubt. On so many different subjects—whether it is border protection, national security or trade union reforms—this Leader of the Opposition shows that he is not up to the job. He lacks the judgement to be Prime Minister of Australia unless he changes his mind about the Registered Organisations Commission bill.

**Taxation**

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (14:27): My question is to the Treasurer. If the government drops its plan for a big business tax cut which costs the budget $50 billion, will it be more or less likely that the budget will be in balance in 2021?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Treasurer) (14:28): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to engage in the hypotheticals of the member opposite. The mid-year statement will come out on 19 December, it will take account of the various datasets that will be available at that time, and the member opposite will be in a position to observe what the outcomes are at that point.

I do know that back in 2013 he looked to his mentor and said this:

… Keating knew that the corporate tax rate needed to be cut to make Australia competitive, that capital and investment would flow to tax-competitive nations and that this was an important job-creation move.
That is what the member opposite said. Today he has walked away, as he has now for many months, from the deep convictions that he once held about the importance of having a competitive tax rate, not just for all businesses but for small businesses as well. A business with a $2½ million turnover employing 15 people—the shadow Treasurer thinks that sort of business should have a higher tax burden than what the government is proposing.

He asked about what the impact on the budget would be if we were to follow the path of those opposite, who would seek to impose higher taxes on small businesses. I ask him: what does he think the impact on the budget is going to be if they continue in their approach of blocking $19 billion in budget savings measures?

Yes, they got dragged kicking and screaming to support $6 billion in measures that they actually put in their own estimates before the budget, but $19 billion—and that's just over four years. No wonder they took to the last election an increase in deficit of $16½ billion that has now increased to $16.8 billion.

So, if those opposite are deadly serious about dealing with issues on the fiscal scene, they need to get serious about passing the savings that the rating agencies—the IMF and others—have made very clear are measures that need to be passed to ensure that Australia's fiscal position is as resilient and as strong as it can be. The only party standing in the way of that are those opposite—those opposite who want to continue to run up expenditure, run up taxes, run up debt and run up deficits. They learnt nothing from their six wasted years in office and they have learnt nothing now from the four years of wasted time in a policy desert in opposition.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:30): Before I call the member for Forde, I inform the House that joining us in the chamber this afternoon is a delegation of ASEAN parliamentarians. On behalf of the House, I extend a very warm welcome to you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Tourism

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. Will the minister outline how Australians working in the tourism sector will benefit from the 2018 Commonwealth Games? What support has the Commonwealth coalition government given to the 2018 Commonwealth games, and is the minister aware of any risks to the timely completion of games infrastructure?

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (14:31): I thank the member for Forde for his question. I know, like the other Gold Coast members, he is personally very excited about the upcoming 2018 Commonwealth games. In fact, yesterday marked 500 days until the Gold Coast hosts the 2018 games. It will be one of the biggest sporting events in Australia this decade and the largest ever hosted by the Gold Coast.

The coalition recognises the significant benefits that will be associated with hosting 6,600 athletes from 71 nations in front of some 1.5 million spectators and an estimated television audience of around 1.5 billion people. The games will attract more than 100,000 visitors to the Gold Coast and generate an estimated economic boost of some $2 billion, as well as leaving a legacy of good quality sports and other infrastructure for the city. That is part of the
reason why the coalition government has invested $156 million in the Commonwealth games, and I was pleased that we were also able to secure an extra $15 million for the redevelopment of the Metricon Stadium precinct, including the facilities for the Gold Coast Suns.

I note the member for Forde also asked about risks to the timely completion of the Commonwealth games infrastructure. I have to say that, unfortunately, yes, there are risks to that the infrastructure will not be completed in time for the Commonwealth games. You see, the unlawful activities of good friends of the Australian Labor Party, the unions, in particular the militant and extreme CFMEU, are providing a direct risk to the successful completion of games infrastructure and indeed of the games village for the athletes themselves.

For months, we have witnessed the CFMEU deliberately causing delays, threatening safety officers and blowing out costs for Commonwealth games infrastructure. Only last week, we saw reports of sabotage on the Commonwealth games village of Parklands. We saw the CFMEU—no doubt being very good-natured—lodge yet another complaint about the Parklands site, claiming concerns over safety. What we saw reported though was that there were a large number of pins, used to support the actual scaffolding around the sites themselves, that mysteriously vanished.

The CFMEU officials claim that this had nothing to do with them and had nothing to do with Grocon, even though, quite strangely, it just so happens that the militant and extreme CFMEU are in dispute with Grocon over an EBA. That is the reason the Labor Party and this Leader of the Opposition simply cannot be trusted to make decisions in Australia's national interest. They are not putting Australia first; they are about putting unions first. (Time expired)

Schools

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. The National Party education minister in New South Wales, Adrian Piccoli, said about Labor’s plan for extra school funding:

… the Nationals supported the Gonski reforms right from the start. It's good policy, that really benefits country schools and country kids … we don't play politics with our children's future.

Does the Acting Prime Minister agree with his Nationals colleague, Adrian Piccoli, or will he continue to make excuses for the government's policies of cuts that will see every country kid in every country school worse off?

Mr Chester interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport will cease interjecting.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:35): I thank the honourable member for Sydney for her question. Might I say that not only are we putting more money into education than they ever did, but each year we are putting in more money than we did the previous year. So what we are actually seeing—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned.

Mr JOYCE: is that the Labor Party have a direct interest in this. Their interest is with the Teachers Federation to make sure that one of their champions, who hand out for them at every
polling booth and who have nothing in mind except to get rid of the coalition government, continues to be supported.

I can say that since about 1988 there has been a doubling in real terms in the education funding for our students in this nation. But one of the things we are dealing with, unfortunately, especially under Labor governments, is that our PISA levels against our other trading partners have been falling. What we can also acknowledge is that the Labor Party has this—almost—vendetta against independent schools, a vendetta against Catholic schools and a vendetta against anybody but the people in the public school sector. We say that it is a person's choice where they send their kids and we want to support that choice. It is one of the clear differentiations between our side of the House and their side of the House.

Our belief is not only in a strong public school network but also in a strong private and independent school network. Ours is a belief in people's choices, a belief in the Catholic school system, a belief in the independent school system and a belief in the Lutheran school system. What we always get from the Labor Party is a diatribe that is punched out by the Teachers Federation because they are their union mates helping them out.

If there is one group of people who are always looking after regional Australia, it would be the National Party and our Country Liberal friends, because we believe in actually living there. We actually have seats there. We actually represent the people there. Of course, whenever you try to go to the Labor Party and talk about—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Member for Sydney, that's your final warning.

Mr JOYCE: a greater investment in regional areas by decentralisation, by moving people out, who fights against this? It is the Australian Labor Party—any excuse at all just to keep them poor. That is how the Labor Party thinks.

So we are proud of the work that we are doing in education. We stand by the fact that we have greater funding, but we are not going to follow the dictums of the teachers federation of Australia. We will make sure we look after the needs and the aspirations of the students.

Ms Burney interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Barton is warned.

Economy

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. Will the minister advise the House why it is important to maintain the rule of law in Australian industry? How will the government's ABCC and registered organisations commission boost Australian investment and support jobs for hardworking Australians?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:38): I want to thank the member for Robertson, who has a great interest in construction, in industry and in development and who is somebody in particular who has overseen the plans, the pledge and the promise and will oversee the delivery of the Gosford medical school. That is why she is concerned about real-world delivery of construction projects and the timely delivery of construction projects.

The construction sector in Australia employs a million people. It represents nine per cent of the workforce. It represents eight per cent of GDP. But it could be stronger still if there were
fewer disruptions and therefore more projects commenced and therefore more jobs created—construction industry jobs that could be created which are not being created now. We saw today, of course, that these disruptions are now up to affecting over $100 billion of projects in the work that is being done by the CFMEU. You say, 'That's an extremely large number,' and the Treasurer has gone through a series of the projects, but let's take this down to the level of the sorts of projects that are being affected.

We know that in Victoria prisons are being deferred by the CFMEU. I can understand why, but so are hospitals. We have the Queensland children's hospital, which is being disrupted; the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where Jimmy O'Connor—it is a big family—was part of a finding of the court which delivered a $100,000 fine against CFMEU members where he pledged to go to war in relation to the Royal Adelaide Hospital; The Florey Institute of Neuroscience & Mental Health; the Ku-ring-gai hospital in New South Wales; and the Perth Children's Hospital. All of these have been subject to CFMEU disputes in which they are opposing any action when they oppose the ABCC legislation and the ROC legislation.

You ask: why would they do that? Why would they oppose action to clean up our hospitals? And what is it we have said? We have seen a story here on the front page of The Courier Mail which begins: 'Who's really the boss? Bill Shorten secured the leadership of the ALP with the help of a secret back-room deal with the CFMEU to vote down the construction watchdog.' So what he is doing is trading the jobs of blue-collar workers for his own job. He is not the friend of the worker; he is the puppet of the union leaders and he is trading in the very people he pretends to represent. I am happy to table that. (Time expired)

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:41): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. Can he confirm that he doctored his Hansard, forced out the departmental secretary who dared to question his integrity, announced the relocation of the APVMA to his own electorate without releasing the cost-benefit analysis and is free-ranging against his colleagues on the Murray-Darling Basin contrary to his Prime Minister? Does the Acting Prime Minister agree that, with this trail of chaos and division in his wake, he is looking more like the Liberal Prime Minister every day?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:42): It's a little like having the drunk lecture at the temperance league! It is the most amazing thing. Let's try to go through the member for Hunter's allegations in seriatim. No. 1: I have never doctored the Hansard, and this has been dealt with over and over again. It is like the only feather you have got to fly with, and even that has fallen out years ago, and yet there you are, sort of strung up by a featherless wing. The next one: do we want to move APVMA? Yes, we do. We on this side of the House believe in decentralisation. We believe in not only moving APVMA to Hunter but moving RIRDC to Wagga and moving GRDC to Toowoomba. Yes, we believe in decentralisation. We believe in moving the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to Adelaide. We believe in the largesse of
our nation being spread more evenly across it. And, of course, what you believe in is just keeping it all in one little spot.

I acknowledge that we have a vision for this nation. We are proud of the turnaround we have seen in agricultural exports. We are proud that we are getting a better return through the farm gate. We are proud of the fact that, when we speak to the pork producers, they are getting record returns; when we speak to the sugar producers, they are getting record returns; when we speak to the cattle producers, they are getting record returns; and, when we speak to the meat sheep producers, they are getting record returns. We are proud of the work we do and we are proud of the result we get. We are proud of the fact that we believe in dams and that we are driving a dams project ahead. We admonish the Labor Party for the fact that, if they ever got into government, they would take away the funding for dams, because they have no vision. They are visionless. They are a philosophers club. That is all they are.

The other thing we acknowledge is that it is great that they have let the member for Hunter off the leash for his second question on a policy issue in a year! So that is good. We worry about you in our question time preparations, member for Hunter. We worry about you. We know how it goes: you would wander down, you would see the member for Watson and you would say: 'Please, can I have a question today? Please, can have a question today?' And he would reply to you something similar to what Mr Hunter down in South Australia replied to me, that sort of colourful invective, that: 'Today is your day. Today's your day.' And I would like to acknowledge the fact that he has managed to get above question 13. He has got above question 13, so you are having a good day in the office. So you should want to see more of me, because it is the only hope you have.

**Economy**

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (14:45): My question is to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer update the House on the importance of a strong economy to improve the budget and arrest Australia's debt? How does promoting investment in the Australian economy boost revenue to the budget and lift wages for hardworking Australians?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:45): I thank the member for Boothby for her question. I was in South Australia recently and spoke to many South Australian businesses who are looking forward to the introduction of the reduced company tax rate, particularly for small- and medium-sized businesses, because they understand that in the environment where we need Australians to be able to gain more working hours to improve their wages and to improve their earnings, then we need businesses to be in a position to enable them to do that.

Now, those opposite, want to keep businesses on higher rates of tax. How they think that is going to enable a business to give employees more hours of work is beyond me, but we know those opposite, when it comes to tax, can never get enough. And every time they see an estimate which shows some pressures on revenues, what they think they need to do is just keep squeezing that tax lemon as hard as they possibly can. But we know on this side, that we need to be able to support small business and medium-sized business, in particular, to ensure that they can give those employees who work in those businesses the opportunities. It is not just the coalition who believes that; in fact, at a time past, the Leader of the Opposition used to believe in these sorts of things. At the ACOSS event in March 2011, at a time when those opposite had a $47 billion deficit, this is what he said:
Reducing the corporate tax rate … sees more capital flowing into our domestic economy, which will then flow on to workers in the form of higher wages—thereby improving standards of living.

And because reducing the company tax rate is an economic growth instrument, reducing the corporate tax rate … is also an investment in the Australian people—including people who might now be on welfare and require the services of ACOSS members.

He said:

It frees up more capital for business to invest in skills and training and apprenticeships and mentoring—

……

This makes reducing the rate a productivity improver—given its more capital available per person in the company's workforce and more capital available for potential investment in research and development.

He summed up, saying to ACOSS:

Friends, corporate tax reform helps Australia's private sector grow and it creates jobs right up and down the income ladder.

What hypocrisy now from the Leader of the Opposition, who said that to an ACOSS audience, knowing full well giving companies the opportunity to give people more work and better wages—he now walks away from it. He claims it is to protect the budget, yet they refuse to support $19 billion in savings and, at the same time, having cashed out taking away the corporate tax cut, they still have a deficit which is $16.8 billion higher. This Leader of the Opposition believes in nothing and stands for nothing. If he were ever to have the opportunity to run a budget, he would run it into the ground. (Time expired)

Deputy Prime Minister

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. Yesterday, when speaking about the Acting Prime Minister's plan to dismantle the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, Senator Xenophon said, 'Barnaby was free-ranging the other day. It does not reflect whole-of-government policy.' Is the Acting Prime Minister aware who in the government communicated this message to Senator Xenophon and was the senator correct? Was it fair to describe the Acting Prime Minister as free-ranging?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:49): I thank the honourable member for Maribyrnong for his question. Obviously, it has an agricultural slant with his reference to free-ranging. But I would just like to quote to him the legislation as actually written by your member for Watson. Have a drink of water and have a listen to this: 'The efficiency contributions'—that is what the 450 gigalitres is about—to the proposed adjustments have to achieve less-neutral or improved socioeconomic outcomes.' Now, the person who wrote that is just sitting behind you; he is the member for Watson. So what we are actually talking about is what is in the plan. It is actually the reality of the plan.

What we are trying to do is work our way through this maze that has been set by you. And in working our way through this maze to finalise the plan, we have to have negotiations, civil negotiations. We had a crack at these civil negotiations and we went down and met a rather interesting chap, Mr Hunter. He had a few things to say—most of them old Saxon terms. We tried to actually continue on the discussion, but after he had filled the room with blue and got stuck into one of your colleagues, he then slammed the door—he had a couple of goes at slamming the door because he did not quite get it the first time—and then proceeded out into
a public restaurant where he continued his profanities until we made it to the door and started eating an ice cream. If that is what we call Labor Party negotiation, the Labor Party dealing with the problem, then I think somebody had something to answer for.

And might I remind you, the member for Maribyrnong, you have made statements about what you believe is appropriate and inappropriate, but you have been remarkably silent since this has been occupying every paper in the nation. Remarkably silent—we have not heard boo from you about what your views are on how a senior minister would treat other people's staff and just people of the public in general. Why on earth are you not saying something about this? Or is it the case that the member for Maribyrnong, the Leader of the Opposition, is one thing on one day, when he is in front of—I do not know—Fran Kelly, and something entirely different when it is one of his colleagues. So we will continue to work as hard as we can. We have invested billions upon billions of dollars in making sure that we finalise the plan. We are working towards it. We are making sure that we do everything we can to maintain the social and economic balance, in equivalence with the environment, so that we can actually provide the outcome.

And we would appreciate it if—my humble request is that—when we go to South Australia, to actually talk to the Labor Party minister, he stays for more than, like, 10 minutes in the meeting before he fills the room with profanity and charges down the street to eat an ice cream. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:52): I inform members of the House that we have present with us in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon former member for Macarthur, Mr Pat Farmer. Welcome back.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

National Security

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister please update the House on the importance of maintaining a consistent approach, to safeguard Australia's national security?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:53): I thank the member for Petrie for his question. As he well knows, under the coalition government Australia's reputation has been reinforced as a strong and reliable partner and ally in terms of our strategic and defence contribution to security challenges in our region and globally. We can be relied upon to support others. We are dependable. Most importantly, we are consistent in our approach to security issues, including border protection and defence.

We are prepared to advocate, to defend and to fight for our national interest while building stronger relationships with other nations and partners to strive for increased peace and security. A key to our global and regional standing has been the consistency in our approach. Other nations are clear about our values and for what and where we stand.

The contrast with the opposition could not be greater. Under this weak Leader of the Opposition, Labor's border protection policy is all over the place—it often depends on the time of the day—as they lurch from position to position. And it is clear that the Leader of the
Opposition has learned nothing from the catastrophic border protection failures when they
were in government. Not content with undermining our national security on that front, the
opposition has now proposed a downgrade to our security alliance with the United States. But,
once again, they are all over the shop, sometimes contradicting themselves within the same
interview or speech. It reminds me of Labor's position on the South China Sea. They have five
positions. Well, they have got four stated positions and a no position from the Leader of the
Opposition; that makes five.

It is instructive that when under pressure the opposition declares its bipartisan support for
the US alliance, but then it crab-walks away from the alliance by saying it is at a 'change
point', knowing full well that this kind of rhetoric from the Leader of the Opposition in the
Senate taps into that very rich vein of anti-American sentiment in the Labor left, as it seeks to
ever more align itself with the Greens on national security. The trend is clear: the Leader of
the Opposition describing the President-elect of the United States as 'barking mad'; the Leader
of the Opposition in the Senate calling for a downgrade to the ANZUS alliance. The Leader
of the Opposition is quite prepared to put our security alliance with United States at risk for
some cheap domestic political points at home.

The Leader of the House described the lack of judgement. Combine the lack of judgement
with his weakness—the Leader of the Opposition is a threat to Australia's national security.
Whether it is border protection, or whether it is our alliances, Labor cannot be trusted on
national security—no aspect of our national security.

Water

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:56): My question is to the
Acting Prime Minister. I refer to the Acting Prime Minister's previous answer. Given the 450
additional gigalitres is to be acquired through investment in on-farm infrastructure, how can it
be possible for there to be negative consequences for communities caused by taxpayers
paying for farmers to improve their infrastructure? Isn't it the case that the National Party is
simply looking for any excuse while the Prime Minister is away to tear apart the bipartisan
consensus on the Murray-Darling?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and
Water Resources) (14:56): This is a very special day. It is a very special day, now, on two
accounts: one is that I am the acting—

Mr Feeney interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: Well, I reckon I'll be over here longer than ever you will be! But the other
one is this: that is the first question from the Labor Party I have ever got on water. That is
how much concern—

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton is warned.

Mr JOYCE: they have for water. So it is a special day. Note it in your diary: on 21
November in the year of our Lord 2016, the Labor Party decided to ask me a question about
water! And I welcome it. It might be that we were doing such a good job there was nothing
worth asking a question about. They might have thought it was a strategic weakness.
But I thank you. I thank you for asking me this question, amongst other things, on the average price, because we have got $1.77 billion in the account; if you take out the $200 million for works and measures, that is $1.57 billion, and, for $1.57 billion, you have not got a hope in Hades of delivering 450 gigs—not a hope. Are you suggesting—and you might want to talk to the member for McMahon—that you are going to put more money on the table? If you are, I welcome it. I look at the member for McMahon; he has got his arms folded; he is not saying boo; he is not saying a thing.

And what we got—in the brief amount of time with the respected minister, or the person who is supposed to be the minister, in South Australia—was apparently that the Commonwealth would just fork out and pay for it; whatever it required, we would just find the money. We never actually found out where they are going to find the money from. And this is the issue—these are the complexities that we are trying to deal with. I say once more: we would appreciate it, if we take the effort—if we actually make the call to South Australia, write the letter to South Australia, go to South Australia and have the meeting in South Australia—if the minister from South Australia manages to stay there for more than 10 to 15 minutes before tearing out the door.

We are trying to make sure that we land the plan and have things work out. And I acknowledge: the first iteration, under the Labor Party—you did a good job on the second—was a complete and utter disaster. We were on the edge of, almost, civil disturbance. So it is a highly contentious issue. And we are doing everything in our power to make sure that we get this thing through. But we are going to require a bit more diligence and a lot more courtesy than we are currently getting from the Australian Labor Party.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (14:59):** My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on further steps the government has taken to facilitate third-country resettlement of refugees on Nauru and Manus Island? How does this demonstrate this government's commitment to protecting Australia's borders?

**Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:59):** I thank the honourable member for his question. I commend him on the work that he is doing at the moment in Victoria staring down the Apex gangs and the threat that those people are opposing to people in Victoria—a job that Daniel Andrews is not doing. It is actually quite shameful, but it is reflective of the weakness of the modern-day Labor leadership that they cannot stand up to unlawful elements in our society.

The reality is that we were charged at the last election with cleaning up one of the significant public policy failings since Federation—

**Mr Perrett:** You had been in office for three years.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Moreton is warned.

**Mr DUTTON:** that is, the 50,000 people that arrived on 800 boats and the 1,200 people that drowned at sea. We were charged with cleaning that mess up. We said to the Australian people that we would resolve this issue of Labor's making. We said that we would get children out of detention and we have. We said that we would close detention centres; we have closed 17 detention centres that Labor opened. We said that we would get people off
Manus and Nauru; we are in the process of doing that, and that is why we announced, only in the last week or so, the arrangement with the United States.

But what is very important is that people smugglers in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and elsewhere at the moment hear a very strong and consistent message from not only the Prime Minister but the alternative Prime Minister of this country. Australians are watching now and looking at this government cleaning up a mess of Labor's making. Labor put those people onto Manus and Nauru, Labor put those kids into detention and Labor created a policy which saw those people drown at sea. We have cleaned Labor's mess up. But, in trying to get people off Manus and Nauru, we are concerned—and I have been very open about this—about people-smuggling syndicates putting together propaganda and messages to try and get people onto boats.

The Australian people are watching in bewilderment at the Leader of the Opposition's actions right now. He is weak and incapable of showing leadership. The legislation we have passed before this House and which is now in the Senate faces defeat because the Labor Party cannot deal with the Left of their own party. This weak Leader of the Opposition will stand up at the next election and somehow try and convince Australians that he has the same resolve as this Prime Minister and this government to stare down the continuing threat from people smugglers. All I say to the Australian people is: do not look at what this Leader of the Opposition says but look at what he does. He says he is on a unity ticket with us when it comes to stopping boats and he does the complete opposite, and he fails every test. He is the great chameleon of Australian politics. He shows, yet again, that he is unfit to be Prime Minister of this country.

Migration

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:03): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Last week, when speaking about his immigration portfolio, the minister for immigration said:

The reality is Malcolm Fraser did make mistakes in bringing some people in the 1970s …

Which people was the minister referring to? Will the minister now apologise to Australia's hard-working migrant communities, including but not limited to the Vietnamese community?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:03): I am not going to be misrepresented by this great fraud of Australian politics—I can assure you of that. I am not going to be bullied by this union leader. That may have been his working life—he may have bullied people and he may have doublecrossed everybody he has come across in his working life, but I will not be bullied and I will not be demonised by this union leader.

I made the point last week that we do have concerns about elements within Australian society at the moment, in particular some of those people who have been involved in criminal activity—some of those people who have been involved in heading off to Syria and to Iraq. I am not going to allow the rest of the community, in Sydney and Melbourne in particular, to be defined by those small elements who are besmirching the vast majority of people within their own communities. I am not going to allow that to happen. But, at the same time, Mr Speaker, I will tell you what—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Lindsay and Parramatta will leave under 94(a).
The members for Lindsay and Parramatta then left the chamber.

Mr DUTTON: Where I see extremism, I will call it out. Where I see people breaking the Australian law, I will call it out. Where I see people doing harm to Australians, I will call it out. And I will tell you what else I will call out, Mr Speaker: this weak Leader of the Opposition. You cannot pretend to be the alternative Prime Minister of this country but not have the resolve to deal with these issues.

The SPEAKER: Has the minister concluded his answer? The minister has concluded his answer.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Australia-United States Relationship

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Defence Personnel. Will the minister advise the House what the impact of a change in the Australian-US relationship would have on Australia's Defence Force personnel?

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler and the minister for immigration will cease their exchange.

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) (15:05): I would like to thank the member for her question and note her commitment to the Defence community in her electorate of Capricornia. The member for Capricornia knows the value of having local communities involved in joint exercises between Australian and US forces. Her electorate plays host to the Exercise Talisman Sabre at the Shoalwater Bay Military Training Area and would also be the beneficiary of $2 billion in investment from joint Australian-Singaporean exercises.

Any change in the Australian-US relationship puts at risk the unique capabilities that benefit Australian Defence Force personnel. For example, the Force Posture Agreement, which will see up to 2,500 US Marines rotate through the Northern Territory, is a key enabler of our future security in the Northern Territory. The Force Posture Agreement was signed in 2014 and came into force in 2015. Australia and the US will share the costs for more than $2 billion in infrastructure investment in northern Australia, as well as the ongoing costs of the initiative over the 25-year life of the agreement.

This initiative is bringing a large amount of money into the Territory. It not only provides training for ADF personnel but stimulates the local economy. The member for Lingiari understands this. When US Marines first started exercises in the Northern Territory, he said: We have unique attributes which can now be shared in a more formal way with our comrades from the United States, and it's a very important part that we are playing as a community in that relationship and we should be very proud of it.

Yet it seems the shadow foreign affairs minister underestimates the extraordinary benefit of these links and the importance of our current relationship with the US. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs noted, the shadow minister wants to, sadly, downgrade our relationship with
the US. The local member, the member for Lingiari, is right to point out how important that relationship is, but what we want to know is: what does the Leader of the Opposition think? The Leader of the Opposition has a problem. His side of politics is divided when it comes to the most important alliance relationship we have. We need to know from the Leader of the Opposition: whose side is he taking? Is he backing his shadow foreign affairs minister or is he backing sensible people like the member for Lingiari? It is time the Leader of the Opposition owned up to his problem and told us where he stands. *(Time expired)*

**Migration**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. I refer to his previous answer. Which people, from which country, does the minister believe should not have been allowed into Australia when Mr Fraser was Prime Minister?

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:09): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The advice that I have is that, out of the last 33 people who have been charged with terrorist related offences in this country, 22 are from second- and third-generation Lebanese Muslim backgrounds. I am not going to allow people who are hardworking, who have done the right thing by this country, who have contributed, who have worked hard and who have educated their children to be defined by those people who are doing the wrong thing and have been charged with terrorist offences or have been involved in crime otherwise. If the Leader of the Opposition wants somehow to conduct a phoney debate in this country and not to be honest in relation to these matters, that is an issue for him.

We are doing all that we can, through our intelligence agencies and through our border protection agencies, to make sure that we detect offences before they occur and to make sure that we can disrupt these terrorist offences, in particular, before they take place. But I am not going to shy away from the facts. I hold up those people who have come from all walks of life—the Vietnamese who came in; people who have come in from Asia and from war-torn Europe; people who have come in from Lebanon and otherwise. Many people who have built this country over many decades deserve to be praised, but I am going to call out those people who are doing the wrong thing. If we pretend otherwise, my judgement is that we only compound these problems.

It is very hard to take anything seriously from this Leader of the Opposition when he presided over the greatest failing of public policy in this country's history, when they allowed the 50,000 people on 800 boats to come into this country. We are getting the balance right when it comes to the migration policy in this country. We have 18,750 people a year coming here under our refugee and humanitarian programs, we have a net migration figure of close to 200,000 and we are working on one of the best programs in the world to provide a second start in life for people—and we want them to do it in a safe society. I do not want people, whether they are longstanding or new arrivals to our country, being harmed. I do not want terrorist offences being committed in our country. I do not want people committing all sorts of
extortion and other crimes in parts of the country. I do not want that. I want a safe country, and I am going to do everything that I can in this portfolio to stare these threats down.

I am not interested in the politically correct nonsense that the Leader of the Opposition might carry on with. I want to make sure that we settle people in this country who want to take the opportunity given to them. We provide support services, education and housing, and many people—the vast majority of people—make an absolute go of that. But, for those people who do not, we should own up to our mistakes, we should rectify the problems and we should ensure the great future of this country.

**Employment**

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (15:12): My constituency question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline how the government is working to promote jobs for Australian workers in areas of high youth unemployment such as Leichhardt, which has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country at more than 27 per cent? Can the Treasurer advise of any alternative plans which put foreign workers at a competitive advantage in the Australian labour market?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (15:12): I thank the member for Leichhardt for his question. He knows what it is like to get a job when you are young and do whatever job you can get to start life. His first job, he tells me, was cleaning the bathrooms at the local train station as a 15-year-old. We know that Australians across this country want to work and want to work more. We know that young people want to be in jobs and they want to go and get those jobs. That is why in the budget this year we announced our $850 million youth employment PaTH program, which will get underway next year, which is about getting longer term young unemployed people into work, where they can choose a future which is completely different to being dependent on a life of welfare.

But they need the opportunities, particularly in regional areas, and that is why it comes as some great surprise to me that the Leader of the Opposition goes around beating his chest about how much he wants to support Australian workers but, at the same time, wants to offer a big, fat tax cut to foreign workers—people coming on 417 visas. He wants to cut their tax from 32½c all way down to 10½c. On this side of the House, we have put forward a sensible, practical proposal of 19c in the dollar, which ensures that backpackers who come to Australia take home and put in their pocket what they would get if they were working in Canada or New Zealand or the United Kingdom—but that is not good enough for this mob. They want to give foreign workers a tax advantage to go and pick fruit over young Australians who could go and do that work. They want to incentivise employers in regional Australia by giving foreign workers a tax cut for them to pay less tax than an Australian would in the same circumstance.

When it comes to foreign workers, we have had the Leader of the Opposition beating his chest about 457s, but he was the gold-medal standard in issuing 457s when he was responsible. This is the party of Mr McTernan who was on a 457 when he worked with Julia Gillard, for goodness sake! Apparently there were not enough media professionals in this country who could provide the former government with media advice that we had to get someone out on a 457.
Then there are the unions who are employing 457 workers hand over fist, which has been exposed by the Minister for Employment. When it comes to talking about supporting Australian workers, you need to look no further than the big fat tax cut the Leader of the Opposition wants to ensure foreign workers get by reducing their tax rate from 32½c all the way down to 10½c.

This issue needs to be resolved, and I am confident that we will be able to come to an arrangement with those in the other place who are keen to see this issue resolved. What those opposite have done is nothing more than their usual cynical playing of politics with the jobs of young Australians.

Mr Joyce: Mr Speaker, after a delightfully entertaining day, although I would like to go on and on and on, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

CONDOLENCES

Harris, Mr Bernie

The SPEAKER (15:16): I want to inform members of the recent death of Mr Bernard Harris. Bernie retired in 2002, having been the Chief Hansard Reporter. He worked in the parliament for 38 years, all of those with Hansard. He dedicated his career and his work to this parliament, and he took an active interest in parliamentary matters after his retirement. I extend, on behalf of the House, our sympathy to his family and friends, and I just wanted to pass on the news to members.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:16): Before I present the papers I might just associate myself with your remarks in relation to Bernie Harris. He was well-known to those of us who served in the parliament before 2002. On behalf of the government, I extend my condolences to his family and his friends. Public servants like Bernie Harris, who devote their lives to ensuring that our parliament and our democracy operates successfully and efficiently, should be lauded and praised. We are all very grateful to the staff and the support of all the members of parliament in this place and the cabinet. Bernie Harris was an exemplar of public servants in this building. It is sad that he has passed to a better place, but he can leave knowing that he left the country better off than when he found it.

DOCUMENTS

Parliamentary Service Commissioner

Presentation

The SPEAKER (15:17): I present the annual report of the Parliamentary Service Commissioner for 2015-16.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:17): 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.
BILLS
Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016
Second Reading

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

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (15:18): Before I continue my comments on the bill, I pass on my best wishes and friendship to our friends in the ASEAN parliamentary delegation and regret that they had to witness firsthand some quite offensive statements made earlier in question time by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection in relation to immigrants to this nation, immigrants who have built this nation and make—

The SPEAKER: The member will come to the substance of the bill. This is a piece of legislation; it is not the matter of public importance. She has other opportunities to express her opinions on those matters at other times of the day.

Ms MADELEINE KING: Thank you, Mr Speaker, apologies. In relation to the bill, which is the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016, perhaps the most significant reforms in this bill relate to increasing access to treatment for mental health disorders, which, thanks to the good work of support and advocacy services in this field, the Australian community is having a growing understanding about.

Around 150,000 veterans with service related disabilities are being supported by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and of these almost 50,000 have an accepted mental health disorder. This means that nearly a third of service related disabilities that are supported by the DVA are accepted mental health disorders. Increasing access to treatment for these disorders is a very good thing. Common conditions include anxiety disorder, depression, stress disorder and alcohol dependence. The stigma of mental health disorders has long been at issue in the greater community, but it can be an even greater challenge to deal with in the military, where Defence Force personnel are trained with a high degree of discipline, encouraged to deal with adversity and to get on with the sometimes dangerous task at hand.

In 2010, the ADF mental health prevalence and wellbeing study, which covered nearly half of all ADF members, found that within a 12-month period almost 18 per cent had sought help for stress or emotional, mental health or family problems. More than 27 per cent were concerned that reporting a mental disorder might result in them being treated differently. Almost 27 per cent of personnel feared their career might be harmed, and almost 37 per cent worried that reporting a mental health condition might reduce their opportunities for future deployment. The study found that personnel who were not deployed had the same rate of mental health disorders as those who had been deployed. That may say something about the challenges of military life quite apart from the challenges of active service. Sadly, the number of ADF members contemplating or planning suicide was found to be double the rate of the general population.

This bill seeks to remove delays and impediments for tens of thousands of eligible current and former members of the Australian defence forces by helping them secure early intervention and treatment for a range of mental health conditions. We know that experts
point out that early intervention in mental health conditions result in much more effective treatment and better outcomes.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a well-known condition facing many veterans, especially but not limited to those who have seen active service in recent theatres like Iraq and Afghanistan. Previously, Defence Force members were required to have either three years of continuous service or operational service and then lodge an application under the Veterans' Entitlements Act, and have a diagnosis confirmed to then be able to access immediate, non-liability health care. These rules meant that they were denied early treatment and the chance for improved health outcomes. It makes no sense to treat people who suffer the same conditions differently. After all, the impact of PTSD on the individual does not alter in scale according to their particular service record. Again, it just makes sense to treat patients with the same level of compassion.

This change will benefit those affected by post-traumatic stress disorder and a range of other conditions, including depression disorder, anxiety disorder, alcoholism and substance abuse. It will see an estimated 67,000 additional current and former ADF members become eligible for non-liability health care.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the advocacy of an old friend, Jason Parish, a long-time Army reservist of many years who has regularly brought to my attention this unfair restriction on gaining help by virtue of time of service. I hope the sensible changes supported by Labor are welcomed by Jason and his comrades in arms in the West.

Importantly, this bill also helps victims of abuse in the ADF who have found themselves ineligible because of the period of service in which they served. The issue of abuse—sexual, physical or psychological—has been a stain on our military. This provision goes some way to further addressing this issue by demonstrating compassion and justice to those victims. In relation to this challenging time in our Defence Force, I commend the actions of my friend the Hon. Stephen Smith who as defence minister did so much to shine a light on practices of bullying and assault. Without confronting this behaviour, reform in our Defence Force would have been impossible. In signs of great progress, our military have acknowledged the shortcomings in their culture and have done good things and worked very hard to ensure that a culture exists that meets the expectations of the community, from which Defence Force members come and to which they return following their service.

The other reform in this bill aligns the cut-off age for incapacity payments to the increased pension age. Again, this is a relatively small and routine change that benefits only a particular number of Australians each year, but it is a big and important change for the individuals concerned who will benefit from it. The stories of the brave women and men who have defended our country and ideals of Western liberal democracy around the world are part of the fabric of Australian culture. Our soldiers, sailors and aircrew have sacrificed so much, up to and including their lives. It is a debt we can never fully repay.

With this bill we can at least show our appreciation to both current and former ADF members. With it we can show understanding to those families who support both current and former Australian Defence Force members through thick and thin. I understand that the total financial cost of all of these changes to Australian taxpayers is estimated at just under $44 million by 30 June 2020. I am sure the Australian people would not baulk at this investment for the welfare of our current service personnel.
It has been my pleasure to speak on this very important bill today. I want to thank the shadow minister for veterans affairs, the Hon. Amanda Rishworth, for so eloquently putting the opposition's position and, indeed, I thank all speakers for their valuable contribution and support of this legislation. It is always heartening and powerful to see what can be achieved in this place when both sides of the corridor work together, and this has been one of those times.

It has been particularly heartening for me, the daughter and granddaughter and sister of service men, and a friend and colleague of those who have served, to speak on this bill today. The treatment of our service men and women and veterans will always be a priority for the Labor Party. With HMAS Stirling on Garden Island, in my electorate, I am committed to helping those who serve as best I can and I am committed to their families. It was a particularly poignant moment last Sunday when we saw HMAS Arunta slowly drift away from the docks of HMAS Stirling; a very moving moment. One can only guess what the emotions and feelings were amongst the families and service people going off to do their very hard and dangerous job.

I look forward to continuing to work cooperatively over this term of parliament to explore what more we can do for those who are prepared to serve this country and defend it when called upon to do so.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (15:25): I am particularly proud to speak on this Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget And Other Measures) Bill 2016 this afternoon. My mother was a war widow. Her husband was in the 2nd/28th Battalion and was killed while serving in New Guinea. So matters to do with our Defence Force members and veterans are very close to my heart.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work that is done by RSLs right around Australia and particularly those in my electorate of Forest. I also want to acknowledge, because I take part in the Defence Force program on a regular basis, this afternoon that I have Warrant Officer Sean Campbell spending some time with me in the House this week, in the reciprocal program, learning about the role of a member of parliament. I have had firsthand access to our outstanding people—they are not just great Defence Force members, they are absolutely outstanding people.

The launch of the program was held here today in Parliament House. I would encourage all members of this place to take the opportunity to spend time with our Defence Force members on deployment or wherever the opportunity comes. It gives you firsthand experience of what life is like wherever our Defence Force members are serving. You get to see how well they are trained and how passionate they are about their work. It is also good for them to have access to members of parliament, and they can talk directly to us about the issues they face whilst on deployment as well as issues faced by their families.

I am particularly pleased to talk about this bill today but, more importantly, to talk about the people who will be better off as a result of measures in this bill. We do recognise very well that our current and former Defence Force members develop a range of mental and physical conditions and the earlier they seek treatment the more effective the likely health and other outcomes will be. So streamlining the process is particularly important. That is one thing contained in this bill. Delay causes uncertainty and greater stress on the applicant veteran, especially if that has to come from a range of government departments and sources. That is the sort of thing this bill is amending and it is contained throughout this bill.
Simplifying the process is particularly relevant when you consider that around 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the Defence Force will become eligible to receive NLHC treatment for mental-health conditions, should they have need of it as a result of this. The proposed changes will remove administrative and financial barriers to accessing mental-health care for past and present Defence Force members and will allow them to seek treatment as quickly as possible. It is an important part in achieving good long-term outcomes and increases the likelihood of an individual returning to a healthy and productive life. That is what we want to achieve, whether it is as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, alcohol-use disorders or substance-use disorders. They are some of the issues that the government, in our budget, committed $37.9 million to extend eligibility for.

The changes proposed by the government in this bill will provide much greater support for our veterans and their families. I think it is critical for the coalition government to continue the support for our great service people and veterans. Nobody who understands the sacrifice of service and risks faced by our military personnel could possibly begrudge them the support that they require following their service. This government does not and will not forget our service men and women once they start receiving their pension payments.

While I am here, I want to talk about the 11th/28th Battalion. I look at our reservists, who do an amazing job, and I look at the 11th/28th in my part of the world. Just last Sunday, the Royal Western Australian Regiment battle group, the 11th/28th, had an Army training session in Bunbury. They showed the community how the development of life skills, with leadership and teamwork, is part of that training. People got the opportunity to see the actual equipment that they use and to talk to real soldiers. They saw some of the training and were able to find out more. I am hoping that more young people in my part of the world choose to sign up to be reservists and perhaps consider entering the Defence Force.

The 11th/28th came out of what was the 2nd/28th, in which my mother's first husband served. Jack Leonard was his name. He saw service in the Middle East as well as in New Guinea. He was one of the oldest people in Western Australia to enlist in World War II. But, at that time, the war was well and truly on our doorstep and he could see what that meant for his family and his community. He was killed on the banks of the Busu River in New Guinea. It was a very rough crossing of the Busu River, and, during the night, the particular servicemen had to patrol the beach because the Japanese had a very strong foothold and were using their machine guns to keep our forces back. Jack and a 19-year-old serviceman were the forward scouts. They had to dig a hole on that beach that night, whilst the Japanese fired intermittently over their heads. It rained all night, and they had to try to keep their rifles and ammunition dry and their noses out of the water as the hole filled up. The Japanese stormed the beach the next day. Jack was found with a ring of six dead Japanese soldiers around him that he had taken on in hand-to-hand combat in that particular battle. He was killed by a head shot from a sniper.

My mother was at home on the farm in Brunswick, and it was a very hot day. I read her diary, and in it she talked about the fact that the young girl from the post office rode her pushbike out to tell my mum and give her this telegram—in those days you got a telegram. My mum, with my two older sisters—these two dear little girls—got in her car, caught the train with her mother and went to a place called Bridgetown, a couple of hours away, to let
Jack's mother knew in person so that she did not have to hear simply by a telegram. I often think of the courage that my mother showed. That was replicated frequently by families in our part of the world. Between a couple of small towns, we lost 16 members of the Defence Force in that time. It had a profound effect right across the whole community, and it still does to this day.

While I am here, I really want to acknowledge those Defence Force members who are currently operating around the world on behalf of our country. Whether it is in Afghanistan, whether it is in border protection with Operation Resolute—and we have about 800 members there—whether it is Operation Paladin or Operation Mazurka, whether it is in Egypt, Israel or South Sudan, or whether it is in the Middle East areas of operation right at this moment in Iraq, I think we all take a very direct interest in the operations that we commit our service men and women to, and those in this parliament in particular take it very seriously.

The other thing I would like to acknowledge is their extensive work in emergency services support, particularly by the reservists. We see this particularly during bushfires and floods. I understand that during the current earthquake damage in New Zealand the HMAS Darwin was deployed to assist. These are often the things that we do not actually see but that happen on a regular basis. Nothing gives our Australian communities greater confidence than to see the members of our Defence Force arrive in their communities. They are very well trained, they are very capable and their capacity with logistics in very limited circumstances is just extraordinary.

I am particularly proud to have Warrant Officer Sean Campbell with us for this week. He has a very interesting history and lists his career highlights as time spent serving at sea during numerous operational deployments, including the first operational deployments for Anzac and Arunta, and serving as a career manager before assuming the position of ship Warrant Officer. He is an officer member of Engineers Australia, has done a range of things during his time and has served Australia in its Defence Force particularly well. While he is with us today, I will say thank you so much for everything you have done and for what your family has contributed, because it is not just the individual Defence Force member, it is the family as well who contribute to what happens.

I want to speak as well about the government's initiative in the Veterans Employment Program. We know that each year around 5,000 Australian Defence Force members leave Defence, and they want to pursue careers. We are encouraging more small to medium enterprises to see the opportunity that exists in these very well trained and capable people who are all very highly qualified. The government is pursuing a range of initiatives in this space, just another example of how committed the government is in assisting veterans or people who have chosen to leave defence for whatever reason.

I spent time in Afghanistan in 2007 during a deployment in Tarin Kot and in Kandahar. We went out to a forward operating base, Camp Wali, in the Mirabad Valley. I will never forget the two young men who gave us a briefing out there. They were very young men but the most capable young people that I have come across. That capability was replicated in each one of these Defence Force programs that I have had the honour of being able to attend. Nothing quite gives you the knowledge and experience as being on the ground. The other thing it does do is give Defence Force members a direct opportunity to talk to us as members of parliament.
and it is amazing how much very genuine information we as members of parliament got out of that particular engagement. I will probably value forever that opportunity.

I am particularly pleased to be able to support this bill today. The coalition government has taken numerous measures to support our veterans and will do so ongoing. But given the commitment that they and their families give to this nation, it is really the least we can do. I am proud to support this and I would say that if my mother were alive she would be even prouder of the work of this government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Lyons, recognising the member for Forrest's contribution, I do not know whether Warrant Officer Sean Campbell remembers but I spent a week on HMAS Anzac on patrol living in the stoker's mess in 2011 or 2012 and I would like to acknowledge his presence in the House today.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (15:39): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016. The health and wellbeing of our returned service men and women must be one of the chief priorities of any government on any day. When it comes to our veterans, bipartisanship should always triumph. That is why I am proud to be standing here today to support the amendment on this important bill.

This amendment will give equality to our returned soldiers and other service men and women similar to those of any other worker in Australia. Our veterans and their families deserve world class care and support; they do not need added stress to their life created by financial worries whilst going through health matters like PTSD, depressive disorder and anxiety disorder. No worker should be on less than their normal weekly earnings when seeking treatment for work related matters and this includes our highly regarded Defence Force men and women. This is important because, currently, when a member discharges from the ADF there can be a period of time before incapacity payment amounts can be determined and while superannuation entitlements are finalised. These periods can last months and have the ability to increase the health concerns of the veterans. Some members may experience financial hardship during this period. These amendments will enable veterans to receive their normal salary during this period.

Labor will always encourage and support measures designed to ensure that programs take account of the mental health requirements of veterans. Veterans' mental health continues to be an issue of significant concern, and an area in which Labor is committed to identifying where more support can be provided. Just recently I had the pleasure of presenting a certificate of appreciation to Mr Stephen Parley in my electorate, a returned serviceman who served in Afghanistan. Unfortunately Stephen has suffered many injuries and illnesses from his time serving and he spoke to me about the issue of producing evidence just to gain these entitlements. It was a fraught experience that no-one should have to go through. I thought: here is a man that has done the right thing by the country and yet, on his return, we expect him to jump through hoops to get the treatment he needs. One would assume this would be a simple process. Stephen is not alone; many face such a problem on their return. The thought of people serving our great nation, coming back to deal with a paper-shuffling process and then having to survive on less money than what they were being paid is overwhelming and, I think, un-Australian.
Australians have always come to the front when their country has called them. History tells us this in graphic and tragic detail. What is less detailed is the after effect on veterans—the injuries, the addictions, the family break ups and the silent deaths. Too often, these are the stories that go unheard. I am proud to say that Tasmania has a detailed history when it comes to serving. We have sent many young men, mainly young men, and some young women off to war to proudly serve their country. It was the Boer War in South Africa which really established the pattern of overseas military service as an essential element in defence throughout Australia's colonies. The frontline of Tasmanian defence since 1899 has always been on foreign battlefields. Tasmanians have travelled the world in the name of country and queen and perhaps will do so in our own name one day. About 860 Tasmanians served in the South African war. From 1901 to 1914, Tasmanian defence continued in the hands of a small voluntary force. A cadet system was developed, and universal military training for males between the ages of 12 and 26 was introduced in 1911.

The war did open deep divisions in our community, as those of us in the Labor Party well know, but there was almost universal agreement that Tasmanian interests were tied to the needs of the British Empire and that it was necessary for Tasmanians to fight overseas to help win the war. More than 13,000 Tasmanians embarked as members of many different units, including about 80 nurses and over 100 members of the air flying corps and others in the Royal Australian Navy. But nearly 75 percent were members of the infantry units of the Australian Imperial Force—the 12th, 40th, 26th and 15th Battalions—and the main artillery unit, the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade. The cost was high. More than half of the Tasmanians who went were casualties. Two thousand, four hundred and thirty-two were killed, and many more were wounded in body and spirit. They returned home heroes but broken. Support fell on few and it was demanding. Stories are only now being told about what those returned men had to face and the very little support that they had over the rest of their lives. Treatment was basic and it had a dramatic effect that could not be measured in those times. One can only imagine the poor veterans' issues that were bottled up and released through abuse of substances, such as drugs and alcohol, well before better support was made available.

During World War II, Tasmania's defence interests were again universally perceived as being served by contributing men and materiel to fight elsewhere. Tasmania itself, unlike other areas of Australia, was officially regarded as an 'isolated locality', not a likely target for attack or invasion. However, 5,000 people joined the Civil Defence Legion by the end of 1940, and Japan's entry into the war in December 1941 sharpened fears of air raids and submarine attack. About 31,000 Tasmanian men and women enlisted in the military forces, more than two-thirds joining the Army. The majority served outside Tasmania, either overseas or in other parts of Australia, and 1,066 died.

War in Vietnam resulted in Tasmania's largest military contribution since the Second World War, more than 1,500 Tasmanians serving there between 1965 and 1974. Seven hundred and four of them were conscripted national servicemen. Seventeen Tasmanians died in Vietnam. The introduction of conscription during the Vietnam War witnessed another reorganisation, to accommodate an increase in numbers. More recently, Tasmanian soldiers have continued that tradition, whilst serving in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, to name a few areas of modern conflict. It is these men and women who, on return, must have our fullest support, and I am pleased to say that these days I think we are better equipped as a society to
provide that support. That is one of the things that this amendment legislation today seeks to address.

In my electorate I have seen the great work that organisations like the vets club at Bridgewater, Mates4Mates, Gagebrook Men's Shed, PCYC and RSPCA do to encourage interactions with returned veterans. These organisations are bearing the load that we, in government and opposition, create when we send our service men and women off to war. The Headstone Project, which I have spoken of in this place, aims to ensure that no grave of a returned soldier goes unmarked. It is a project I fully support. Any assistance needed to care for and respect our veterans should be front and centre in this House, and it should be supported by all sides of this parliament.

The bill seeks to make three specific adjustments, and I support the three amendments as tabled in the legislation. Firstly, the amendments in schedule 1 provide for payments of interim compensation to incapacitated current or former ADF members while the actual amount of compensation is being determined. Secondly, it is recognised that, for some mental health conditions, early intervention can result in better outcomes for clients. Prior to this change, ADF members were required to have three years either continuous full-time service or operational service, to lodge an application with the Veterans' Entitlements Act and to have a diagnosis. Under these changes, clients will be able to access NLHC immediately and only need to have served one full-time day. It is estimated that around 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the ADF will become eligible to receive NLHC. This includes victims of abuse in the ADF who may have previously been excluded from NLHC coverage due to the period in which they served or the length of their service. Thirdly, schedule 3 aligns the incapacity payment cut-off age to the increases in age pension eligibility.

This remains a priority area for Labor. We will continue to work cooperatively with the government over this term of parliament to explore what more can be done to support those who have served and fought for our country. I truly believe it is our duty to do so, supporting the veterans who serve this country and risk life and limb. They deserve the best possible treatment when they return home, and I think the $43.6 million this adjustment will cost is some of the best spent money by this parliament ever. I will be a proud member of parliament when the day comes that I am able to look veterans in the eye and know they have been given the best treatment and support that any Australian government could possibly put in legislation.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (15:50): The Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016 reminds me of a number of things. It reminds me of a Vietnam veteran I met at the Bulimba bowls club on Anzac Day this year, who told me about having lost more of his comrades in the past year to suicide. It reminds me of a current serving member of the armed forces I spoke with on the day of the commemoration of the Battle of Long Tan. He spoke to me not just about suicide but also about the ongoing effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on people he had worked with and served with, who were still overseas or who were returning from overseas. It reminds me of the peacekeepers I have spoken to in my electorate, who have told me some harrowing stories of the work that they have done in places like East Timor and the ongoing impacts on their lives. It reminds me of a very young former soldier I met. You probably remember that Ben Quilty went over to
Afghanistan, commissioned by the Australian War Memorial, and produced an exhibition called *After Afghanistan*. I remember going to the exhibition when it was held in my electorate, at Griffith University at South Bank in Brisbane, and seeing the incredible paintings and meeting two people who had been the subjects of the paintings. One of them, as I say, was very young. He had joined when he was still a teenager and had gone over to Afghanistan. He would have been 22, I think. He had left the Defence Force. He was looking at what to do next with his life. He talked to me about the experience of serving over there and the experience of what it was like afterwards. But probably the most memorable part of that event was hearing someone older than me, a mature man, speak at the exhibition about his own work as a leader of soldiers in Afghanistan and seeing him cry in the middle of his speech, in front of all these people, and, in doing so, really talk about the impact of service on him.

This bill also reminds me of the memorial service that was held here at Parliament House in the last sitting week, conducted by the member for Fairfax and the member for Moreton and attended by the minister and the shadow minister as an acknowledgement of people who had been lost to PTSD and suicide following military service. It was a great service that was conducted just outside where we are now. One of the people present at that service was the widow of someone who had been lost and another was his daughter. I spoke to them after the service, and they were so pleased that this parliament was acknowledging the losses that have occurred as a consequence of PTSD and of suicide.

Only just this weekend, on Saturday, I held a mobile office and a young man came to see about an issue unrelated to military service. We got to talking and I asked him what he had done before what he was doing now—he is currently at TAFE getting ready to go to university and study engineering—and he said, 'I was in the Army and I had two tours in the Middle East.' I asked, 'Did you go to Afghanistan?' He said, 'I was there only really briefly,' and I asked what it was like. He said, 'While I was there I was a pallbearer.' There had been losses while he had been there. That made me think about these young Australians who go to very, very distant places and who do so not for glory, personal satisfaction or personal fame but out of a sense of duty, obligation and service. They are incredible people. It is incredible to think of voluntary enrolment in the defence forces and the willingness to go and serve.

My great-grandfather was a prisoner of war. I remember him still. My parents were young and my grandparents were young; so I have strong memories of my great-grandfather. He never spoke to me about that experience but, when my grandmother passed away a couple of years ago, one of her personal effects was something that I had never seen, and it was his diary from when he was a prisoner of war. She had kept it. I do not think anyone in my family had seen it. It is a harrowing thing to look at. He was a young man and he had two daughters when this was happening to him. My great-grandmother had taken them up to Yorkshire to keep them safe. So he was not as young as some of the other veterans.

The sacrifices that are made but also the fear of what might happen to you or the fear of the consequences and the impact of living on after your comrades have been injured, maimed or killed are things that everyone in this place should think about—and I am sure that all of us do think about. When we think about veterans, we really need to be very careful to ensure that those who are left—those who do survive, those who do grow old, those who are wearied by age—are cared for as well. That is why I think that this bill is so important.
PTSD is a serious medical condition, and that is why I am really pleased that the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation, which is based in my electorate, is undertaking some world-first research into PTSD for veterans. The foundation has partnered with RSL Queensland for that purpose. Since 2013, the RSL has given almost $7 million to the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation for this world-first research into PTSD. The foundation is talking to 150 Vietnam veterans who have been diagnosed with PTSD and 150 who have never been diagnosed. It is working with those people to understand the science of PTSD, to look at the genetics of PTSD and to look at the physical effects. I think sometimes the physical effects are not front of mind for us when we talk about it.

Some of the initial findings from the research is showing that, if you have PTSD, you are something like three times more likely to be acting out your dreams while you are having them, you are much more likely to have restless legs and you are much more likely to have fatigue during the day. And there is a range of other physical effects that flow on from PTSD. So I wanted to take the opportunity while speaking to this bill to acknowledge that that partnership is ongoing in Queensland and to thank the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation and RSL Queensland for the work that they are doing. They estimate that there are around 4,000 Australian veterans of Afghanistan alone who have PTSD. Of course, if you look at all of the conflicts and all of the people who have served, there would be many more. So I wanted to acknowledge them and thank them.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to thank those people who have served and to thank those people who are still serving. It is always a great honour as part of our role as federal members of parliament to participate in memorials and commemorations of conflicts and wars. Just a couple of weeks ago I was at a commemoration for the First World War. In my electorate there is a First World War memorial that was laid in 1916. It is one of the earliest war memorials in the country. We were commemorating the centenary of that memorial. One of the reasons it is such a great honour to be part of those commemorations is that you do get to acknowledge the work of people who have made sacrifices, people who have served, people who have not come back, people who still serve and their families. That was of course no exception, and I had the pleasure of speaking with people on that day. So, in the course of speaking to this bill, I really want to acknowledge and thank all those who make sacrifices in defending the nation. The work that they do is invaluable.

We cannot do enough to express our gratitude and, if we are sincere about that gratitude and we really mean what we say when we talk about those who have served when we go to those commemorations, that has to be backed up with genuine support for veterans. That is why I am pleased to support this bill today. It is a bill that will make adjustments. It will adjust payments of interim compensation to incapacitated current or former ADF members, which happens while the actual amount of compensation is being determined. Instead of being paid at the minimum wage while you are waiting for the determination, you will be paid above the minimum wage. It will be a compensation situation with recognition for what was earned.

As a consequence of this bill, there will also be some changes in relation to post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. It is estimated that around 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the ADF will become eligible to receive this particular benefit, the NLHC, and that
includes victims of abuse in the ADF as well. Finally, there is the alignment of the incapacity payments cut-off age to the increases in the age pension eligibility, which is a very important measure and one that advocates for Defence Force personnel in my electorate have been calling for for some time.

Looking after veterans is a priority for Labor. We have a great shadow minister in Amanda Rishworth. In the time that she has been the shadow minister for veterans' affairs she has done a lot of work to work with the community and to really speak with veterans about what needs to be done. She is continuing to pursue policy change that will continue to support veterans. I note that shadow assistant minister Brodtmann is also here with us today. She has been a tireless advocate for the Defence community, including for veterans and the families of Defence members. Every time ADSO visits me, I get a nice story about how great she is and what a wonderful advocate she is. It is really pleasing for me to be able to stand here and support a bill that I know she supports very strongly—as does the shadow minister—and to commend the bill to the House.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:02): Thank you very much to the previous member for those lovely comments. Also, I want to give a shout out to ADSO: I trust you are doing great work, that you are working with our fabulous shadow minister for veterans' affairs to ensure we provide to our veterans—those veterans who have served our country so selflessly—with the conditions and the support they deserve, and that veterans are acknowledged and, most importantly, are cared for as they age.

Our veterans and their families deserve world-class care and support, and Labor will always encourage and support measures designed to ensure that existing programs take account of the mental health requirements of veterans. Veterans' mental health is a huge issue at the moment. Everywhere you go, people are talking about it. I have spent a lot of time at Soldier On events. They do great work in terms of helping veterans—particularly young veterans coming back from Afghanistan—transition back into life. They do not just work with the veterans; they also work with the families. I am the daughter-in-law of a Vietnam vet, and my late mother-in-law always said that she got a different man back from that war. It is not just the impact that it has on that individual in terms of the effect, trauma and shock of war. It is also the impact it has on their spouse or partner and their family. We hear reports of intergenerational trauma. We see that from Vietnam vets and I am sure that it is bound to happen with our vets from Afghanistan too.

It is absolutely vital that we as a nation honour the service of our veterans—and honour the service of those who are currently serving as well—and ensure that they are supported, protected and safe when they return, because the incidence of mental health issues is increasing. We read about it more and more each day. This is because we are gaining a greater understanding of it. During World War I it was shell shock, and the treatment for that was pretty primitive and pretty barbaric and most people were shunned. A lot of people who experienced shell shock were shunned. It was the same situation in World War II. We are now gaining a greater understanding of the symptoms and the effects of trauma and also the symptoms and effects of the trauma of war and conflict. It is vitally important that we provide a sophisticated level of service and support to our veterans, because we have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of these issues and the many ways in which they manifest themselves.
As has been mentioned by the many speakers on this side who have been talking on Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016, the amending legislation makes three specific adjustments. The amendments in schedule 1 provide for payments of interim compensation to incapacitated current or former ADF members while the actual amount of compensation is being determined. Currently, applicants are paid at the national minimum wage amount while their claims are being processed, which can be less what they were earning at the time of the injury. I have had conversations with veterans about that.

It has also been recognised that, for some mental health conditions, early intervention can result in better outcomes for clients. Prior to this change, ADF members were required to have had at least three years continuous full-time service or operational service and then lodge an application under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act and then have a diagnosis. Under these changes, clients would be able to access the coverage immediately and would only need to have served one full-time day. It is estimated that around 67,000 additional current and former permanent members of the ADF will become eligible to receive this coverage, and this includes victims of abuse in the ADF who may have previously been excluded from coverage due to the period in which they served or the length of their service. This extension is limited to the following conditions: post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. Again, that just underscores the greater sophistication in understanding of the many different ways in which trauma can manifest itself: substance abuse, alcohol abuse, anxiety, depression and PTSD.

Schedule 3 aligns the incapacity payments cut-off age to the increases in the age pension eligibility. There are a range of elements that are covered in this—most importantly, those dealing with mental health challenges. Again, I just want to thank and acknowledge the work of everyone who has been involved in the consultation on this bill—and that it does acknowledge that there were gaps in the market, that there were gaps in coverage and that they have now been addressed.

I had the great fortune of attending, with the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, the 65th commemoration of two specific battles of the Korean War, Kapyong and Maryang San. The Korean War is a forgotten war. People still talk about the Vietnam War as a forgotten war but after my visit to this commemoration in Korea I believe that there is a very limited understanding of our involvement in the Korean War, and I do believe that it is the forgotten war.

As I said, we were there to acknowledge those two very significant battles in which Australian troops played a major role in securing really critical areas of land, at Kapyong and Maryang San. I want to thank the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, with whom I tagged along—I represented the Leader of the Opposition there—I am very grateful to him for that because it gave me the great pleasure of meeting eight extraordinary veterans. I do hope that they are listening to us now: Graham Connor, 1RAR; Les Hall, 1RAR; Gordon ‘Taffy’ Hughes, HMAS Sydney; Jack Lang, 3RAR; John Murphy, 3RAR; Les Powell, 3RAR; from the ACT, our nation’s great capital, Peter Scott, DSO, also from 3RAR; and Ray Seaver, 77 Squadron. These men were extraordinary. It was just such a privilege and an honour to be with them on this return to Korea. For many of them it was the first time since they left the country after the war.
What was so extraordinary was the fact that there was a genuine curiosity there. There was a degree of reservation and hesitation about returning to areas where they had lost mates—and there was that degree of reservation and hesitation. These men—we are talking mid- to late-80s to early-90s—had the constitutions of oxen. They were extraordinary. We were up at the crack of dawn. The pace was just constant throughout the day. We were getting to bed at nine o'clock. But there they were: chipper, chirpy, up at five in the morning, ready to take on the new program for the day, 'eating like pregnant sharks', as my mother says. They were keeping up with the drinking with some of those young things from 3RAR. They were breathtakingly resilient.

They were there to enjoy themselves and to commemorate and honour the mates they had lost, the contribution they had made and the contribution of the Korean people. So, if any of them are listening, I say: 'Hello to you all. I miss you. I missed you a lot when I got back from Korea. I must admit I really enjoyed our conversations. It was great talking to you about your experiences.'

They were just overwhelmed and amazed at the change in Korea in those 65 years. When they left, four million were dead—two million from Korea. The country was completely decimated by the ravages of war. There was poverty. There were people wandering around in rags, in tatters. There were people who had lost loved ones—relatives. There were people whose villages and houses had been completely blown apart, whose lives had been completely shattered. Then they went back to South Korea and saw what it is today. We went to Busan and Seoul and we saw this economic powerhouse that is Korea now. It is quite extraordinary. They could not believe the transformation of that nation. They acknowledge their contribution to it, but they attribute it to the strength of character, the courage and the bravery of the people of Korea, because it is quite a transformation in a very short period of time, particularly for a nation that went through a real hit with the Asian crisis in the late 1990s. And again their response to that was quite extraordinary.

Just going back to the Korean War—as I said, the forgotten war—18,000 Australians served, 340 died. Many of the Australians who went over to serve in the war were basically reconstructing Japan just after the Second World War, so they essentially moved over from Japan straight into action in Korea. This is something that not many people know: it was the first and the only United Nations initiated war.

The amount of Australians who served, the amount of Australians who died there, fighting to ensure prosperity for future Korea—the fact that it was the UN actively involved in this. There were 20 or 30 nations involved in it, and they also lost young people there. It was a significant international contribution to ensure the security and the prosperity of the Korea of today.

There are many wonderful stories that I gleaned from that commemorative visit but what I was really touched by was the fact that the vets were accompanied by young current members of 3RAR. I asked these young men, 'So how did you get chosen to come on this mission?' and they all said, 'It was our good looks.' I do not know about that but, anyway, they were there and they were respectful and decent and they are young soldiers of whom we can be proud. 3RAR made a significant contribution to the war. It was essentially where it was nicknamed 'Old Faithful'. 3RAR was there at the beginning and was there at the end, and you could always rely on 3RAR, Old Faithful, to be there to help you out during difficult times. So these
young men were there to commemorate some of their former members who had lost their lives in the Korean War. At Busan United Nations War Cemetery, they held little services at each of the graves of the members of 3RAR. They laid a poppy and they paid tribute and acknowledged the contribution that 3RAR had made.

I want to acknowledge, and make mention of, three extraordinary Australians because their stories kept coming up during the course of time that we were there. The first one really touched me. In fact, when I was told about this story by the historian, I burst into tears. I was a complete mess. She was used to it; she has heard this story a million times but, for me, it was a first. Sixty-five years ago, Sister Nancy Hummerston married her beloved Captain Ken Hummerston in Tokyo. Six weeks later, Captain Hummerston was in Korea when the jeep he was driving was blown up by landmine. He and his driver were killed in the explosion and were the first Australians to die in the Korean War. Captain Hummerston had been in Korea just six days and had been married for such a very short time. Nancy was heartbroken but threw herself into her work and returned to Japan to continue nursing. She never remarried and she devoted her entire life to helping veterans. Her one wish—and I hope I am going to get through this—was that when she died her ashes would be buried with him. It was about six years ago, I think, that those ashes were returned to his grave and she was buried with him, her great love—finally, beside the love of her life, Captain Kenneth Hummerston, 60 years after they last parted ways. Rest in peace—I did not quite get through that without getting emotional.

Another extraordinary Australian, Private Horace Madden—one of 29 Australians taken prisoner in the Korean War. He was a signaller with 3RAR and was captured at Kapyong on 24 April 1951. He was forced to march 300 kilometres in freezing conditions to Yalu River. Despite poor health and deprived of food, he defied his captors and gave the little he had to those more needy, and he died of malnutrition just months later—again, an extraordinary Australian.

It is a privilege to speak on this bill today and, most importantly, a privilege to honour the veterans of our nation and those who are currently serving. To those Korean War veterans, I look forward to seeing you again, hopefully next year when you are here, for another acknowledgement of your service. I miss you. Again, thank you so much for all you have given to our nation, to all the veterans who have given so much to our nation, to our people, to our democracy. Lest we forget.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (16:17): By way of summation to the second reading debate on the Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016, and on behalf of the minister, I would just note that the bill gives effect to three of the veterans affairs 2016 budget measures, all of which will benefit the defence and ex-service community. The first of the three budget measures will expand access under the Veterans' Entitlements Act to non-liability health care for certain mental health conditions for all current and for former permanent members of the Defence Force. The reference to the provision of non-liability health care describes treatment for conditions that do not need to be linked to the service of the member, and is regarded as being separate from any claim for compensation. To provide for the expanded access, the government has committed $37.9 million in the 2016-17 budget to extend eligibility for non-liability health care for five mental health conditions. Those are: post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, depressive
disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. The amendments being made by this bill will also ensure that access to treatment for the listed mental health conditions will be quicker and easier by removing the need for a formal diagnosis at the time the request for treatment is made.

The remaining measures both relate to the payment of compensation in the form of incapacity payments under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. The first measure will assist members and families by ensuring that interim incapacity payments will be payable at 100 per cent of the normal earnings of the member. That means that for a former Defence Force member, interim incapacity payments will match the regular salary payable at the time of discharge. Under the current incapacity payment provisions, the amount of compensation payable cannot be finally determined until superannuation entitlements are finalised by the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation. So this measure will ensure the appropriate level of support is maintained commensurate with the former Defence Force member's salary whilst the superannuation entitlements are being calculated.

The remaining measure will improve support for current and former Defence Force members and their families by aligning the cut-off age for incapacity payments with the increases in the pension age at which age pension will be payable under the Social Security Act. In most cases, incapacity payments cease when the current or former member reaches 65 years of age. In the circumstances where the injury occurred on or after the age of 63, the maximum of 104 weeks of incapacity payments will be payable. The amendments to be made by this bill will ensure that eligibility for incapacity payments will continue to keep pace with the scheduled age pension age increases. These 2016 budget measures are further examples 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 acknowledge the contribution to the debate of this bill made by the member for Kingston, the shadow minister, in which she noted the importance that early intervention can have in mental health treatment. This bill will ensure that we provide our veterans with the help they need as soon as possible. The member for Kingston also noted that the extension of eligibility and delaying of the requirement for a diagnosis are common sense changes that will have a huge impact. The shadow minister also noted that the other measures in the bill address the problems caused by the low level of interim incapacity payments to veterans. The government welcomes her support for another commonsense change that will increase these payments so that no veteran is left in financial difficulty. I would also like to thank on behalf of the minister, the member for Wright, for his point that while we might see physically fit veterans returning from conflict, we need to make sure that the injuries that are hidden are treated as soon as possible. The member for Wright has also made the point that in these commonsense changes, we are not just assisting veterans access to treatment they need, but that they are being provided with simpler and more streamlined systems.

Additionally, I would like to thank the member for Lingiari for his contribution to this debate. As a former minister for veterans' affairs, he knows better than most the challenges that face veterans and serving personnel. As he noted, this bill forms part of a broader canvas of reforms to ensure that all veterans receive adequate treatment and support when transitioning from service in the defence forces. It continues a tradition of bipartisan support for the veteran community.
Finally, I would like to recognise the member for Ryan's input in regard to her continual advocacy for our Defence personnel and veterans. Be it through supporting ex-service organisations that provide an important service for veterans in our community, improving care for older veterans receiving a pension or ensuring that persons transitioning to civilian life have resources and assistance readily available to them, she has been a steadfast supporter of veterans in her own community, and I thank her for her contribution.

This bill is not only a commonsense bill but one that will fundamentally change the way our veterans receive assistance for mental health. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (16:22): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Assistance Alignment and Other Measures) Bill 2016

Second Reading

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

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (16:24): This bill, the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Assistance Alignment and Other Measures) Bill 2016, proposes a number of technical amendments to strengthen the legislation to better achieve its original intention. It is not controversial.

Schedule 1 amends the date of effect provisions for the calculation of family tax benefit supplements in order to prevent payment of a supplement where an entitlement would have existed had the recipient complied with existing reporting timelines. Schedule 2 consists of contingent provisions, which repeal schedule 1 in the event that the government passes its family tax benefit supplement cuts and the changes in schedule 1 become redundant. Schedule 3 corrects an unintended consequence in the youth allowance rate calculator which results in underpayment of some youth allowance recipients.

As I said, the contents of the bill are not controversial, and so we will support its passage through the parliament. But I do want to take this opportunity to make it very clear that Labor does not support any further cuts to family tax benefit end of year supplements. I have had many, many people email me about this issue, so I want to make it crystal clear—and I am very glad that the minister is at the table—that Labor will not be supporting any further cuts to family tax benefit end of year supplements.

I want to speak briefly about the date of effect provisions in the bill. Family tax benefit is paid in fortnightly instalments, at a rate based on an estimate of adjusted taxable income. At the end of each financial year, reconciliation occurs, and the amount of family tax benefit paid
is compared with the amount of family tax benefit that would have been paid, had the actual taxable income been known, with the amount of any part A and/or part B supplements factored in. The reconciliation process therefore can result in either the creation of a debt or a credit. The reconciliation process is triggered by the lodgement of an income tax return or by seeking a review.

When a recipient of family tax benefit is not required to lodge an income tax return, they must notify the Department of Human Services in order to trigger the reconciliation process. The department must be notified within a year of the end of the relevant financial year that an income tax return was not required to be lodged. When notification happens more than a year after the end of the relevant financial year and the reconciliation result is that the recipient is entitled to receive a family tax benefit top-up or supplement, this amount is not paid as a result of the reconciliation occurring out of time. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal has interpreted the date of effect provisions to allow for payment of additional family tax benefit where the department was notified more than a year after the end of the relevant financial year. This is inconsistent with the intention of the original legislation and the practice of the department, and this schedule amends the legislation to ensure that this is not the case. So we do support the intention of the bill before us.

As we are talking about family tax benefits in this bill, I do want to draw the attention of the House to some very dodgy numbers that the Minister for Social Services has been taking around to newspapers, trying to scare people into accepting unfair cuts to vulnerable families. In a recent article in *The Australian*, the minister used a highly selective example of a single parent family with four children aged between four and 13. First, I would just remind the House that, according to ABS data, only around four per cent of single parents have four or more children. But, more significantly, the minister was completely wrong to say in the article that a single parent earning a salary of around $45,000 would be better off not working. As ACOSS stated in a statement, the government's example compared 'apples with oranges'. ACOSS stated that: 'a sole parent with four children is over $20,000 better off when in paid work on a wage earning the part-time median wage of $46,500 and over $25,000 better off when earning the full-time median wage of $61,300.' Greg Jericho of *The Guardian* described the government's figures as 'patently absurd'. Fairfax's Ross Gittins described it as a 'cock and bull' story. Ross Gittins suggested that the government planted it because it:

... wants us to believe the federal budget is close to bankruptcy but, in truth, it's this government that's nearer to being morally, politically and economically bankrupt.

Cassandra Goldie, the CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service, said the claims were part of a disturbing pattern. She said:

It appears to be a deliberate strategy to generate a story which creates this impression that we've got a social security system which is 'bloated and too generous' when the facts will show it's completely to the contrary.

So what we have here is the Minister for Social Services prepared to twist the numbers, prepared to cherry-pick figures to suit his political argument and, I am sorry to say, prepared to scare people with misleading numbers. You might ask: to what purpose? What is the ultimate objective of this scurrilous scare campaign?

I am concerned that it is about frightening the Australian people to try to force them into accepting unfair and unnecessary cuts, like those which we saw in the 2014 budget. This, I
think, is the ultimate political objective of this Liberal government—to try to scare people into accepting another round of harsh and unfair cuts. I am pleased to say that Labor certainly will not be letting this government get away with it. Just as we stood up to the cuts in 2014, we will do the same.

I just want to remind the House of the $8.5 billion that the previous Liberal government tried to cut from families. They wanted to remove family tax benefit part B from families when their youngest child turned six. They wanted to freeze indexation of family tax benefits. Every single Liberal member of parliament voted for these cuts. All in all, they would have meant that ordinary Australian families would have been around $6,000 a year worse off. Ten per cent of their income would have been ripped away. Of course many, many people fought against those cuts, Labor included. I am very pleased that many of them were abandoned by the government. Unfortunately, there are still around $2 billion worth of cuts in front of the parliament that this government does want to take from families.

We will support this bill today, as it is a technical bill. But we certainly will not be letting this government get away with a misleading campaign that targets vulnerable Australians. We certainly will be standing up for Australian families and be holding this government accountable for what can only be described as an outrageous scare campaign.

**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) (16:32): By way of summation on the second reading debate for the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Assistance Alignment and Other Measures) Bill 2016, as was noted by the shadow minister for social services, the bill does introduce amendments in the social services portfolio to reinforce the time period for income reconciliation for certain family tax benefit recipients for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years, and to correct an unintended consequence generated by the youth allowance rate calculator.

Amendments will be made to the date-of-effect provisions to clarify long-standing administrative practice in relation to the payment of arrears of family tax benefit. In effect, the amendments will ensure it is clear that an individual cannot be paid family tax benefit supplements and top-ups where they notify that they were not required to lodge an income tax return more than one year after the end of the relevant income year. This will ensure that the legislation is clear so that review agencies such as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal will apply the law as intended when reviewing these matters. The amendments also ensure consistency with the equivalent time frame currently applying to families who are required to lodge a tax return for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years.

While the amendments are technically retrospective in nature, they merely strengthen existing provisions to put their interpretation beyond doubt. It is worth noting that there will be no material effect on the family tax benefit recipients for these years given the one-year time frame has been in effect since the 2012-13 year and has been communicated consistently to recipients since that time. One year is considered a reasonable amount of time for families to notify Centrelink that they are not required to lodge and/or provide details of types of income not included in a tax return in order for reconciliation of their family tax benefit entitlement to occur.
This bill does not prevent extensions to the period of time available for recipients to notify that they were not required to lodge where there were special circumstances that prevented them from fulfilling their obligations on time. Such extensions continue to be available under the current subsection 32J subsection (2) of the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999. This bill also does not prevent those recipients granted an extension under the above-mentioned subsection from being paid family tax benefit supplements and top-ups as a result of notifying that they were not required to lodge an income tax return more than a year after the end of the relevant financial year. These amendments will ensure that full effect is given to the original 2013 realignments of the time period for income reconciliation budget measure and that the intent of the family assistance program is met, which is to deliver financial assistance to families to help with the cost of raising children when it is needed.

The bill also includes contingent amendments to remove reference to family tax benefit supplements in the event they are phased out as part of the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2016, which is, of course, designed to improve the sustainability of the family payment system. The bill also introduces amendments to correct unintended consequences of amendments that were made in part 3 of schedule 1 to the Social Services Legislation Amendment (More Generous Means Testing for Youth Payments) Bill 2015 to the youth allowance rate calculator in section 1067G of the Social Security Act 1991. It is intended that the rate calculator produce a fortnightly rate. Currently, there is an inconsistency in that step 1 of the rate calculator is expressed as an annual amount while subsequent steps are expressed as fortnightly amounts. The result is that comparing the outcome of the subsequent steps from the calculation in step 1 does not generally provide the correct threshold test outcome and, in most cases, will result in a harsh outcome. This error occurred because the introduction of complex maintenance income rules from the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 which are predicated on annual amounts to the Social Security Act 1991, where payments are based on fortnightly amounts. The change that is proposed amends step 1 in the rate calculator to reduce the figure to a fortnightly amount consistent with the original intent of the changes as announced by the government in the 2015-16 budget.

It is also customary at this point to thank members opposite for their contributions. Of course, I do that. I note that the shadow minister, the member for Jagajaga, said that, whilst they are supporting this bill which is technical in nature, they will not support further cuts to the FTB supplement. I note the use of the word 'further' because, of course, you did not support a range of cuts for those people on incomes above $80,000, which was the complete end of their supplement. The use of 'further' was advisable because the support for that was a reversal of your position, because you opposed that prior to the election. You let millions of Australians believe that your position was to oppose any cuts to the supplements, but in the omnibus savings bill—

Ms Macklin: That is not true.

Mr PORTER: That is in fact true. In all the cameos that the member opposite used when they were talking about cuts, they would recall all of the supplementary cuts that we had made. They reversed their position, just like they did with respect to the asset changes to the pension and just like they did with respect to the schoolkids bonus. So I am sure that people
take all of the coldness of the cold comfort that is offered by the member opposite when she says that Labor stood up to these cuts. Yes, they did stand up to the cuts to the pension, until they stopped standing up to the cuts to the pension when it came to the assets test. Yes, they did stand up to the ending of the schoolkids bonus, until they decided not to stand up to the ending of the schoolkids bonus. Yes, they did stand up to ending FTB supplements until they decided to support that measure. In every instance that they said they would oppose something right up to the date of the election, they failed to do that and in the process deceived millions of Australians. In fact, they ran petitions collecting the signatures of Australians against changes to the pension assets test, at the very time that they were supporting that policy. So I thank the member opposite for her interjection because it simply offers another opportunity to point out the unbelievable barefaced hypocrisy of members opposite.

Ms Macklin: You misled the parliament again.

Mr PORTER: 'Misleading the parliament' is the accusation being levelled. You misled 24 million Australians by saying that you would oppose changes to the assets test on the pension when you, unfortunately, ended up supporting those, as you did with the removal of the schoolkids bonus and have done, at least in part, with the removal of some of the family tax benefit end-of-year supplement. So I thank the member opposite for her observations.

Finally, the measure ensures that the aim is to align parental means testing arrangements for youth allowance more closely with those of family tax benefit part A. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (16:40): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons): I call the member for Hotham and welcome her back to the chamber.

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (16:41): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am very pleased to make this contribution to the debate on the Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016. The Australian Labor Party has a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption. We are committed to fighting corruption in any form, be it corruption in business, corruption in politics, corruption in unions or corruption in
law enforcement. This commitment is backed up by a very strong track record in government. In government, federal Labor took important steps to ensure government integrity. We introduced whistleblower protections for public servants, we set up a lobbying code of conduct and a lobbyist register, and we implemented a code of conduct for the first time for ministerial staff. We also took steps to prevent corruption within law enforcement. We expanded the powers of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity and we strongly supported the then Australian Crime Commission.

The bill before us implements a number of changes to Commonwealth laws to assist state anti-corruption bodies. Labor supports state and territory efforts to tackle corruption. We believe that state anti-corruption bodies, such as the Victorian Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the new New South Wales Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, are a vital part of our national integrity system and play a critical role in ensuring public confidence in law enforcement. The bill before us updates a number of Commonwealth laws to provide the Victorian IBAC and the new NSW Law Enforcement Conduct Commission with powers to support their investigative activities. The bill updates Commonwealth legislation to provide these two bodies with the same powers as equivalent state and territory anti-corruption bodies, such as the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission.

Schedule 1 of the bill replaces references in Commonwealth legislation to the New South Wales Police Integrity Commission with its replacement body, the New South Wales Law Enforcement Conduct Commission. As part of this update, the bill removes the Police Integrity Commission from the list of criminal law enforcement agencies under the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act—or what we commonly call in this parliament the data retention legislation—and replaces it with the new LECC.

Being listed as a criminal law enforcement agency under the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act would enable LECC officers some pretty significant powers. In certain circumstances, they would be able to apply for stored communications warrants to access SMS messages and emails, require telecommunications carriers to preserve all communications relating to specific persons, and authorise the disclosure of telecommunications data prospectively for up to 45 days. These are very significant powers and have the potential to greatly affect people's privacy. It is for this reason that the bill before us was referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, the PJCIS, for review pursuant to the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act. That happened because of a reform that Labor put forward to the data retention legislation in the last parliament.

The PJCIS has considered the proposed legislation and particularly this question of substituting the Police Integrity Commission with the LECC on the list of criminal law enforcement agencies. The PJCIS has found that the investigative powers being provided to the LECC in the bill are approximately the same as those currently available to the Police Integrity Commission. However, while the nature and type of the LECC's investigative powers will be the same as the PIC, the range of conduct that may be subject to investigation has changed slightly. Despite this, the PJCIS in its review found that the powers of the new LECC will be comparable to those of other integrity bodies in other Australian states such as the New South Wales ICAC, the Victorian IBAC and the Western Australian Corruption and
Crime Commission. It is in light of those findings that the PJCIS supported the inclusion of the LECC in the list of criminal law enforcement agencies under the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act and recommended that this bill be passed.

Labor very much support state and territory efforts to tackle corruption. We also believe it is important to properly scrutinise legislation which may affect peoples' privacy, and it has been terrific to see that the reform and the PJCIS review are working so well. Following the scrutiny of this proposed legislation through the PJCIS review process, Labor will support the passage of this bill.

Alongside the changes I have talked about, there are some additional changes contained in this bill that relate to processes of crime legalisation. Specifically, the bill will close a loophole which currently allows criminals to use the exploit of their crimes through different financial structures that they can create to do so. In a recent case, the Supreme Court of Western Australia found that under current federal proceeds of crime legislation, a property will be considered to be 'lawfully acquired' if the initial deposit for the property is paid for with legitimate money even if the mortgage repayments on that property are made using proceeds of crime. This is obviously a significant loophole that would allow criminals to funnel the money they make from their crime into property investments, and that is something that cannot be allowed under our processes of crime regime. The bill will insert a new paragraph into section 336A of the Proceeds of Crime Act, which will see that issue addressed, and the change will ensure that property will be 'lawfully acquired' if the payments that are used to acquire and retain the property, either directly or indirectly, are also 'lawfully acquired'.

Subparagraph 336A(c)(i) will address situations where a person makes mortgage repayments using unlawfully obtained money, as this money is used to discharge a security on that person's legal and equitable interest in the property. It also covers rental payments made using unlawfully obtained money, which enables criminals to retain their properties. Subparagraph 336A(c)(ii) will address situations where a person obtains money under a loan contract, then pays off that loan using unlawfully obtained money. Finally, subparagraph 336A(c)(iii) will address situations of 'layered' liabilities which can be used to avoid penalties under the current proceeds of crime regime. They include, for example, situations where a person uses unlawfully obtained funds to discharge a loan, then uses the money from that first loan to discharge debts owed under a second loan, and then uses the second loan to purchase a property.

The Commonwealth proceeds of crime regime is very important in the way that we try to tackle crime in Australia. It deters people from engaging in criminal activity by reducing the profits of the potentials of their crime, and it prevents crime by diminishing the funds that criminals can use for future crime. We are very pleased to see this amendment being made to try to tighten up our proceeds of crime legalisation. We support the closing of the loophole and the continued effectiveness of the proceeds of crime legislation.

In conclusion, this bill provides a range of important and necessary measures to bring our Commonwealth laws up to date with changes in state laws and to close the loophole that I have discussed in the proceeds of crime regime. Labor supports this bill and its many measures to assist state and federal agencies to combat crime and corruption.

All up, although there are a number of acts that it amends, there are three basic things that this bill does. Firstly, it supports the establishment of the New South Wales Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, known as the LECC and its inspector. Secondly, it aligns the independent broad-based, anti-corruption commission in Victoria investigative powers with those available to other state anti-corruption bodies. Thirdly, it amends the Proceeds of Crime Act to clarify the definition of 'lawfully acquired' to address issues raised by the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police v Huang 2016 in the West Australia Supreme Court.

One thing that is important in this bill is that it talks about alignments of different policing statutes that we have. We have in this country, of course, each state with its own separate police force, its own separate set of laws and its own separate set of crime statistics. I think it is very important that we do as much as we can to get alignment across those different jurisdictions to give us a better handle on exactly what the areas of crime are that we are tackling. One example that I would like to give demonstrating the importance of alignments is some of the recent crime statistics that we have between New South Wales and Victoria. To start with, for Victoria we only have some figures for the year to date June 2016, while the New South Wales figures are for 24 months to the year June 2016. So they are not exactly apples for apples in timing, but they do give us somewhere to start of a reasonably similar period of time. Also, the categories of crime do not align, so where we have reporting of crime statistics, we are again not getting apples-for-apples comparisons, but we are getting something reasonably close, and this is what I think needs more alignment.

Let's firstly look at Victoria. For the year to 30 June 2016 we have seen, in Victoria, assault and related offences up by 11 per cent. We have seen robbery in that state up 14 per cent. You would think New South Wales would have similar figures. Although these are for two years, where we have seen robbery up in Victoria by 14 per cent in New South Wales robbery with a weapon is down 25.9 per cent, robbery with a firearm is down 41 per cent and robbery with a weapon not being a firearm is down 22 per cent. This is a massive discrepancy between the two states, which gives cause for a greater federal look at these issues to see why we are not getting alignment. Let's look at another statistic from Victoria. We see theft in Victoria, in the last 12 months, up an incredible 19.2 per cent. We are talking something like another 30,000 incidents of theft reported in Victoria. It is 19.2 per cent up in just 12 months.

What are the comparable figures for New South Wales? There is not a specific theft category but we do have some other categories we can look at. In New South Wales motor vehicle theft is down 12.6 per cent. Stealing from a dwelling, in New South Wales, is again down 6.6 per cent. Stealing from persons is again down 9.9 per cent. In comparison with Victoria, we have seen theft up 19 per cent.
Here is another statistic. We have seen in Victoria dangerous and negligent acts endangering people up an incredible 23 per cent. Also in Victoria are public nuisance offences up 30 per cent. This is in a 12-month period. Public transport regulations offences in Victoria are up 33.3 per cent, one-third. Yet in New South Wales we see the exact opposite. Malicious damage to property in New South Wales is down 3.2 per cent. Break and enter from a dwelling is down 7.2 per cent.

This is the reason we need to look at the individual crime statistics from our different states. We need to try and get some alignment here. The figures and the discrepancies between New South Wales and Victoria are stark and alarming. With that, I commend this bill to the House.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (16:55): I thank the member for Hughes and the member for Hotham for their contributions to this debate. The Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Bill 2016 demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to supporting state and territory governments in tackling corruption and misconduct and depriving criminals of their proceeds of crime.

The bill supports the establishment of the New South Wales Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and its inspector. The bill provides the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission with access to information obtained under the Commonwealth interception regime, similar to other state anticorruption commissions. Access to such information is vital to enable the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to prevent, detect and investigate law enforcement corruption and misconduct.

The Commonwealth interception regime provides safeguards, in relation to how agencies that receive intercepted material are able to use that material and communicate that information. This bill will also ensure Victoria's Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission's powers under Commonwealth law align with those available to equivalent state anticorruption bodies. These powers are a critical tool for the commission to discharge a critical integrity and oversight role.

The bill will also make minor amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to ensure that property acquired unlawfully is not kept by criminals and protected from the reach of this act. The methods that criminals use to retain proceeds of crime are constantly evolving and the government is committed to ensuring that the law also evolves to address these methods.

Currently, there is uncertainty as to whether a court can examine the source of mortgage repayments in determining whether a property that is subject to the mortgage is lawfully acquired. This bill removes that uncertainty. It will require courts to examine layered loans, leaseholds, mortgage repayments and other seemingly legitimate payments related to the property in determining whether the property is lawfully acquired. This is essential to ensure criminals are deprived of the proceeds of offences and undermine the profitability of criminal enterprise.

This bill is an important step in ensuring that anticorruption and law enforcement agencies responsible for combating serious criminal activity are able to access investigative tools that are imperative to supporting their functions and also to making sure that criminals cannot keep their ill-gotten gains. I thank the support of the House for its passing.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (16:58): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill. I also ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) and (2) as circulated together.

Leave granted.

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

(1) Schedule 1, item 12, page 7 (lines 19 to 28), omit paragraph (dc) of the definition of permitted purpose in subsection 5(1), substitute:

(dc) in the case of the Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission—dealing with (by reports and recommendations) conduct amounting to:

(i) agency maladministration (within the meaning of subsection (6A)) on the part of the Commission; or

(ii) officer misconduct (within the meaning of section 122 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016 (NSW)) or officer maladministration (within the meaning of that section) on the part of officers (within the meaning of that Act) of the Commission;

whether or not the subject of a complaint; or

[permitted purpose]

(2) Schedule 1, item 19, page 9 (before line 1), before subsection 5(7), insert:

Permitted purposes—Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission

(6A) For the purposes of subparagraph (dc) (i) of the definition of permitted purpose in subsection (1), agency maladministration in relation to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission has the same meaning as it has in the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016 (NSW) in relation to the NSW Police Force or the Crime Commission.

[permitted purpose]

I thank the opposition for their support of the bill and also of these amendments. These amendments are purely to accede to a request, from the New South Wales government, that we received last week. The amendments ensure that the bill supports the full range of oversight functions of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the amendments expand the purposes to which the inspector of the conduct commission can communicate, make use of or make a record of telecommunications interception information under the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 to include maladministration by the conduct commission.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (16:59): We welcome the government's proposed amendments to fix its original drafting to ensure that the inspector of the LECC is able to undertake the same oversight role as the former inspector of the Police Integrity Commission. I do want to make the point that it is actually through the PJCIS review process that the error was identified and raised by the New South Wales government. The review of legislation like this via the PJCIS is a reform that Labor fought for and won as a condition of our support for the government's
data retention legislation. Again, it is really great to see that process working so well and picking up the error that the government has made here. The inspector is going to perform a very critical role overseeing the LECC, and we are pleased support this amendment.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (17:00): by leave--I move:

That this bill now be read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Customs Tariff Amendment (Expanded Information Technology Agreement Implementation and Other Measures) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (17:02): Australia's participation in world trade organisations is particularly important. Countries that trade together and engage in enterprise and commerce together are less likely to have disputes and are more likely to engage in amity and goodwill amongst countries. Australia is a willing and important middle power in that field and we have participated in many, many organisations internationally which have improved trade, commerce and intercourse between nations.

This legislation, the Customs Tariff Amendment (Expanded Information Technology Agreement Implementation and Other Measures) Bill 2016, is important. This legislation comes under the World Trade Organization's expanded Information Technology Agreement, as does the World Customs Organization fifth review of the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, which we dealt with recently.

I will say at the start that Labor will support this legislation. Australia is a net importer of information technology and imports an estimated $18.9 billion worth of expanded Information Technology Agreement products every year. The bill will specifically amend the Customs Tariff Act to create new tariff subheadings to allow certain IT products to be separately identified, amend the customs duty rates for selected tariff subheadings so that they incrementally reduce to free and remove obsolete customs duty rates. This will reduce the size of the Customs Tariff Act.

In the 2016-17 budget, the government committed to reducing the customs duty rates for information technology products over time to free to be consistent with Australia's requirements under the World Trade Organization's expanded Information Technology Agreement. Those reductions will begin incrementally from January 2017. I must say the government has kept a fine line. It has just got this legislation in. It could have done it a bit earlier, but it has decided to bring it in at this late stage, and we will support it.
In certain circumstances, commitments were made to reduce the customs duty rate for particular goods within a classification while the customs duty rate for other goods within the classification will remain unchanged. This will require the creation of new tariff classifications to separately identify the subset of goods. The bill will reduce customs duty rates, with the amount and timing dependent on the particular category of items belonging to the particular group. It is expected this will benefit both businesses and individuals. It has an $80 million cost to the taxpayer, but we will support it anyway.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade undertook consultation with affected industries, which identified potential domestic manufacturers and suppliers that would potentially require a longer time to adjust to reduced prices of competing imported products. This input from industry is reflected in the two categories—phase-in rates at F and G—which account for eight of the tariff subheadings and will reach free by 2020-21. The staged categories A through to E represent 106 tariff subheadings and will achieve free by two years earlier, by 2019, for items like printer ink circuits.

Some Australian items will be affected by these changes, including speakers and car components, but, overall, I am satisfied the bill will provide opportunities for Australian businesses in new markets. As I said earlier in this very short speech, that is particularly important. It will reduce documentation requirements for those businesses currently claiming preferential rates or tariff concessions. Just for the information of those who might be listening, in 2019, for example, arcade machines, sound amplifiers, staple machines and cards incorporating magnetic strips will go to free. In 2021, car speakers, time switches, battery clamps on cars and other components in cars will go to free. It is expected that all changes will be effected by the middle of 2021.

Labor supports the legislation. It is important for there to be certainty in business, certainty in commerce and certainty internationally, and that is why Labor supports this legislation. As I said, the government kept it fine. The timeline is pretty close, but we see that the reduction in tariffs will begin early next year. We will support the legislation.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (17:07): I rise to speak on the Customs Tariff Amendment (Expanded Information Technology Agreement Implementation and Other Measures) Bill 2016. I follow on from the contribution of the shadow minister and will pick up on some of the points that he made. I am particularly interested in this bill and the benefit it will provide to Australia's digital economy, which has been valued in the past year at roughly $79 billion and has the potential to rise. It grew over the course of the year before that from $50 billion. It is through the use of cloud technology and through the things that we are using more and more each day such as smartphones and tablets that businesses are finding better ways of working, smarter ways of working, and more efficient ways of reaching customers and conducting business.

Digital technology is a big thing for us, particularly when it comprises at this point 5.1 per cent of total GDP. So anything that can be done to reduce costs needs to be welcomed and this Customs Tariff Amendment (Expanded Information Technology Agreement Implementation and Other Measures) Bill promises to reduce some of the costs to business through the purchase of information technology. We are a net importer of information technology. Those imports, as the shadow minister indicated, are nearly $19 billion worth of
expanded information technology agreement products each year. A huge amount of money is being spent on digital technology in this country, particularly by businesses. As I said, this is not a small amount of money when you consider the value of the broader digital economy to the Australian economy.

A lot of people have worked out that, for those businesses that actually get their act together and do embrace digital technology, it does pay dividends. I recently had the opportunity to read through a Deloitte Access economics report that was prepared for Google Australia. Deloitte Access have been doing work in this space for a number of years tracking what small and medium businesses are doing when it comes to technology, how they are using it and what it is doing to their business. Deloitte Access recently released the updated version of that work, and I commend them for it. It is important that the tech sector in this country demonstrates the value of digital technology to businesses and encourages others to take on digital technology, start engaging and see the benefit of it.

The Connected Small Businesses Report indicated that, for example, advanced Australian small businesses have reached greater levels of digital engagement compared to small and medium enterprises that have basic digital engagement. Those advanced businesses are 1½ times more likely to be growing revenue, which is a big deal for them. They are eight times more likely to be creating jobs. In an environment where there are those that are questioning whether or not technology and innovation are killing of jobs, this is an example where, if digital technology is embraced, it actually creates jobs. The Connected Small Businesses Report found businesses that are much more advanced in the uptake of technical digital technology and digital engagement are eight times more likely to be creating jobs. They are seven times more likely to be exporting. Why? Because they are opening up markets, opening up pathways to new customers and creating business opportunities rapidly. They are 14 times more likely to be innovative. They generate 1.4 times more revenue per employee and they have got a much more diversified customer base.

However, the report found more than 90 per cent of small and medium businesses are not taking full advantage of today's digital tools, with many business identifying inadequate skills as a barrier to making the most of the web. That is a big issue. The report itself, which is available online, does actually examine some of the reasons behind that. Some of the reasons put forward as to why businesses are not taking up digital technology to improve the way they run, to work smarter, to create more revenue, to be able to create more jobs is a belief that the digital tools themselves are not effective for their business. There are concerns around data security and privacy. There is a lack of skills and knowledge, as I referred a few moments ago, to using these digital tools either on the part of the business owner or their staff.

One of the big reasons why these tools are not being used is the concern around the cost of adopting them. This has been a big issue for quite some time. For a number of years, we have been raising the fact that there are big differentials between the prices that are being charged for Australian businesses here compared to their competitors. As I said, if you use those digital tools properly, you can open up customer bases not just on the domestic front but internationally. In Australia, our own businesses are being slugged much more for their software and for their hardware. Those costs, in actual fact, were the subject of a former Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications report that was brought down a couple of years ago entitled: What cost? IT pricing and the Australia tax.
The report talked about the big differentials in pricing that are imposed on Australian businesses, particularly small businesses, which has been my concern. That report was brought down in July 2013. It has been sitting there. We have called a number of times for the former communications minister, the member for Wentworth, now Prime Minister, to actually respond to it because being able to reduce the cost barriers for the uptake of digital technology within SMBs would make a big difference. It would not only improve the efficiency of Australian businesses but it would also mean that they could make more money, open up opportunity in new markets, hire more people. This would obviously be a great thing for the Australian economy. It would also obviously be a good thing for communities to have thriving small businesses in their area that are much stronger, hiring more people and providing opportunity for locals outside of our major cities.

Again, in the face of all the concerns, in the face of all the evidence, Professor Ian Harper, in his review of our competition laws, indicated that this was an issue and that we need to find ways to help people impacted by these price differentials. It has been shown time and again as a barrier that the government has failed to respond to. The report is sitting there. The former House of Representatives Infrastructure and Communications Committee report *What cost? IT pricing and the Australia tax* has been sitting there with no response. It is great to be able to reduce tariffs—that is fantastic—but that is a small portion of the total cost that is being faced, and, dare I say it, the benefit of that tariff reduction will basically disappear in the blink of an eye once there are, for example, any movements in currency. If the value of our dollar decreases, you will see a huge impact on pricing in this country. As I said before, we import $19 billion worth of product. This is a big deal.

If the government want to make an impact on this and want to see prices being reduced for small and medium enterprises in this country, particularly with the amount of technology that is required to ensure we get the most out of our digital economy, they should be acting on the report and they should be acting on what Professor Harper has said. They should be making sure that we reduce the cost impact on businesses, because of the longer term economic and community benefit that arises as a result of something that is becoming more and more pervasive, that is meaning something to businesses and that can actually change the way in which the Australian economy performs, particularly as other parts of the world are waking up to this and are moving very quickly to ensure that smarter businesses are taking a bigger share of their economy.

**Mr HAWKE** (Mitchell—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (17:15): I thank the opposition for their support and their contributions in relation to the Customs Tariff Amendment (Expanded Information Technology Agreement Implementation and Other Measures) Bill 2016. This bill amends the Customs Tariff Act 1995 to progressively eliminate customs duty rates on certain information technology products. The elimination of customs duty rates on these products will benefit Australian industries and consumers, through lower import costs. The bill gives effect to Australia's international obligations under the World Trade Organization's expanded Information Technology Agreement. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to

Bill read a second time.
Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (17:16): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (17:17): I am pleased to be speaking on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016. Labor acknowledges that the bill seeks to cover an important funding gap for current recipients of the mobility allowance. It is important that those who are currently receiving the mobility allowance are able to continue to receive continuity of support during the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The mobility allowance is a fortnightly payment of $93.20 paid to people who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance—because of disability, illness or injury—provided that they travel to and from home for paid work, voluntary work, study or training or to look for work.

In the 2013-14 budget the former Labor government agreed that funding for the mobility allowance was to be absorbed into the NDIS, with transport assistance to be provided through the NDIS for participants. This bill will introduce a 2016-17 budget measure to support transition of mobility allowance to National Disability Insurance Scheme participants. From 1 January 2017, changes will apply to the qualification criteria for mobility allowance for new claims and to the period for which mobility allowance is continued when a person ceases to be qualified in certain circumstances.

In addition, mobility allowance will no longer be payable to individuals who transition to the NDIS but subsequently cease to be NDIS participants. These changes will support transition from mobility allowance to the NDIS or other arrangements for continuity of support. Mobility allowance will cease on 1 January 2020, to ensure the NDIS is the main source of support for people with disability who need assistance to enable them to engage in the workplace and other economic activities.

We do need further information on the proposals in this bill, and that is why we have referred the bill to a Senate inquiry. We will reserve our final position in the Senate until completion of that inquiry, but we will not be opposing the bill in the House today. What we do know is that the bill will phase out the mobility allowance completely from 1 July 2020 and, in the meantime, will tighten the eligibility criteria in a number of ways. From 1 January 2017 mobility allowance will be limited to people aged under 65 years of age, and new applicants for the allowance must have a permanent or significant disability to qualify. This measure brings the criteria closer in line with the NDIS disability rules.
The bill requires that the secretary is of the opinion that the recipient's disability is either permanent or likely to last for at least four months in order to be eligible for mobility allowance. This provision appears in place of the existing definition of 'handicapped person' and gives the secretary a similar level of discretion as the CEO of the National Disability Insurance Agency. The grace period that is currently allowed if a recipient stops work or their other qualifying activity, called the continuation period, will be reduced from 12 weeks to four weeks. People who exit their NDIS package of support will no longer be able to reclaim mobility allowance under this legislation.

This bill limits eligibility only to people who are travelling to undertake gainful employment or vocational education. Recipients who wish to undertake voluntary work or a vocational rehabilitation program will no longer be able to access the payment. Current recipients of mobility allowance who are still in receipt of the payment as at 30 June 2020 will continue to receive long-term support.

As I have said, there is a range of legitimate concerns about the bill, particularly around the fact that people with similar transport needs who are not eligible for the NDIS will not be able to access similar support in future and the changes to eligibility in the meantime. Currently, 89 per cent of mobility allowance recipients are also eligible to receive a primary income support payment. Managing the costs of their special transport needs may become more difficult for people in the absence of the allowance, potentially leading to people pulling out of activities that are important for their wellbeing. We do, as I say, have a number of concerns, and we certainly hope that these will be answered through the Senate inquiry process. We will of course continue to do everything we can to ensure that people with disability are protected and receive the support that they need.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme, designed, funded and introduced by Labor, is now improving the lives of thousands of Australians with disability. All Australians deserve peace of mind that, if they or their loved ones acquire a disability, the support that they need will be there. I think we in the parliament are all aware that the NDIS is the biggest social reform since the introduction of Medicare, and thousands and thousands of people with disability in Australia have been campaigning for the National Disability Insurance Scheme for many, many years.

Unfortunately, the rollout of the NDIS, which began in earnest in July this year, has faced and continues to face some significant problems. People with disability should not face any uncertainty about the future of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I think we are all aware that the rollout of the Myplace portal simply has not been good enough. Many disability service providers went unpaid while people with disability and their families have faced and continue to face considerable delays getting their national disability insurance plans finalised and in place. This is because the government's new IT system was not properly tested and all the bugs ironed out before the National Disability Insurance Scheme transition started in earnest on 1 July. It is also the case that, unfortunately, the government did not adequately resource the National Disability Insurance Agency—a situation the government has sought to rectify recently—to make sure that they had enough people to deal with the transition. That is why we are now seeing so many people who are not able to get their plans in place as quickly as they should be.
The government also, very unfortunately—and I say this in the spirit of goodwill—wants to sack the father of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Bruce Bonyhady, from his role as the chair of the board. Bruce had led the board for three years, and his hard work deserves our gratitude and respect. Unfortunately, Minister Porter has made it clear that he wants to replace Bruce Bonyhady and other board members who understand the needs of people with disability with a much more corporate board. Of course, people with disability are very concerned that this will mean greater direction by the minister rather than in the interests of people with disability. We of course will continue to hold this government to account for the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I see the assistant minister here. If she would like to say that the government is proposing to keep Bruce Bonyhady on as the chair of the board, I am sure the parliament would be very, very pleased to hear it.

I know that at the moment there are a lot of very negative headlines about the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. But I do want to say that, from the experience that is happening in my electorate, where the NDIS is being rolled out as we speak, we are seeing that it improves the lives of thousands of people. I was at a wonderful place called Kalparrin, in Greensborough in my electorate, last week, opening a wonderful new sensory garden. Kalparrin does a great job delivering early intervention to young children with a disability. I met with many families who, overwhelmingly, have had a positive experience with the NDIS, and their children are now receiving the additional supports that they need.

All of us must work together to make the NDIS a success. There is an enormous amount of goodwill in the community towards the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We all need to harness that goodwill to make sure that we get the NDIS that people with disability need and deserve.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan—Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services) (17:28): I rise today to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016. This bill, as the title suggests, transitions the mobility allowance program to the NDIS and amends the Social Security Act 1991 to ensure the program is better targeted to those who require support the most while awaiting transition to the NDIS.

I am pleased to speak to this bill not only as the member for Ryan but also as the Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services. The NDIS is one of Australia’s largest social and economic reforms and will support approximately 460,000 Australians aged under 65 who are permanently or significantly disabled and their families and carers. Members of this House well know that the NDIS is all about empowering and supporting the participant, including those with significant disability. This bill supports the approach that the NDIS will be the main program of support for people with a disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities.

People often forget or dismiss the fact that, for many Australians with a disability, it is a significant task to move about the community. The disability criteria applied to the mobility allowance will now be aligned with the NDIS disability criteria. From 1 July 2017, this will mean that new claimants must have a permanent or significant disability which prevents them from using public transport without substantial assistance and must be undertaking paid work or vocational training. There will also be a reduction in the continuation period during which a person can receive mobility allowance while not engaging in an approved activity. The
grace period will be reduced from 12 weeks to 4 weeks. Changes to new mobility allowance claims under this bill will also mean that new applicants cannot be over 65 years of age. This is consistent with the NDIS rules.

Another amendment of this bill will see those who abandon their NDIS support package unable to claim mobility allowance. However, the changes will not impact existing mobility allowance customers. It is estimated that around 70 per cent of current mobility allowance recipients, some 42,000, will be eligible to receive an NDIS package of support. The remaining 30 per cent of recipients, 18,000, includes around 4,000 recipients who will be aged 65 years or older and 14,000 recipients aged under 65 years.

I want to be clear: we as a government are working to ensure that people continue to receive the support they need. However, the current mobility allowance scheme is very broad and does not necessarily target those who need support the most. Individuals who will no longer have access to mobility allowance and are ineligible for the NDIS still have a range of other assistance programs to help them. Some of these assistance programs provide services to address mobility issues faced by individuals. Assistance programs available to these individuals include: GST-exempt purchase of cars for work use where the individual has a disability affecting them to the extent they cannot use public transport; the Employment Assistance Fund, providing financial assistance for people with disability or for their workforce modification equipment or services; employment services through jobactive, Disability Employment Services and the Community Development Program, assisting jobseekers, including those with disability, become job ready and find work, including through providing wage subsidies; Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support Program, providing wage and mentoring support for the employers hiring apprentices and trainees with disability; and state and territory transport, vehicle modification and parking subsidies.

In the 2016-17 budget, the coalition government provided $46.5 million to ensure that those ineligible for an NDIS package will still be supported by the mobility allowance in the short to medium term. I need not explain the importance that our government places on the success of the NDIS and on recognition of the fact that only the coalition government is able to provide secure and stable finances critical to its longevity. Let me be clear: the NDIS is providing benefits.

On 1 July 2016, the NDIS started its gradual full rollout across Australia. The NDIS is being introduced in stages over three years to ensure it is successful and sustainable. Existing Commonwealth and state-based services and supports will continue until eligible people start to receive supports from the NDIS. People with disability are living more independent lives—engaging with their community, entering the workforce for the first time or returning to work and receiving the services and equipment they need—and the NDIS provides the flexibility to support choice and control.

Take, for example, the case I heard from a young man who had previously required assistance every morning from a carer who came in to get him ready for work and then drove him to work. In the afternoon, the process was repeated again in reverse, where the carer met him at his office, took him home and prepared him for the evening. Because of the NDIS, this young man's plan included what he asked for, which was the modification of a vehicle so he could drive himself to work. Although that was a high up-front cost, what has happened now is that the young man has regained his confidence and his independence. Now, not only does
he drive himself to and from work every day, he has decided that he no longer needs daily assistance from a carer. Being independent is taken for granted by many people. It is not until you experience the hardships faced by people with disabilities that you appreciate the small things, like driving yourself unassisted to and from work—and, in capital cities, even experiencing those dreaded traffic jams! Just like the gentleman in the case to which I referred, those seeking to continue to engage in the workforce or other economic activities will be supported through the transition of the mobility allowance program to the NDIS.

I was also pleased to hear a story about Tania, a proud Awabakal woman and an active member of the NDIA Hunter local advisory group, who is passionate about improving the lives of young people residing in aged care. Tania had a stroke at the age of 39 and lived in an aged-care facility for three years, where she was confined to her bed, unable to take part in her community and separated from her husband and her daughter, who is now 16. When Tania became an NDIS participant, she began to reclaim her independence and achieve her goals. First, Tania was provided with an electric wheelchair that gave her back her freedom. She was previously in bed all day every day and could not talk, walk, move or see. Then she was given travel allowance so that she could go home and see her daughter. Until then, she was only able to see her daughter once a week, and it was difficult for her daughter to visit her in the nursing home. Tania is now enjoying the choice and control that the NDIS gives her and is better able to participate in her community.

This government is building a more supportive and sustainable disability services sector, but we have to be realistic. When Labor rushed through the legislation in the last breath of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments, they conveniently failed to adequately identify the funds necessary to float the policy, or to itemise them and put them aside so that they would be secure for the NDIS program. It is all very well to get legislation through the parliament, but if it is not properly funded then it will just be a pipedream. The NDIS is expensive; there is no question about that. The coalition has been working diligently to plug the $6 billion black hole in NDIS funding. This bill is testament to our government's commitment to full implementation of the NDIS and to fully funded implementation of the NDIS. This government is building a more supportive and sustainable disability services sector. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (17:37): I am pleased to speak to this bill relating to the mobility allowance paid to people who cannot easily use public transport or need substantial assistance to do so because of disability, illness of injury, provided that they are travelling to or from home for paid work, voluntary work, study or training or to look for work.

Labor acknowledges that this legislation covers an important funding gap for current recipients of the mobility allowance who are ineligible under the NDIS. We are currently considering the legislation and await the completion of today's hearing and the Senate inquiry process.

I first want to explain why access to a mobility allowance is so important for an electorate like mine. Macquarie is 4,300 square kilometres. The area is traversed by long and winding roads along ridges of the Blue Mountains. They go for kilometres, with small roads leading off them into valleys and lovely country lanes, but of course there is very little in the way of public transport. It is hard enough to travel the distances if you are fit and healthy, let alone if you have an injury, an illness or a disability.
If you live on the Blue Mountains rail line you can get up and down the mountain—including to Penrith, where many of our services are based. However, if you live on the Hawkesbury side of my electorate, you could almost fly to Darwin faster than you can get to and from Penrith by public transport. You could definitely fly to New Zealand.

It is an irregular, slow bus ride to Richmond or Windsor station, then a train trip to Blacktown, then another train back to Penrith. To do this with any sort of disability, injury or illness is even more of an arduous task. From Bowen Mountain it might only be 40 minutes by car, but it is nearly three hours by public transport. From St Albans it is more than an hour and a half to Penrith via river ferry, but there is no available public transport route to travel that 85 kilometres. So getting around the electorate is hard work at the best of times, and a car or special vehicle or service is really the only reasonable option, which is why mobility allowances—and community transport, for that matter—are so vital.

I will just take a moment to talk about one amazing organisation that does provide community transport. They are called Great Community Transport. They assist people with disabilities, carers accompanying clients, people receiving cancer treatment and others who are in some way transport disadvantaged, even in the short-term. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the work of Helen Walker OAM, who retired from that organisation after 30 years of service just last Friday.

Helen identified in the early eighties that transport assistance was needed in the Blue Mountains and then she set about fixing the problem. Mountains Community Transport was originally funded through the Home and Community Care program in New South Wales. It began with Helen, a driver, and a shared room with another community service in 1986. The Blue Mountains service amalgamated with the Nepean service in 2004, and they provided assistance for everything from shopping, medical and hospital transport, transport to centre-based meals and social outings—all of this provided by paid and volunteer workers. Now, 30 years on, it has 26 employees, over 100 volunteers, 25 vehicles and two offices. Today the organisation provides transport to more than 3,000 people a year, with a total of 78,000 trips. It was a privilege to be able to thank Helen for her vision and her work on behalf of the community that she has served around such a challenging issue.

So to the bill: the mobility allowance is a fortnightly payment of $93.20. That does not go a long way in an electorate like mine, but it is a help nonetheless. There are currently around 60,000 mobility allowance recipients; however, the NDIS trials have demonstrated that around 30 per cent—that is 18,000 people—of these mobility allowance recipients will likely be ineligible to receive an NDIS package of support. This group includes around 4,000 recipients who would be aged 65 years or older and approximately 14,000 recipients under 65.

In the 2013-14 budget, it was agreed that funding for the mobility allowance was to be rolled into the NDIS, to help fund its implementation, with transport assistance to be provided through the NDIS for participants. This bill will provide $46.5 million in the 2016-17 budget, to ensure that current recipients of the mobility allowance who are not eligible for the NDIS will be supported in the short to medium term.

The legislation covers a really important funding gap for current recipients who are otherwise ineligible under the NDIS. Without this funding they would simply have to stay at home. It is important that current recipients continue to receive this continuity of support...
during the rollout of the NDIS so that no-one with illness or disability is worse off. It is also important that the disability sector has consistency and stability as the rollout of the NDIS continues.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak a bit more broadly about the NDIS, which is obviously the reason we have this bill before us. It was of course Labor's decision to roll the mobility allowance into the NDIS, just as it was our decision to develop the NDIS—and, I should add, to fully fund it. But, as I said, we do have concerns that some of the changes in this bill go beyond the precise argument of rolling the mobility allowance over.

In Macquarie, while the NDIS is transforming people's lives for the better, it is not there yet for a number of clients and their families. I have recently heard one amazing story from 'SJ', who lives in Blackheath. SJ had an accident and is now wheelchair-bound and in need of care. She has a young son, Hamish, who is also a fantastic support to her. She has found that receiving her plan from the NDIS and working through the process has been an incredibly empowering experience—as it should be. That is exactly how it should be. And SJ is going to be a fantastic example of the very best that NDIS can achieve.

But not everybody in the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury has had the same experience. We were part of the early rollout last year, and it has become clear to me that we and this government could be doing a lot more to make it a smoother process. I have estimated that, some weeks, one of my staff is working virtually full-time on NDIS issues, liaising with the NDIA on behalf of constituents who feel like they have been beating their head against a brick wall just trying to get the same level of support—let alone more support—than they previously had. We have mums who are told that their plan for their child has been approved, but they do not know what to do next, and no-one is available to help them work out the next steps.

I am also concerned about the story one mother told me about the lengths that she had to go to in order to secure the same access to respite care that she had previously. She had to declare that she would not be able to care for her daughter at all without a certain level of respite and that she would give up being a carer completely. While we clearly need guidelines, we need to have person-centred carers. They are the way to go. Going through this process—like this mum, who has cared for her daughter for 26 years—feels like an unnecessary humiliation for people who have given so much of their lives to caring. The service providers in my electorate are also frustrated, as the rules keep changing and the advice varies, and having issues resolved is really coming down to the determination and persistence of a few people.

Let me give you a few examples. We know about the NDIS portal. I am told it is still terribly slow and that staff are wasting significant time when processing bookings and invoices. It is really practical stuff that is troubling them. You cannot set access levels for different staff, and messages received go to the entire business and organisation. There is no breakdown of who is charging what and no detail on how much of a budget has been booked. My service providers and consumers experience significant delays in speaking to an operator at the NDIS contact centre. There is no capacity to leave messages and there are long wait times. When they do get through they often find that the NDIA frontline staff, even though they are working to the best of their ability, simply do not have the answers. Feedback differs,
depending on the operator; it might be that it is the wrong office, or that they cannot see the same screen as the service provider can. Some of the NDIA staff have clearly not had the training that would really benefit them, and they are not familiar with the request for payment booking process. The most common complaint is that the advice from two different people is contradictory or simply inaccurate.

What we are seeing locally, in some cases, is that, when the first plan is received by somebody, the plan reflects what people are already receiving—or less. We are finding that, in many cases, input is ignored, including specialist reports, documentation relating to the individual and recommendations of key planning people. Plans are also being unilaterally approved by NDIS without discussion. These sorts of things are frustrating to families, who are turning to the service providers. There is also some confusion about what role the service providers can play, so, all in all, for some people it can be a really frustrating process—and it should not be.

What we would really love to see is for the government to put more resources into this. There is no genuine review process in place, which is another issue. If the plan is not right, there is very limited ability to seek review. One family who raised the issue of a reduction in the former mobility allowance to a lower transport funding was actually advised by an NDIA person to trial it for a few months and see how they go. This is not the sort of certainty that families need. They were then further advised that any review would take approximately six weeks. When you are asking people to manage their package and make decisions, they need to know that it is a package that they can live with and that it is going to ensure that the person being cared for is not worse off. We would like to see people better off and better supported.

It is a fact that reviews cannot be done within the last three months of the plan, and that really leaves open the possibility of funds running low or running out if they have been utilised incorrectly or for emergencies. These are some of the really practical issues that we would like to see addressed. I am grateful, though, for people like Andrew Daly from DARE, John Le Breton from Greystanes, the team at EMPOWERability, Kath Harrison from Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre, Belinda Colombrita from Thorndale and Denise Heath from NADO who, in spite of these challenges, come together to work through them. There is so much goodwill and there are so many people doing hours of work to make this whole system work. I think it will be thanks to them that we get through this difficult period.

As I say, we see a lot of goodwill towards the scheme on all sides. But people's patience is running thin, and the minister really must step up. Labor will continue to work to make sure that people with disability are protected and are receiving the support they need. After all, that is what the NDIS is all about. That is what we are here to improve, and we will work in any way we can to see that that happens.

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (17:51): I rise on behalf of the Labor opposition to speak to the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016. Can I commend the member for Macquarie for her speech. It showed that the member for Macquarie, who is living in an area which has had this NDIS scheme rolled out, understands the issues intimately. She has put on record some of the very practical issues that need to be dealt with in terms of the NDIS rollout. I commend her for her understanding and knowledge that has just been displayed to this House. The Labor
opposition is going to refer this piece of legislation to an inquiry in the other place, and we reserve the right to do so until further information is received. I will undertake to explain why we are taking that position. It is because there is so much uncertainty about this particular aspect of the NDIS scheme. The most prudent thing for us to do would be to recommend that this issue of the transition mobility allowance be explored in an inquiry in the other place. But I am happy to speak today on the proposed social services legislation, as I have said. I note from the outset that we are still evaluating our position on this legislation, which covers a very complex area. We acknowledge that there is a need for the stated aim of the legislation: to deal with the funding gap for current recipients of the mobility allowance who are ineligible for the NDIS. That is very important. There are going to be many, many people with disability who will not be eligible for the NDIS, and we must not forget this very large cohort of people in our discussions about disability and, in particular, about the NDIS.

I think there is the assumption in some quarters—I am not saying in this House, but in some parts of the community—that if you have a disability, then you are going to be automatically eligible for the NDIS. Of course, we know that there are thousands and thousands of people who have significant disability which affects their wellbeing who will not be eligible. It is important that the mobility allowance be in place, particularly for those people who, as I have just outlined, will be ineligible for the scheme. As the shadow minister has said, we look forward to receiving more information on the proposal and we reserve our right to decide it on its merit until our queries are answered through the inquiry process. I think that is a very prudent way to go: it is not saying that Labor will disagree with this piece of legislation; it is saying that there are aspects to the legislation that are unclear, and that it would be irresponsible to take a solid position on the legislation until those queries are cleared up. Having said that, the stated intention of this legislation is to prevent anyone falling through the gaps. I certainly welcome that aim, as does the Labor Party. It is absolutely crucial that we keep in mind that group of people who will not be eligible for the NDIS.

Those who currently receive the mobility allowance must continue to receive support during the rollout of the NDIS. Most importantly, it must be a priority that they not be worse off as a result of the rollout—hence Labor’s view that this should be examined by an inquiry. The mobility allowance is available to those with a mobility-limiting condition, depending on whether they meet a number of criteria. It is intended to assist in covering some of the costs associated with limited mobility. There have been some very disappointing media reports about those receiving the NDIS who have had their mobility allowance cut before they have begun to receive NDIS funding—and I am glad to see that the minister has joined us to participate, as he has been today, in this discussion. We are aware of one person, at least, who has had her mobility allowance cut before any determination about her being a recipient of the NDIS funding. I would ask the minister to respond to this particular issue in his response to this debate. The story, Minister, was in *The Age* in October this year and told the story of Jessica Eshel’s sister Antonella who, having been given a sub-par NDIS plan, had her mobility allowance cut, even though she was still waiting to be reassessed. I am not saying that there was any deliberate action by the department in taking away Antonella’s mobility allowance before she had received a determination, but it is something that we need to be very clear about, and certainly—I think you would agree, Minister—not an acceptable situation. This left Antonella $90 out of pocket, and made managing her expenses far more difficult. And we do know—and this is something that we must keep in mind in this discussion and in the
determination—that the people who we are talking about are not, in the main, people who can afford to forego $90.

As it stands now, the National Disability Insurance Scheme lets Centrelink know that a person is eligible for the NDIS—but that may occur weeks before they actually begin to receive NDIS funding. If passed, the current bill will phase out the allowance entirely from July 2020, and significantly limit its availability from January 2017. That would mean that anyone who exits the NDIS would be unable to re-claim the allowance in the future, leaving them significantly worse off—which is an issue that I think the government needs to address. I would also ask the minister to attend himself to that. It would also mean that from 2020 the situation for 30 per cent of current recipients who are not eligible for the NDIS would be unclear.

Rolling the mobility allowance into the NDIS is not in itself a bad decision. In many ways, it makes sense; helping to make the process simpler for those who need to be assessed by the NDIA, and ensuring that they are not left worse off. I do have questions about the decision to end the allowance entirely, given that there are 14,000 people who will be ineligible for the NDIS but claim the allowance today. I would suggest very strongly to the minister that this needs to be thought through. While this bill gives them some stability in the short term, by continuing to support them, it does not provide them with any clarity over the longer term. I am also concerned that the bill before the House goes much further than the original proposal, by reducing the continuation period from 12 to 4 weeks, and by introducing a cut-off age of 65. At first inspection, this appears somewhat excessive. It is also problematic given that the majority of those that currently claim the allowance are also in receipt of some other government support. There is no doubt these individuals already have a great deal of difficulty managing their budgets. I would be concerned that this legislation may make their lives considerably more difficult.

The NDIS is a proud Labor achievement. It went through with bipartisan support. But rushing such a huge reform could let people fall through the cracks. The NDIS was designed, funded and introduced—to an empty chamber, I would say—by Labor, and I am pleased that it is being delivered on time and within budget. It will change lives, and I know many of the community are eagerly awaiting the rollout in their areas. In the next three years, 430,000 people will enter the NDIS. On this side of the chamber, we acknowledge that this is a monumental task but one that will be worth it.

One of the reasons I am concerned is that this government has a bad track record when it comes to the most disadvantaged members of the community. We have seen it in a few ways: the treatment of people receiving a disability support allowance, for example. We have seen individuals with the most chronic intellectual disabilities threatened with having their support cut if they do not jump through bureaucratic hoops. The age pension has an enormous waiting time, and many age pensioners are forced to wait hours on the phone for routine inquiries. The fact is that the Turnbull government is still stuck in the 'lifters versus leaners' mindset. It is a distressing situation when you see a country that has a social safety net and yet the government is determined to make out that those in receipt of that social safety net are lifters or leaners or crooks trying to defraud the system. This is not the dialogue that should be surrounding those people that are the most disadvantaged within our community. It is cruel and it is heartless.
These issues must be resolved, and I have to say, in relation to cutting further staff at Centrelink, that the pressures and the morale issues at Centrelink are extreme. There was a case of a family being pursued by Centrelink debt collectors over a $230 bill owed by their recently deceased daughter, who had been tragically killed in a car accident. These things should be picked up by a minister's office. The government has displayed a callous lack of empathy, so it is with good reason that we have some concerns. I am concerned about this government's approach to Centrelink clients. We have seen today that derogatory language is so prevalent that an FOI request for instances of language of rorters, double-dippers and fraudsters will require too much time to process. It seems to me that the government has been on a long campaign of talking down those who receive assistance, and I find the language it uses in referring to recipients of disability and age pensions troubling. People do not choose to have serious disabilities, to get older or even to be unemployed. That is why I support a comprehensive welfare safety net and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The NDIS will be transformative, as I said, but we need to be very clear and very careful about its implications. There are many other examples of the way in which Centrelink is letting down many people in the community that I do not have time to talk about today, except to say that just last week my office was contacted by a constituent who was scared and worried because the FaHCSIA funding she currently receives to provide support and applied behavioural therapy for her young autistic son was due to be cut a full year before the NDIS was to be rolled out in our area. She was scared because she believed that her son would miss out on vital early intervention. I am still hopeful that this will not be the case. I think her case provides a useful example of the need for government to act with empathy. I am very proud that this place has a bipartisan commitment to the NDIS, but we should remember that part of the process needs to be communicating with those who need it so that they understand what is going to happen to them. People with disabilities and their families have many things to be uncertain about. We must not add to that list by rushing into legislation when the facts are unclear.

Labor will do everything it can to support the NDIS, and that is why we will not rush into decisions without all the necessary information. We will not oppose this bill in this place but, as I said, we reserve the right to make amendments and to finalise our position once we have received advice through the committee process. I draw the attention of the minister to the issues that I have raised throughout my intervention in relation to this piece of legislation, and it is the responsibility of the minister to respond to those particular direct cases that I have raised. As I said, many people will not be eligible for the NDIS, and this piece of legislation is critical to those people. There is, in my view, a bipartisan approach, and that is absolutely appropriate, but I am sure that the government will understand that bipartisanship is not a race to the bottom; bipartisanship is knowing what all the facts are to be able to make informed decisions, which is why Labor is taking the position we are on this piece of legislation.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (18:05): During this debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016, I have had a chance to hear a number of the speeches, particularly by my colleagues on this side of the House, and I have to say I am getting increasingly nervous about this government's ability to roll out the NDIS. We are getting ready to hit the go button in Bendigo, and a lot of families are feeling the same.
We, of course, have called for the NDIS rollout to happen sooner in Bendigo. We have a large area of need within the Bendigo electorate, and there was a lot of excitement, when Labor put forward the proposal while last in government, that a number of people with disability would finally get the support and respect that they deserve. However, we have seen again that with this government the devil is always in the detail, and the government is not quite good at implementation. We are hearing more and more stories about how this government is getting the implementation wrong. In particular with this bill, in relation to the mobility allowance, I am one of the many people on this side eager to learn the outcomes of the Senate inquiry.

The Bendigo electorate is like most regional electorates: it is an area that struggles to be serviced by public transport. While Bendigo, a township of 100,000 people, has bus services, the services are not as frequent as people would like and they are not always suitable for people with a disability. Quite often people with a disability come into towns like Maldon and Heathcote for services and to participate in supported employee programs. In these towns, again, the buses are infrequent, despite the investment by the state Labor government in public transport. There simply is not the number of people requiring bus services. Then we have Woodend, Kyneton and Castlemaine, which are towns serviced by a train system. To get to the train system people—in particular people with a disability, who currently use mobility allowance—often require a taxi. In fact, it is quite well known throughout Bendigo that if you want a taxi on Monday between 8.30 and 10.30 you have no chance, because our taxi service works closely with people with a disability, who currently qualify for mobility allowance, to transport them to and from their day services, whether it be their place of education or place of supported employment. The questions that we are asking in the other place go to the heart of what is being proposed: how will this change affect people who are already on very low incomes? How will those people continue to participate in society, work, day programs and education?

Someone with a disability uses a variety of programs. We learnt this acutely when Radius Disability Services entered administration last month, for not every Radius employee's engagement was the same. On Monday and Tuesday they might have been engaged in supported employment, working in one of the many enterprises that Radius had; on Thursday and Friday they might have been involved in their day program; and on the day in between they might have been catching up with family. When Radius went into administration it left over 120 supported employees without a place of employment. It left 100 day clients without a place to go. It required quite complex negotiations with families to find those people, first, alternative employment; and, second, an opportunity to continue in day programs. I want to acknowledge the shadow assistant minister for the work that her office provided. We worked together to try to find a quick response for a number of the families, because it was a very anxious time. I want to acknowledge the families for their patience and for the many supportive phone calls they made not only to our office but to each other in sticking together to see their loved ones through this tough time. I also want to acknowledge the many clients of Radius Disability Services who have shown their loyalty by following the supported employees to the new providers of those enterprises. As one person said to me: 'I can't wait to get my boys back. They're good people.'
This event did send through our community a few shockwaves about the government's ability to roll out the NDIS. An alarming thing that one of the board members said to me was, 'Lisa, I will be frank: under the current proposed model for the NDIS rollout we would have struggled to survive.' It is true that the way in which the NDIS is rolling out is radically changing how we support people with a disability. It will provide participants with choice, and that is a good thing. However, it means our not-for-profit sector, who have relied on block funding for a very long time, have to change their business model. It means that they have to change how they engage with clients. Something Radius said to me was that the pricing point for some NDIS services is too low. They also said they were worried about cherry-picking by some of the big providers.

With regard to the trust people with a disability have in the government's ability to roll out the NDIS, as a previous speaker said, this government already has a terrible reputation when it comes to the disability support pension. Whilst those opposite huff and puff, their reputation is in tatters. There are some great NDIS success stories but, as the member for Macquarie highlighted, that is not true of every case. NDIA is struggling to meet the huge demands of participants. I call on the government to listen to the concerns being raised not just by members in this place but by the workforce, families and not-for-profit agencies.

The government has failed to adequately resource the National Disability Insurance Agency, which is why the member for Macquarie described in some detail what her office is going through. The member for Macquarie said that they required one staff member dedicated to the rollout of the NDIS. I take this opportunity to ask the government: can we get an extra allowance? If the member for Macquarie's office—which is in an electorate very similar to my own in terms of participants and challenges—requires one entire electoral officer position to service the complaints around the rollout of the NDIS, because this government has not adequately resourced the NDIA, can we all have an extra EO? In my office we do not have any slack; we work really hard. We have one person dedicated to following up Centrelink issues. We have one person who is dedicated to following up My Aged Care and DSP issues. We simply do not have the extra hours in the day to take on this extra workload. Given the experiences of some in this place of this government's appalling inability to roll out the NDIS and the NDIA, perhaps we all need extra staff to help the government manage this process.

The government has also failed to make sure that the development of the IT system—the myplace portal—is working on time. We have heard people talking about the details involved and the complex problems they have had with the myplace portal. I raise this again because Bendigo is due to receive the rollout. We are listed for rollout in early 2017.

Beyond the questions we are asking about the mobility allowance, people with a disability and their families talk. That is why, in my electorate, there was excitement and jubilation when Labor first introduced the NDIS. We had a full Labor team here and many of the crossbenchers, but absolutely nobody from the Liberal and Nationals side bothered to turn up, which shows their commitment to the NDIS! There was absolute excitement in my electorate. But, as we have seen it rolled out across the country and as people with a disability in their families have talked to one another—as we have heard today—concerns have been raised by
people on this side. There is a bit of a clock ticking on it for the government, and they need to fix the concerns being raised.

We talk about this a lot. We constantly need to be looking at complex reform. It is not good enough and it is not acceptable to blame the other guy. You are in government and you are the minister. It is the government of the day that is responsible for this rollout. I call on the government to listen to the concerns that are being raised by families, and I call on the government to listen to the concerns that we have raised about this bill going further than was originally proposed. I know some people who will be affected by this change. It will mean they will go out less and, because they are on a fixed income, they will cease participating in the activities they participate in currently. They are not wealthy people. These are people who will have to rely on volunteers or on family to get from A to B, because this government is reducing their allowance and going further than we ever planned to do. It makes me worry about what comes next.

The government needs to listen to the concerns being raised by families, particularly in relation to the workforce and making sure that we have a quality, trained workforce. I am concerned that this is a growing area when it comes to temporary workers. It is not something the government likes to talk about. We want to make sure that we have a skilled, qualified workforce available to support people with a disability. I am concerned that the not-for-profits are saying that the NDIA’s pegging of the price for core-support items at the award wage means that it is hard for them to pay their employees their collective agreement rates. I ask the minister to investigate whether it is true that the NDIA has pegged the unit price for core services at the award. It means that the not-for-profits, who currently have collective agreements with their employees, will slowly go backwards. They will not receive the funding they require to pay wages. When we talk about the award, does it cover penalty rates, or is it just a Monday-to-Friday rate?

There is concern with how this government is rolling out the NDIS. There is concern about the NDIA model and the fact that the government is failing to adequately resource the NDIA. There are concerns and problems with the IT system. I call on the government to take all of these concerns seriously, to act and to invest the extra funding now to ensure that some of the most vulnerable in our community are not disadvantaged. This bill has the potential to affect a lot of people in regional areas—areas where we do not have good public transport systems. I call on the government to listen to the concerns being raised in the Senate inquiry and to respond. Do not let this bill go further than it was intended to and harm those who are already disadvantaged, particularly those in regional areas.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (18:19): In summation of the second reading debate for the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016 I thank members opposite and note a few technical matters about the bill before I address some of the issues that were raised.

The bill introduces the 2016-17 budget measure: the transition mobility allowance program into the National Disability Insurance Scheme—the NDIS. The NDIS is, of course, the new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with a significant functional impairment and a permanent disability. The NDIS will provide about 460,000 Australians
under the age 65 who have a disability with the reasonable and necessary support they need to live fruitful and successful lives.

The mobility allowance is one of 17 Commonwealth programs transitioning into the NDIS as part of its rollout across Australia, which commenced on 1 July 2016. The mobility allowance is being transitioned into the NDIS to ensure that the NDIS is the main program of support for people with a disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities.

The challenge to eligibility and the ongoing entitlement rules are designed to support the transition of mobility-allowance funding to the NDIS as eligible recipients move from the payment to the NDIS. For those recipients who are ineligible for the NDIS, other arrangements will be put in place to support them. I will turn, in a moment, to that current group of mobility allowance recipients who are ineligible for the NDIS.

In the 2016–17 budget—the most recent budget—the government provided $46½ million to ensure that recipients are not left without a means of support in the short term. Those are the recipients of mobility allowance who may not roll into the NDIS. Over the long term, the government is considering how these recipients can best be supported to maintain their workforce participation. The changes in this bill will ensure that the mobility allowance payment is better targeted to those who need it most while they wait to be transitioned to the NDIS.

The changes are consistent with changes made to other Commonwealth programs where funding is transitioning to the NDIS. The government is, of course, fully committed to the full implementation of the NDIS and to ensuring that those Australians who need support to engage in work and training receive the necessary assistance. Of course this bill is another step by this government towards that outcome.

I might make some brief comment with respect to matters raised by members opposite. On a number of occasions a number of the members opposite used the term that ‘the bill goes further than the original proposal’. Where they use that phrase I infer they are talking about the original proposal which was the 2013–14 Labor budget proposal to, in effect, roll the funding for the mobility allowance in its entirety into the NDIS as it rolled out. Of course, in 2013–14 the budget years that were being considered were 2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18. Here were are on 30 June 2016 with the full rollout of the NDIS underway—and well underway, I might add—and this issue arises. During the trials we got a firmer estimate on the number of people who were in receipt of mobility allowance and who would be unlikely to roll into the NDIS, but the fact that people who were in receipt of mobility allowance would not all roll into the NDIS was always known. It was clearly known in 2013–14, and yet in 2013–14, when the budget decision was made to roll the entirety of the mobility allowance into the NDIS starting on 30 June 2016, what was the funding that was allocated in any of those years 2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18 to, in effect, mitigate the roll-in of the mobility allowance for those recipients who could be reasonably estimated would not transition into the NDIS? The answer to that question is zero. Not a single cent was provisioned in those four out years of the budget to look after those people who would not under any reasonable estimate transition into the NDIS.

To sit and listen to members opposite talk about how this bill goes further than the original proposal is, of course, trivially true and profoundly false. It does go further than the original
proposal in that we have actually budgeted for the people that you knew would exist in 2013-14 who do not transition into the NDIS but nevertheless will lose a mobility allowance. The budgeted amount in this bill, which was set out in the 2016-17 budget, is $46½ million. So, in absolutely typical Labor fashion, the game plan is to have the idea in embryo, roll the money in, leave it underfunded, know that there is a cohort that you have to address but do not address the funding of that cohort in your own budgets and leave it to future governments to address that funding—which we have done with this $46½ million.

In commending the bill to the House I would simply say that it is a difficult thing to listen to members opposite talking about this bill—

Ms Burney: Where are you getting the money from?

Mr PORTER: It comes out of the budget—this bill going further than the original proposal. Forty-six and a half million dollars is budgeted for a group that you knew would exist and budgeted zero for and yet come in here and claim compassion for, compassion that was never backed up by an actual decision in the budget—an actual decision that this government, by the way, has made. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (18:26): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the following Address in Reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament—

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (18:26): To go on from where I left off: the government has also committed to a $20 million jobs, infrastructure and training package for the Upper Spencer Gulf. At the same time, we have committed to a long-term naval shipbuilding industry based in Adelaide, and this will present a huge range of opportunities to the Whyalla works over the extended period. These commitments have helped make the Whyalla assets more marketable, and the administrators, Korda Mentha, have been working hard to bring about a sale to somebody who wants to keep the assets producing and is prepared to invest to bring the plant up to world’s best practice. It has also not gone unnoticed that the workers in the steel plant in Whyalla have after reconsideration agreed to accept a 10 per cent wage cut.
I pay tribute here to Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science Greg Hunt, who has made the future of Whyalla his No. 1 priority from the day he was promoted to the position just after the election. He has visited Whyalla, talked regularly with the SA state government and, importantly, provided a letter of comfort to any potential new buyers, setting out the areas in which the federal government may be able to provide further assistance.

I was very pleased three weeks ago, I think it was now—perhaps it was two—when the minister rang me from a train in Korea to report on the very positive meeting he had held earlier in the day with POSCO. The great news, of course, is that, while there has been some excitement about POSCO's interest, they are not the only parties that see value in Arrium's assets. Last Friday I had the privilege of meeting with Sanjeev Gupta, from Liberty House Group, who was visiting Whyalla on the Saturday. I met with him in Adelaide on the Friday night to discuss the possibility of Liberty House becoming an investor in the Whyalla and Arrium operation more widely. Let me say about the company Liberty House that they have a long track record—over 20 years—of investing in steel production plants that have been run down or gone broke, reinvesting, reinvigorating their management structures and making a success out of those particular businesses. Over that time, they have not sold any businesses; they have kept them all going. That is the kind of positive news that we need along with POSCO's genuine interest. I expect at least another two prospective buyers to come to Whyalla over the next few weeks to have a look at what is on offer there.

All in all, I feel very confident about the future, but we cannot stop, and nothing is delivered until the ink is dry.

On other fronts, I believe the government is making great strides as well. Only three weeks ago I opened the new Port Augusta drug and alcohol treatment centre, a never-delivered dream from the Rudd-Gillard years that Liberal Party commitment delivered well within the time frames of its first term in office. I also attended and opened the Lucky Bay Harbour extension, and am looking forward to the establishment of a grain export facility there.

The last two rounds of the Stronger Regions grants have been very generous to Grey, and even though we can always find new projects within our community that we would like to get off the ground with a little assistance, I am very pleased with those results. The last around saw an allocation of almost $9 million to the Peterborough community, a town with the lowest socioeconomic outcomes in the electorate of Grey. The town has relied on a septic tank and soakage systems in the past. The infrastructure is old and crumbling, and I have been very concerned about the health risk that has been escalating.

Further south, the Gulf St Vincent community was thrilled to learn of the Commonwealth's commitment of $1 million towards a $3 million project to build a new artificial reef, and that investment is enough to tip the balance and bring that project forward. Certainly the declarations of 19 near-coast marine parks by the state government—virtually all in the waters adjacent to the electorate of Grey—have caused great concern to the commercial and recreational fishers alike, and there will be a need to further invest in projects which will expand the biomass.

In the earlier rounds of the Stronger Regions grants, $5 million was allocated towards the Port Pirie sporting precinct, and I saw the finished plan just the other day. Almost $5 million was allocated to refurbish the Copper Coast sporting complex, $1 million to the Barunga nursing home at Port Broughton, and almost $5 million for a fish unloader at Thevenard.
In other action, ARENA has backed the establishment of a $20 million solar-wind project with batteries and diesel backup at Coober Pedy. Coober Pedy—I have told the House on many occasions—has an off-grid electrical system and so, of course, anything that can provide sustainable, long-term electricity becomes much more viable in a place like Coober Pedy. I think this should be a good project for the future of the town even though there are some issues around pricing which are still causing some concern in the community.

I look forward to the construction of the passing lanes between Port Augusta and Whyalla, with the federal government contributing 80 per cent of the construction costs. At the moment, the program is in the hands of the state government and I am very hopeful—indeed, quite anxious—that they will start soon, but I can assure the electorate that the funding is locked in. To the north of the state, the Commonwealth is investing $85 million bringing the main road accessing the APY Lands to first-class standard.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it demonstrates that the seat of Grey is attracting the kind of support that we need to lift our economic performance to the top shelf. In fact, I would go so far as to say that South Australia desperately needs Grey to lead it out of its economic doldrums. While economic opportunities arise all around the electorate in the form of agriculture, resources, fishing, aquaculture and tourism, there is a significant shadow hanging over all of South Australia—that is, the penalties that are now being inflicted upon our economy by electricity prices.

Since the closure of the coal-fired power station at Port Augusta in May, the South Australian wholesale price for electricity has doubled. Unfortunately, this outcome was predictable, perhaps even inevitable, because of the rush in South Australia to renewable electricity without the accompanying planning and strategic investment to ensure that the state had a base-load capacity of around 25 per cent of the grid demand. There is no greater supporter of renewable energy than me but, in this, the transition period, it is important that as well as delivering renewable electricity, it is also reliable and competitive. In South Australia, unfortunately, it is neither. I have been saying for quite some time that if South Australia is to pursue a fast transition to renewable electricity, it must be accompanied by appropriate amounts of storage—in other words, capable of providing base-load electricity. On that basis, I say there should be no new renewable projects approved in South Australia unless they have storage.

It is a great concern to me that the state government pays no heed to these calls and continues to approve new wind farm developments in our state without insisting on that storage—it is just so important that we get this right. There are some very significant lessons to be learned for the rest of the world and for the rest of Australia from what has happened in South Australia. It is causing great anxiety amongst our business community, our large consumers—those people that actually employ people in their economy at the moment. It is, I think, the No. 1 issue facing our state at the moment. We need some quick traction on some possible solutions. At this stage, it seems unlikely that the coal-fired power station will be fired up again even temporarily, but it is very important that somebody, some organisation—and I suggest that could be led by the state government—should place a long-term order for electricity with some of the generators that have spare capacity in their gas turbines. This, in turn, would enable those generators to actually go into the gas market and tie up those long-term gas supply contracts, which they need to be able to substantiate that supply. It is a bit of
a chicken and egg situation, but it is really the most important economic issue facing South Australia at the moment.

We cannot afford to have the most expensive electricity in the world. Quite simply, we need to compete not only with overseas products; we also need to compete with the eastern states. There are those who speak of building a new interconnector through to New South Wales. I understand how this might alleviate the problem, but it does actually beg the question, then, that if we have moved in South Australia to support renewable energy in order to shut down our CO2 emissions, to shut down our coal-fired power station, that at the first sign of difficulty of power supply we would build a billion-dollar interconnector to New South Wales so that we could access their coal-fired power stations. It does seem to be something of an anomaly—one of those things that was not clearly thought out before.

I suspect that the answer lies within South Australia, and we need to support that generation capacity that can provide base-load electricity. That can be renewable, but it can also be gas. That is the task that is in front of us now. But overall, I must say that I am very pleased with the government's efforts within my electorate. Certainly my No.1 issue, like Greg Hunt's, is the sale of Arrium and I apply myself to that virtually every day in this job. I believe we will get there and then, of course, we need to fix these electricity issues in South Australia. Thank you very much.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (18:37): In speaking on the address-in-reply, I want to address the government's industrial relations agenda in particular, which it is still trying to get through the parliament. At the core of this agenda are two bills: the registered organisations bill and the ABCC bill. The government says it is all about cleaning up corruption in Australia. They say it is all about making building and construction more efficient. But I say it is about the Liberals' signature policy; I say it is really about Work Choices.

The Australian labour movement was the only thing standing between Australian working families and Work Choices in 2007, and it, along with the Fair Work Act, is the only thing standing between them now. These bills are all about crushing the labour movement. On the other side of this chamber, they have clearly not forgotten 2007. So it is not about a union watchdog; it is about letting the dogs loose on workers' conditions, across the entire Australian workforce.

These bills are about smashing our trade unions. These bills are about lifting the profit share even higher. These bills are about trying to further drive down the wage share of our national income. This is a recipe for weaker growth, precisely at a time when the global economy is the most vulnerable it has been since 2008-09. These bills are part of the Liberal Party's economic approach that will lead to further wealth concentration, not wealth creation.

The IMF rejects the trickle-down economics which are embraced by these bills. What do I mean by 'trickle down'? The notion that if you give more resources to the rich, the benefits will simply trickle down and, magically, we will all be better off. It is a notion that is disproved by our experience, across the developed world, of concentrated incomes at the top; hollowed out middle classes, particularly in the United States; and armies of working poor. If you ask any person in the street about the registered organisations bill or the ABCC bill, they would not be able to tell you much. But if you ask them about the Panama papers, they might have something to say about that.
So these bills say a lot about the government's priorities. This is the government's spiteful vengeance writ large. In effect, those opposite took our nation to an early and expensive double-dissolution election over something that was not an issue on the street.

The issues on the street are entirely different. Families are asking how on earth they can juggle the strain of wages that have actually gone backwards over the last year. They are asking how they can absorb this government's hit on the social wage by cuts to Medicare that directly impact on family health costs. Expectant mothers are asking how they cope with cuts to paid parental leave. Students are asking about the explosive increase in the cost of university degrees. And of course all are asking about the threat of penalty rates they earn from an out-of-hours or weekend job. If they are a family with kids, they are asking serious questions about the future of education in this country. In Lilley, over 40 schools will lose an average $3.2 million—the equivalent of sacking one in seven teachers.

So this government's agenda fails what I call the motivation test. In public life, it is not just what you do; it is all about the way you do it and it is all about why you do it. LNP governments never find their policy priorities in the daily struggles of middle-income Australians; they find them in the musty boardrooms of corporate Australia and the mouldy hallways of the Institute of Public Affairs. And what are they doing? What they are doing is attacking the labour movement. It goes to the very core of their being.

It is ironic that we went to an election over productivity on building sites at a time when the ABS data clearly shows that productivity in the construction industry has been surging since 2011. It is equally telling that, at a time when corporate tax evasion is rampant and the Panama papers have disclosed corporate transactions that are questionable, the government's IR bills contain higher penalties for civil contraventions by union officials than apply in the Corporations Act for directors of companies. What is truly alarming is: construction workers will be investigated by the ABCC and will be denied the most fundamental and basic legal rights—the right to a lawyer of their choice as well as the right to remain silent. Everyone in this House should just dwell on that and reflect on that. The Prime Minister simply has not told the whole truth. He wants to take away the legal rights of trade unions but leave them in place for his corporate high-flyer mates.

This is the ugly hand of greed and class politics at its worst, and the Prime Minister has his fingerprints all over it. While the Australian people are worrying about jobs, working conditions and attacks on the social wage, their Prime Minister is working to crush the very organisations that are the last line of defence against growing wealth and income inequality. So there is a stench of dishonesty about this government—a stench of dishonesty about their agenda, their motives and their foul propaganda. They are all the same, no matter who leads them. Tony Abbott's baton has simply passed to the next runner. People hoped that Mr Turnbull might not have been the same. He was a little smoother and more polished. But scratch the surface and he is just the same. Turnbull and Abbott both fail the motivation test. The Liberal and National parties have simply replaced someone who would say and do anything to be Prime Minister with someone who would say and do anything to be Prime Minister. The election result proved that Australians are doubly disillusioned with Mr Turnbull.

Make no mistake: just as they are hiding a workplace agenda behind sloganeering against trade unions, they are also hiding the truth about their fiscal policy behind deceptive slogans.
They say: 'We are not spending like Labor,' when the reality is that they are almost two percentage points of GDP higher than Labor. 'We are not taxing like Labor,' they say, when the reality is that, as a proportion of GDP, taxes are higher, consistently, under the Liberals. 'It's Labor's debt,' they say, when the reality is that Turnbull and Abbott have tripled the deficit. And the list goes on.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta):** Order! The member will refer to members by their—

**Mr SWAN:** Certainly. Mr Turnbull and Mr Abbott say, 'We need a company tax cut to generate growth and jobs,' when the reality is that the ATO data shows that private companies in Australia pay, on average, a tax rate of only 19 per cent when weighted for company size and before taking into account deductions, deferred losses, minimisation and evasion.

Who could forget that they have managed to spend $80 million on a trumped-up royal commission into trade unions but have dragged their feet and doing anything about multinational tax evasion, including voting against every measure Labor introduced in this area whilst we were in government. But courtesy of Labor's transparency legislation, which the Liberals voted against but which was passed in 2013, we now know that over a third of all public companies paid no tax in 2013-14. We know that half of all foreign companies in Australia paid no tax. We know that one in three private corporations paid no tax. We know that 55 millionaires paid no tax. And we now know through the Panama papers that around 800 high-net-worth individuals have connections to activities in tax havens.

In the face of this evidence, it is farcical and tragic that the Prime Minister and his ministers can keep a straight face and claim Australia has a spending problem and not a revenue problem, and continue to lay at the feet of trade unions the blame for their economic mismanagement. The Panama papers revealed that the increasing use of tax havens by multinationals and high-wealth individuals has reached epidemic proportions. Some of Australia's largest global companies have been exposed. When global companies operate in a cavalier way, it normalises this behaviour and gives the green light for everybody else to have a go. Tax havens are used by individuals and corporates to keep their activities in the shadows.

For years, Australians have watched the Liberals pander to corporate and media interests. Now, in a world where inequality is rampant, how could anyone have any faith in a leader who professes to believe in equality of opportunity but leads a government that has opposed strong measures to stamp out multinational tax evasion and has voted in this parliament against those measures? And all the while he was doing this he was a fully paid-up member of the Cayman Islands club, watching his capital fund grow under the palm trees. If this was a leader with faith in his leadership, faith in his Treasurer and faith in his country, he would put his money here, not in the Cayman Islands.

The use of tax havens by wealthy individuals and corporates is destroying progressive taxation right across the developed world. The principal reason for using a tax haven like the Cayman Islands is to avoid tax, either in countries where they live or are based or to act as an end point for tax minimisation. Strong actions against tax havens will never be taken by public officials who use them. That much is very clear.
Tax avoidance and evasion is a huge part of the trashing of public faith in democratic legitimacy right around the world. We are seeing it play out across country after country. Everyday workers have a sense that the economy is an inside-outside game in which the wealthy play by different rules and everyone else is denied opportunity.

It is clear, for example, that over a decade there has been a culture of tax avoidance and evasion at BHP, as they plan to evade tax on $5.7 billion held in their Singapore tax shield. Not only have they flouted federal tax law but they have also behaved disgracefully in seeking to avoid state royalty payments. No wonder there is a revolt going on in Western Australia when you look at what the have been up to with transfer pricing. Transfer pricing is exploited when a company sells a product between two arms of its operation in order to book its profits into a lower tax jurisdiction. The BHP tax shield in Singapore is used to smuggle profits out of Australia. Mr Beavan, BHP's chief financial officer, may choose to cutely describe aggressive transfer pricing as a 'valuation dispute'. But, in a world in which we all live, it is evasion.

We have still yet to hear from the BHP board any cogent defence of its actions despite these matters being raised with it by the media and others at its recent meeting in London and its meeting only last week in Brisbane. BHP does have an experienced board, but this board, individually and collectively, has questions which need to be answered—very serious questions. The board has not been true to the values that it espouses in its charter of corporate responsibility.

It is very disappointing that when they were in Brisbane they did not provide any defence of the fact that they have diddled the people of Queensland of very substantial amounts of money through transfer pricing on loyalties to the extent that, from the Queensland revenue office, they now have a bill for $300 million. It is not clear how much they may owe to the same revenue office in the state of Western Australia, but it could be substantial. The governments of Western Australia and Queensland have been treated very, very badly by the big Australian, because the evidence against them is damning. Over a decade BHP has ramped up its Singapore marketing hub to camouflage aggressive transfer pricing which has cost Australia taxpayers at least $1 billion. Historically, BHP has wrapped itself in the Australian flag, but this sort of behaviour would indicate that it is simply a meaningless gesture.

In the face of all the international evidence—when we would put together what has been going on in the government's actions against the trade union movement, its attempts to provide unfunded tax cuts to multinational companies, the farce of its jobs-and-growth slogans—one thing is clear in the international economic debate. We need a fairer distribution of income and wealth to drive economic growth. The increasing concentrations of wealth and income is a handbrake on global growth, holding back the global economy. The only answer our government has is a 1980s trickle-down Reaganomics-type agenda, where workers have fewer rights and lower wages, and companies enjoy lower tax and lower regulation.

There is only one problem with that formula—it suppresses demand. Demand is what is seriously lacking across the global economy and seriously lacking even in our own. You do not solve that problem by needlessly and stupidly attacking workers rights and workers conditions—attacking the minimum wage and attacking penalty rates. In this world, it is okay for Malcolm Turnbull to attack Bill Shorten—
Mr SWAN: and other Labor MPs for being former union officials, but, apparently, it is not okay—in fact, it is class war if anyone mentions that Turnbull is a multi-millionaire advocating policies—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will refer to members by their titles.

Mr SWAN: It is okay if people are attacked on our side of the House for defending workers’ rights and standing up for decent wages, but, if anyone mentions the Prime Minister is a multimillionaire advocating policies that will benefit people like him, they scream ‘class warfare’. They had no trouble rustling up $80 million of taxpayers’ money to fund a royal commission into the trade union movement, but they refused to hold a royal commission into banking and financial sector practices or to deal with the 800 individuals the Panama Papers have disclosed as tax avoiders. There is a fundamental intent on that side of the House to break unions—and when you break unions inequality inevitably follows.

This is the story of what has occurred in the United States over the last 30 years, as the wage share has gone down, the profit share has gone up and their economy has struggled. They have a hollowed-out middle class, an even bigger army of working poor and an obscenely low minimum wage. That great country has been crippled by trickle-down economics, it has smashed its middle class and now it is busily smashing its society and the cohesion that is so essential. If people in a country cannot have an expectation that growth will deliver for them and their living standards in the future and they have no faith that their kids will have an opportunity and living standards in the future, the optimism so essential to the working of a healthy capitalist economy disappears—and, when that disappears, social cohesion goes with it.

The fundamental attempt embodied in the government’s economic agenda really comes back to three bills: the two industrial relations bills on the one hand and the tax bill to give a $50 billion unfunded tax cut, mainly to multinational companies, on the other. It screams out as being an extreme trickle-down agenda, directly the opposite of what responsible organisations like the IMF are now recommending to developed economies around the world. To cover up for its wealth concentration agenda and to pretend it is somehow a wealth creation agenda, the government goes out there and ramps up its attacks on unions, Medicare, the NDIS, public schools and the public sector generally. There is story after story in the papers—you can set your watch by them. On a Sunday, there will be another story about how the tax system is carried by a few, how most of the people getting benefits are bludgers and should be knocked off, how the NDIS is simply unaffordable and how the welfare system is an unsustainable burden. Despite the fact that we have one of the most targeted, efficient welfare systems in the world, this diet of propaganda comes out to camouflage the government’s real intent.

That is why I believe there is a rapidly growing divide between the government and the people in this country. I also believe that this divide has the potential to severely disrupt our political system, across the whole political spectrum. There is a wealth divide that is getting more obscene. The power divide is growing day by day as, in particular, the government sets out to silence the voice of working people. The drive from the government and its sponsors is simply to do one thing: increase the profit share in the economy and decrease the wage share in the economy. As I have said before, this is self-defeating economic policy that the IMF
tells us will lead inevitably to weaker growth, not stronger growth. I have a fervent hope that there are some responsible voices somewhere out there in the business community—obviously not in the Business Council of Australia—who will speak out about how lopsided and self-defeating the government's agenda is. I know there are many that oppose it, but we do not hear their voices. What it is leading to is not only wealth and income inequality but increased political polarisation—and it all flows from the survival-of-the-fittest mentality at the top of this government, whoever leads it.

I believe that all Australians create wealth, from the cleaners here in Parliament House through to the executives who run the largest companies in the land. Everybody is a wealth creator and all Australians deserve a voice in our economic debate and a stake in our economic prosperity. On this side of the House, we will fight for that voice. (Time expired)

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (18:57): I am honoured to have received a vote of confidence from the people of Bennelong and been returned to this parliament with an increased majority. In fact, despite my party suffering from some turbulent results across the country, the voters of Bennelong delivered the biggest swing towards the Liberal Party in all of New South Wales. The seat of Bennelong was held by Labor just six years ago; now, we fell just a few hundred votes short of attaining a 10 per cent margin, the AEC's marker for a safe seat. This was the best result for the Liberal Party in Bennelong since John Howard led us to government in 1996—and at that time his electorate boundaries included the traditionally stronger Liberal areas of Hunters Hill and Lane Cove. This is a result that reflects years of hard work from my office and all of my team. Despite increasing our margin at each election in which I have been a candidate, we have never treated Bennelong as a safe seat and never will; nor have we prioritised support for constituents based on who they declare their loyalty to. I take very seriously my role as the representative of all people of Bennelong, not just the 59.7 per cent of people who gave me their preference.

This election result in Bennelong was only possible because of the hundreds of volunteers who came out to help at dozens of street stalls, train stations and other campaign events in the lead-up to 2 July and, of course, on election day itself. At every election, I am amazed by the demands a campaign makes of its volunteers; yet, at every election, volunteers enthusiastically rise to the task and exceed expectations. Our team stood out for its unity, efficiency and productivity throughout the campaign. I am sincerely grateful to every one for their commitment and work both on election day and on the weeks leading up to 2 July.

It is impossible to name everyone who helped, but I would like to name a certain few people: the FEC president, my friend Mr Artin Etmekdjian, the former mayor of Ryde; and Sarkis Yedelian, the treasurer. They are Armenian, and I have become very aware of Armenia and their great community. Also, there is the wider FEC membership, including Hazel Myers, who has been with us for all six years; Margaret Gibbons; Michael Brereton; my dearest friend Michael Zakka, whom I picked up from outside his flat each morning for train stations; Harry Moskovian and Jerry Yessaeian—a great team of mates; and Daniel Severino, who manned the prepolling station every single day—what a great young man. He was supported by other Young Libs, including Jordan Lane, Tim Burnley-Gibson, Eiofe Hogan, Liam Hawke and the three Davids—David Hogan, David Tregenza and David Yao. Also there is, Hugh Lee, who formed a great friendship with me some six years ago and was one of the great supporters of the Bennelong Cup, using sport to unite our community; Austin Kim; and
Craig Chung, who was booth captain at Eastwood, which had the largest swing of any individual booth in New South Wales—an amazing 12.9 per cent increase in support, taking our two-party-preference result from 50.3 per cent in 2013 to an astronomic 63.2 per cent. Craig ran as councillor in the Sydney council elections on 10 September, for which we congratulate him on his election to that important institution.

Also, there is our office team: Nisha de Alwis, Ursula Melhem, Jacob Masina, Simone Stark and Frances Lofgren—our cement. Jonathon Ward organised every train station, every shopping centre stall and blew up every balloon personally it seemed. Josh Bihary, whom I have been with for more than six years, is my campaign manager and long-serving chief of staff; a special thanks goes to your family, Josh—wife Karen and daughters, Maya and Viola—for giving up their husband and their father for much of the time during the campaign.

There is my family, including my daughter, Emily; her mother, Rosemary; her husband, Chris—it's complicated—my partner, Deb; her daughters, Amanda and Nicky; and my cousins—Adam Oakes; my favourite cousin Louise Crisp; my favourite cousins Penny and Warwick Coombes; I have a lot of favourite cousins; my favourite cousins Susan and Robert Alexander; Peter Alexander; Phil Crealy, my first doubles partner, and his wife, Christine, and their son, Philip—a great family of support. These people, along with hundreds of others, were essential to achieving our result. Considering that the seat was in the hands of the Labor Party just six years ago, we have a great deal to be proud of in the work that we have done in Bennelong and the broader Liberal cause now and we will into the future.

There are many possible reasons why we achieved this excellent result. The wonderful volunteers were essential, but I also feel it was the manner that everyone brought to this contest. We engaged with our fellow candidates and our fellow volunteers. It was civil at all times. It was as friendly and as engaging as it could have been in any contest. The atmosphere between the parties was congenial and friendly, and I thank all candidates and all their volunteers for being of a like mind—a great culture. Whenever we met each other at stations or stalls, we would always join in. We assisted each other when things were dropped, as they often are. We would help them pick it up, and they helped us pick up things. When there were shortages of little pieces that were needed, they were given freely.

The debate in Bennelong was a contest of ideas as much as ideology. Conversations invariably strayed from the central issues of the day. We discussed homeownership. We discussed housing supply. We discussed the funding of infrastructure through value capture. The first promise I made six years ago was to listen, and the second promise I made and learnt to keep was to listen, again. A good conversation is one where you listen, you seek to understand, you ask questions and you consider before making any comment.

People love to be engaged. They love to be heard. They love to have their ideas taken on board. As a result, I have gathered many thoughts, many concerns and many ideas, and from those concerns I have sought to hold inquiries. We have held inquiries into homeownership. We have held inquiries into the funding of infrastructure through value capture. In this way, these public inquiries allow us to gather evidence and to gather the facts from which to build recommendations and then for each party to build their policies to take to the next election. I think that this exercise is most worthwhile. We look forward to a continuation of the contest of ideas in this place and to painting the important issues so that we can serve our electorates better in the future.
Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (19:05): I would like to speak on this address-in-reply with regard to La Trobe and a lot of our election commitments. La Trobe is a fantastic electorate. It covers the areas of the south from Berwick to Beaconsfield to Officer, right across the Dandenong Ranges.

A number of the commitments include closed-circuit TV cameras for Beaconsfield community sporting clubs. That was a $10,000 grant. What does that mean for the Beaconsfield football club? It means that they can have a lot more safety and security when it comes to their clubrooms. Everyone knows, including members of parliament and community groups—I know my friend here the member for Dunkley would be very aware—that when a club gets broken into, it actually puts the club under huge pressure. It puts it under financial pressure, but then there are insurance issues and also that basic community lack of respect.

The closed-circuit TV cameras did two things. Firstly, it gives that extra bit of protection as a deterrent and, secondly, if there is an event that takes place, the police have a start to go after the offenders.

We also announced solar and battery storage funding for nine community groups and sporting clubs in the area. I went up to the Emerald Community House and made an announcement there, and they were very excited. It does make a big difference to many clubs, including the Upper Ferntree Gully Football Club. Solar panels help a club from having to pay huge electricity bills. It takes a bit of pressure off the club and its committee members.

This is one of my favourite ones to announce. We gave a $50,000 grant for installing water fountains—three in total—at the 1000 Steps. I know, Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta, you would be very excited about the 1000 Steps in my electorate of La Trobe. For people interstate, the 1000 Steps is based on the Kokoda Trail. As I speak, there are people going up the 1000 Steps in Melbourne. Each weekend there will be maybe 4,000 people doing the stairs. That is about 30,000 per month.

The annoying thing is, the park's rangers—Matt and the other guys down there—spend so much time picking up discarded plastic bottles. It is a lack of respect for the forest and fellow users of the track. A number of coffee cups have been discarded too. So I say to people, if you take your drink containers there please take them out again. This is a beautiful part of the Dandenong Ranges. It is a major tourist attraction and people should pay a lot more respect to it.

Another big issue is car parking at the base of 1000 Steps. Each weekend the Mount Dandenong Tourist Road has people parked right up to Devil's Elbow. Before people trek up the 1000 Steps they, pretty much, walk a kilometre to get there. The problem is in summer. I know there are fires in Victoria today up in Swan Hill and in my electorate all the CFA members will be gearing up for a big fire season. There would not be another electorate in the country where nearly every suburb has a CFA member going from Upper Ferntree Gully right across to Emerald. It is just one of those things in the La Trobe community. Everybody gets involved in the CFA.

The problem when people park their cars at the base of Mount Dandenong Tourist Road is with the CFA trucks. If one goes in each direction, they cannot pass. So it becomes of great concern. We have committed $100,000 to see if we can find a better solution to that car-parking mess down at the bottom. There is also $200,000 to go towards the Upper Ferntree...
Gully township to see if we can better connect the township to the 1000 Steps. It will also help the traders down there get a lot more business.

Renovations to the Narre Warren North Scout Hall were a $50,000 election commitment. We have already given money to the Narre Warren scouts under other Turnbull government programs. As a former Queen's Scout I always encourage parents to keep their children in the scouting movement or guides—or if they are thinking about joining, just join. It is a fantastic way of having your child learn leadership skills and be involved in a team and in helping each other out—and, at the same time, having a lot of fun. The Upper Ferntree Gully Football Club president, Peter Hards, is doing a fantastic job. We have committed $80,000 to the club for lights. Every club needs good lights. Closed-circuit TV cameras go to the Belgrave Tecoma shopping area to tackle local crime. Crime in La Trobe is bad and closed-circuit TV cameras are a deterrent. Interestingly, we gave Belgrave township closed-circuit TV cameras under the Howard government. We are now going for the upgraded version.

The Basin Football Club has $150,000 for new scoreboards and cricket pitches. Ferny Creek Scout Hall—my old scout hall—gets $200,000 to renovate the two halls. The completion of stage 2 ROC reserve pavilion has $500,000 and the completion of Holm Park recreation reserve and skateboard park has $500,000. So we can have money there for sealing the car park but also for a skate park, which is vital for young people.

There is a multi-use trail link between Emerald and Gembrook. This is something the Cardinia Shire really wanted. It is expanding recreational options. The land or track will be used by horse riders, cyclists, mountain bike riders and walkers. It is going to be great for that area, so we have provided $1 million for that program. Also $1 million went to Gembrook Cockatoo Football Netball Club. I would like to mention Marcus, from the committee, and Damian, the president, because they put a first-class application together. I am very proud of that announcement. They felt a bit left out because we had previously committed $500,000 to the Emerald sporting club down the road, and it is looking absolutely magnificent, what they have done with that money. When government money goes to a sporting group they spend it wisely, as Emerald has done. So many of the players are carpenters or plasterers and they do so much work for free.

We committed $2.5 million to the Dandenong Ranges Ridge Walk. That is a project conducted or managed by the shire rangers and would be over $7 million. The walk goes from Upwey to Montrose. I am really looking forward to certain parts of the forest having boardwalks. Everyone who lives in Victoria loves Victoria, but in winter some of those walking tracks through the Dandenong Ranges get very muddy, and we want to attract more tourism through the hills. That is something I am very excited about.

We are also going to put in a National Heritage application for the Dandenong Ranges, based on our famous landscape artist Tom Roberts and Eugene von Guerard, a Dutch artist. If you go into the gallery in Canberra you will see his works there. There is also Lin Onus, an Indigenous artist. We have a great connection in the electorate to the arts and we want to showcase this along the walk. The council will also undertake work and consultation with the community to put in this application.

As part of our tourism package, the Prime Minister came out during the election and announced $6.5 million to build a discovery centre at Emerald for Puffing Billy. The issue we have at the moment is that when you get off Puffing Billy at Emerald Lake Park on a cold,
wet day you pretty much just stand in the rain. It is not much fun. As John Robinson, the CEO, says, we need a first-class facility. Over 400,000 tourists go there each year, and we want to showcase the history of Puffing Billy and of the area.

We have committed $1 million to restoring an old red rattler train—a bit like the Harry Potter train. When I was young, we used to catch them on the Belgrave train line to go into the CBD. At the time, we did not like them; we hated them. But now we have become nostalgic and we want to have them repaired and give them a new lease on life. We want bring international and interstate tourists from the CBD. I would like to acknowledge the Clark twins. These twins have worked on these carriages for so long. Sadly, a few years back, an arsonist destroyed one of the carriages after they had been working on it for three years and only two weeks before the train would have been on the tracks. They are very excited about this million dollars and what it is going to do.

There is also $10 million for the Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, in particular for addressing the concerns of cyclists. Cadel Evans won the Tour de France and, since then, every single weekend we are inundated with cyclists going up and down the Mount Dandenong Tourist Road. This sounds fantastic, but if you are a local resident and you get stuck behind them in a car—Robyn the Clerk is looking up at me; she is a keen cyclist—they do cause a lot of problems. What we want to do is encourage the cyclists, but do it in a way that is actually safe for all. That is a $10 million package, and we will be working with the state government to ensure that is delivered.

Another issue is the widening of the Monash Freeway. We announced very early that we have a billion-dollar plan. I see the member for Aston, who is very passionate about the Monash upgrade, as is my friend the member for Dunkley. This billion-dollar plan will see an extra lane from Warrigal Road right out to Cardinia Road. Why is it so important to go out to Cardinia Road when the state Labor government said to only go to Clyde Road? The simple reason is the growth in suburbs like Officer and Cranbourne North, which is just outside my electorate. It is the fastest-growing suburb in the country. Members of parliament and politicians always get blamed for not having a vision. Well, we need to have this vision. We need to get both of these lanes of the Monash up and going, right from Warrigal Road to Cardinia Road. We also plan to put in the missing on- and off-ramps at the Beaconsfield interchange and extend O'Shea Road from Clyde Road to the interchange. That will relieve congestion on Clyde Road, because every morning and every evening at the moment everyone is getting stuck in traffic around Clyde Road.

The Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, made a big commitment to ensure that we could actually do something about the Monash Freeway traffic. I know the member for Narre Warren North, Luke Donnellan, the state minister for roads when we announced our initial plan, said it was a 'bird brain idea', yet he has now come along. He has obviously had a bit of birdseed himself and realised that this is actually a good idea because, at the state Labor level, he has now committed $400 million towards the Monash. They have now agreed to a business plan to look at our billion-dollar approach. Getting people moving again is so vitally important. That is what the Turnbull government is doing. We do need the state Labor government to get on board.

Those are our election commitments at a local level. The other commitment we had, on a national scale, was to have a ban on cosmetics testing on animals by July 2017. That means
that new products can no longer be imported into Australia if they have been tested on animals. Existing products will not be taken off the shelves. Also, in Australia, there will be no testing on animals. This is a very progressive move by the Turnbull government. It is something I am very proud to get involved in. I thank those from Be Cruelty-Free Australia and the RSPCA, who got involved in this campaign, as did the Animal Justice Party, who were very supportive with some facts and figures. With that, I will conclude.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (19:20): The address-in-reply is an opportunity to look back on the election campaign and the foundation that it laid for the coming parliament. Reflecting on the Prime Minister's leadership over the last 12 months does feel a little bit like speaking into a void, because we do have a leadership void in Australian politics today on the conservative side. This is a Prime Minister who showed, during the last election campaign, that he could not sell a coffee on Collins Street. His message of jobs and growth sounded appealing to the population, until you scratched the surface and saw what was underneath it.

What we have been seeing since the election campaign is an iron-clad rule of politics making itself felt, and that is that politics abhors a power vacuum. Unsurprisingly, in the void left by the Prime Minister a rogues' gallery of ideological extremists have set up shop. Both inside and outside the coalition party room, power sits not with the sensible centre that was promoted by the Prime Minister but with the seriously unhinged. The coalition, and this government, have been taken over by extremists. The Australian public cannot get a look-in in the coalition party room. All the coalition are interested in is their own ideological obsessions. They are obsessed with internal power plays and tilting at ideological windmills.

The Turnbull-Hanson government—the Liberal-National-One Nation government—has utterly decoupled itself from the interests of the Australian public. It is being led by the nose by the extremist end of Australian politics. We know that the Prime Minister is being led by the extremists in his party room instead of leading them. Indeed, the sexual tension between the extreme right of the Liberal Party and One Nation grew significantly after the first week in parliament.

We saw the member for Dawson state that One Nation '... were not looking at ousting an MP who was advocating the same sort of views espoused by One Nation. That was his explanation for why One Nation did not contest his seat. And further: 'The views of One Nation to a degree are the views of many in the rank and file of the Liberal-National Party.' Again, there was no rebuke from the Prime Minister, no ideological correction, no leadership to say that the party that he leads is not the party of the views of One Nation. The Prime Minister remained mute. With no rebuke from the Prime Minister, Senator Bernardi even went so far as to suggest:

One Nation and others who are saying the things that I think the Liberal Party should be saying, with a bit more nuance and maybe a little bit more delicacy.

This is Malcolm Turnbull's Liberal National party, a party of MPs proudly proclaiming that they are: '…advocating the same sort of views espoused by One Nation' and that they 'should be saying the same things as One Nation' but maybe with a little bit more spin and a little bit more political sophistication glossed over the top. That would be perfect for the leadership of this Prime Minister.

Again, the Prime Minister has been absent from the field and the void has been filled. We saw this particularly on the issue of asylum seekers in the last federal election. The last
federal election will be remembered by future generations as the election that brought One Nation and its brand of politics back into this place. They came in through a door left open by this Prime Minister, a Prime Minister who allowed his immigration minister to claim that 'illiterate and innumerate' refugees would both 'take Australian jobs' and 'languish on the dole' without rebuke and in fact with endorsement. Indeed the Prime Minister barely paused to wipe the immigration minister's saliva from the dog whistle before giving it a blast himself. The Prime Minister allowed the member for Dawson to publicly oppose the resettlement of any Muslim refugees in his electorate because: 'These refugees will either fill jobs Australian workers can do or they will be on welfare, paid for by more taxes from Australian workers.' Again, it was without rebuke. This is a Prime Minister being led by the nose by extremists both inside and outside the parliament. It has continued after the election of course.

We have endured the farce of the PM and the immigration minister engaging in the pantomime of demanding that Labor commit to supporting extraordinary legislation sight unseen that would ban asylum seekers from Australia permanently regardless of whether they had been resettled in a third country—United States, Canada, wherever—indeed, regardless of whether they had received citizenship of another country. Without briefing or explanation, they demanded that Labor support the legislation. They clearly did not even brief their own ministers on what the legislation would do as the health minister managed to quickly contradict the Prime Minister on the scope of its application. Whatever else may be said about the legislation, it was clearly a transparent political stunt—a stunt that uses some of the world's most vulnerable people as political boogie men.

Unlike the Prime Minister, the Labor party does not run when called to heel by extremists. We engage with issues on their merits guided by our principles with the objective of discharging Australia's international obligations while at the same time sending a clear message to those considering risking their own lives or the lives of their children by coming to Australia by boat, not to bother.

We see the same pattern with the government's obsession with section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. For most Australians, the 'right to be a bigot' as the Attorney General famously put it, is not a bbq stopper. We are comfortable living in the most successful multicultural nation on earth and we understand that some minor restraints on more extreme expressions of racial abuse have helped to strengthen our community's social cohesion. But this is not the case inside coalition party rooms that have been taken over by glibertarian extremists with a very narrow obsession about one specific limited restraint on speech.

The mere mention of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act in coalition circles is like adding a drop of blood into shark infested waters. It produces a frothing, churning beneath the water's surface in the bowels of the coalition party room. Coalition MPs take complete leave of their senses when they are asked to consider limits on racist hate speech. Whether it is through ignorance or ill-intent, their public comments reflect no understanding of how section 18C actually operates. Like excited undergraduates, they see the section and they shout, 'This is a restriction on free speech. I have identified it!' They are completely incapable of considering how we might go about balancing competing public interests in this space. They carry on as though the threshold for contravening the section is a trivial question of whether the speech 'offends' or insults', ignoring the body of case law that has made it clear that the section does not extend to speech that constitutes 'mere slights' but instead requires
'profound and serious effects'. They act like any unsuspecting member of the public engaging in good faith political debate could be caught by the provision, ignoring utterly section 18D of the act that contains exemptions designed to protect exactly this behaviour and protecting from the reach of the act artistic works, scientific debate and fair comment on matters of public interest.

They say that 'the process is the punishment' as though a complaint to the Human Rights Commission under section 18C triggers some kind of modern star chamber. The reality is far from it. The Human Rights Commission's focus is on resolving disputes so parties can avoid court proceedings. Of complaints where conciliation was attempted, 76 per cent were successfully resolved in 2015-16. In the 2015-16 reporting year the average time it took the commission to finalise a complaint through conciliation was three months. In that same reporting year 94 per cent of surveyed parties said that they were satisfied with the commission's service. To be blunt, the process under 18C is far better than what a respondent would confront in a defamation proceeding. They have built the biggest strawman since, well, Burning Man, and they dance around their creation in fervours of ideological rapture. As they saying goes, you should dance like no-one's watching, and coalition MPs dance around section 18C without a care for what anyone in the Australian public watching them might think.

Indeed, in the very first week of this parliament, before the Governor-General's speech had even been delivered all but one of the coalition Senate backbench joined with One Nation to sign a notice of motion to gut section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. This extraordinary policy intervention did not appear in the Governor-General's speech. Why? Because this was an agenda being imposed on this Prime Minister by the extremists in his party room. They were willing to utterly humiliate their supposed leader, the Prime Minister, in the first week after his first election in the name of this 18C strawman. Why is it racist speech that gets the coalition going?

Why were the party room dissidents not barking when Malcolm Turnbull's former chief of staff launched defamation proceedings over an insulting televised comedy act? They lay doggo when the member for Warringah and Petter Costello sued an Australian author for writing offensive falsehoods about their wives. The guard dogs of free speech were silent when the former Treasurer Joe Hockey sued The Sydney Morning Herald for its reporting on his fundraising activities. Where were the full-page newspaper ads from the IPA during any of these restraints on free speech? No-one has suggested dismantling the law of defamation every time a defamation plaintiff loses a case. Not even when a bloke sues a newspaper over the depiction of his mullet—

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (19:30): It being 7.30, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Petition: Victoria Roads

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) (19:30): I have a petition with 3,968 signatures.
It has been examined by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions and found to be in order.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of VicRoads road users draws to the attention of the House the urgent need for action on road funding on VicRoads roads for which the Victorian State Government is responsible. The current condition of the VicRoads road network means that motorists face daily danger, inconvenience and risks of vehicle damage. The Turnbull Coalition Government has committed to providing $345 million in roads funding to the Victorian Government's road network and has asked the Victorian Government to match it's funding.

We therefore ask the House to do all within its power to encourage the Victorian State Government to commit to matching the Federal Government's $345 million Victorian rural and regional roads package, including vital repair works on the Princes Highway and Henty Highway for which the Victorian Government is responsible.

from 3,968 citizens.

Mr TEHAN: It is with honour and privilege that I present this petition on behalf of my constituents and, in particular, on behalf of the principal petitioner, Jean Hillam. Jean Hillam decided to take up this petition after she suffered major damage to her car while travelling on the Henty Highway at night. Jean is an 83-year-old pensioner and she suffered over $800 in damage to her car while travelling to Bolwarra to meet with the Portland arts group. She forgot her painting as she drove back to Portland. It was pouring with rain, there was no lighting and, sadly, she hit a pothole and it split a rim on her car entirely in two. I commend Jean for taking up this petition, which has, as I have said, 3,968 signatures—nearly 4,000 signatures. I also commend all those businesses, individuals and family members who have signed this petition, because, after signing this petition, with its call to arms for action on our local roads, they have achieved in part what they set out to do.

Last week the state government decided to match the $20 million the federal government put on the table for the Henty Highway and the $20 million that the federal government put on the table for the Princes Highway. That is a much-needed $80 million injection to our local roads. The most important thing now is that VicRoads immediately—and I say this loudly and clearly—gets on with fixing the roads. It has been estimated that we need $180 million to fix the roads. This investment of $80 million gets us nearly halfway. There is still more to be done, but, with an $80 million injection, we now need real action to start immediately. I call on the state government, on behalf of my community, on behalf of the nearly 4,000 signatories of this petition, to immediately get to work.

We have seen the federal government leading the way with a major Victorian infrastructure package, a $220 million commitment for the Murray Basin Rail Project. Also, we have seen significant funding going to our local roads. There is more to be done but, most importantly, the work needs to start now, because we should not have events where pensioners, driving their cars at night, are faced with bills of $800 due to the poor condition of our local roads. It is with great honour that I present this petition to the House.

Herbert Electorate: Methamphetamine

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (19:35): I rise in this place this evening to talk about a growing and not-so-silent epidemic in my electorate of Herbert, and that is the scourge of
methamphetamine or, as it is commonly known, ice. The spike in this drug's prevalence in Australia has been widespread, and regional Queensland is certainly not immune. There is no group of people or social demographic that is immune or not vulnerable to this epidemic. I was recently talking to a professional in the legal field who told me of a gentleman aged 65 years who was in the Townsville court system for the first time in his life as a result of his addiction to ice. He has never committed a crime in his life. His addiction is destroying his life and his relationships.

Families across North Queensland are feeling the effects of the drug ice, with the number of people seeking help for amphetamine addiction in Townsville rising by 165 per cent since 2010. There is no youth drug and alcohol detox facility north of Brisbane, with young people who wish to seek treatment being required to travel as far away as Melbourne due to the pressure on the service in Brisbane. This means that many young people do not get access to treatment, and this is especially the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. Regional Queensland is crying for out drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation services. Recently a desperate Queensland mother built a cage to house her son who was caught in the grip of the ice epidemic. Whilst I do not condone this action, it needs to be acknowledged that this is the act of desperate and distressed mother. This action clearly demonstrates the total lack of services in regional Queensland communities.

This LNP government has done little to nothing to address this desperate and destructive situation. The Prime Minister launched his 'ICE task force' some time ago and to date it has delivered nothing. The announcement was a bravado act and nothing more than just that. Whilst the government has announced the ICE task force, it has also cut millions upon millions of dollars to frontline services that work to support people dealing with drug addiction. This government has cut millions from the health flexible funds, which includes funds to support drug treatment services and prevention strategies.

Liberal-National governments also have a propensity to cut prevention and early intervention services, and it is very clear that this investment is the most effective and cost-efficient solution. I suggest that, instead of this government focussing on people coming into Australia by boat—which they say they have fixed—maybe they could instead turn their attention to the illegal drugs that are killing our youth and other members of our communities across the nation—and these are truly are coming in illegally by boat!

During the recent election campaign, I was the only candidate in Queensland who committed funds towards a drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation centre. The Salvation Army have been fundraising for over five years to include a youth drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation centre in their much-needed new Townsville complex. The Salvation Army's Townsville facility is both almost ready to be condemned and so overcrowded and booked out that they have had to turn away people who desperately need help. The people addicted to ICE are also often living with mental health conditions, which makes treatment complex and difficult. Our communities in regional Queensland need action and we need it now. We do not want some bravado announcement of a task force; we want facilities, treatment centres and something that can deliver action on this important issue.

There have been numerous reviews into the issues surrounding drug addiction and treatment. Let's not waste any more time or money on countless task forces and useless talk. Let's just get down to business and commit to action and support services. Drug addiction is
also linked to poverty, homelessness and crime. We cannot talk about one without the other. Townsville is currently in the grip of an ICE epidemic, which is also contributing to our youth crime. I stand here today demanding that the Turnbull government takes this issue seriously and delivers the funds required to provide the much-needed drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation services in Townville.

Health Care

Ms KEAY (Braddon) (19:39): On behalf of the Braddon electorate, I rise today to put the Turnbull government on notice in the critical area of health care. At the 2 July election, the Braddon community overwhelmingly voted in favour of better health care. They also voted to protect Medicare from the attacks being made by the Turnbull government. On the day before the election the Prime Minister promised that no Australian would pay more to visit the doctor. This was a complete and utter lie. It has been proven to be a lie with the latest figures from the government's own health department. These figures show quarterly bulk-billing rates in Tasmania dropped in the June quarter from 76.4 per cent to 74 per cent at the end of the September quarter—the biggest fall in any state or territory in the nation.

Thousands of Tasmanians are now paying more to see the doctor, and the silence from the Prime Minister and his Tasmanian Liberal senators has been deafening. At the last election we had the three amigos who wanted to punish the community on health care. The Tasmanian community punished them because they were out of touch. And now it seems that Senator Abetz and his three other Liberal Senate stooges are no different. The Prime Minster, Senator Abetz and these three stooges need look no further than the East Devonport Medical Centre. The East Devonport Medical Centre is reducing bulk-billing to general patients. This means struggling families are faced with an out-of-pocket expense just to see their doctor as the centre winds back bulk-billing. This centre explained to their patients that the reason is 'due to increasing costs along with the federal government freezing the Medicare rebate until June 2020'. Families are being made to make the difficult choice between obtaining care for a sick family member, having that preventative health check-up or putting food on the table.

In effect, the freezing of the Medicare rebate to GPs is nothing more than a GP tax by stealth. The Prime Minister knows this. But, then again, if you are snuggled up in a harbour-side Point Piper mansion, you are probably out of touch with the needs of the average person in the north-west and the west coast of Tasmania. I can just see the Prime Minister ducking into the Double Bay Hotel for a Pimm's and lemonade, not a worry in the world, while the people in my electorate struggle to make ends meet and, thanks to the Prime Minister, are paying more just to see the doctor.

But it is just not me that says the Prime Minister is out of touch and has his priorities all wrong. In a recent letter to me from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, they wanted to make me aware of the success of local GPs Dr Jane Cooper from Devonport and Dr Chris Hughes from Wynyard in achieving major awards in that organisation. The college also told me:

… for a state with around 600 General Practice Managers, Tasmania has been over represented in national accolades this year, and Braddon, it seems, is leading the charge.

Unfortunately, the correspondence goes on to say:

We must now turn our attention to the continuing risks facing the health of the Tasmanian people.
GPs across the country are still reeling from the open attack on general practice, the best-evidenced driver of preventative health outcomes, via the oppressive Medicare rebate freeze. The college says:

Nowhere is this being felt more acutely than in the northern suburbs of Hobart and the North West, where for the first time in memory struggling patients are being asked to pay out of pocket expenses for General Practice visits.

Another consequence of the Prime Minister's GP tax is that people are being forced to present at the emergency departments of the Mersey Community or North West Regional hospitals. This approach makes no economic sense, let alone the obvious preventative health benefits of patients firstly seeing their local GP.

On the Mersey Community Hospital, the only federally funded hospital in Australia, this week a delegation of north-west Tasmania mayors are visiting this place to try to gain some long-term certainty for that hospital. But the minister has repeatedly refused to give any certainty to the long-term funding for that hospital. We need an end to the freeze on the Medicare rebate and we need certainty for the hospital. Prime Minister, the people of my electorate will never forget if you fail them on health care.

La Trobe Electorate: Crime

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (19:44): Sometimes, when you live in the electorate of La Trobe and you are being targeted by this crime wave and the Apex gang, you think that it was only happening to us. I was reading the other day in the crime figures released in the Herald Sun, that in suburbs such as Berwick one in five burglaries—and I think Berwick had over 250—end up with the occupants being violently assaulted by the burglars. I quote from the Herald Sun today:

After a series of terrifying home invasions and youth justice riots, Galaxy research conducted exclusively for the Herald Sun shows 68 per cent of voters polled believe authorities are losing the battle against Apex.

And in a direct warning to the Andrews Government, 64 per cent believe it is not doing enough to tackle youth crime and 44 per cent think the state is less safe today than at the 2014 state election. This is a clear indication that crime is a huge concern in La Trobe, and in Melbourne as well.

While we are talking numbers, let us have a look at the crime data in La Trobe. We know that recent data puts theft at the top of the list in Berwick. Coming second are breaches of orders and crimes against the person, which are neck and neck. This also carries through to suburbs such as Narre Warren, and I have previously spoken to the House about areas such as Beaconsfield and, sadly, it is actually going up into the Dandenong Ranges.

These numbers do not lie, but if you are not the kind of person who likes data, all you need to do is listen to the anecdotes in the community. Last week a very long-term business and stalwart of Berwick, Drysdale's Berwick Village Jewellery, was ram raided in the middle of the night. I viewed the footage firsthand where a ute—obviously stolen—reversed and took out the front windows and the two thieves smashed up the shop and stole thousands of dollars worth of jewellery. This obviously terrified the owners, but it also sends another message, which is that we are losing control of crime. It is very sad.
I am chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, and we have set the following terms of reference for the most recent inquiry, which is into migrant settlement outcomes:

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration shall inquire into and report on migrant settlement outcomes with reference to:

- the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;
- national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;
- the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;
- whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects; and
- any other related matter.

The Committee shall give particular consideration to social engagement of youth migrants, including involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behavior such as gang activity, and the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address issues arising from this behavior.

I would like to take this opportunity and encourage individuals or organisations to make submissions to the inquiry as soon as possible. Submissions are open until 31 January 2017. The committee did take a while to come to agreement on the terms of reference. I thank all the committee members and the secretariat.

I have argued for a while now that we need a federal approach to looking at this migrant gang issue. It started with the Apex gang—a Sudanese based gang in Melbourne. They got their name from Apex Street in Dandenong. It has been an effective gang, because other gangs have morphed into this one, and they are committing exceptionally violent offences. In my day in the police force having a police car rammed was unheard of. At the moment, in Melbourne, there are two rammings of police cars a week. If you compare the crime figures from Victoria and New South Wales, New South Wales has a greater population, yet our crime figures are growing dramatically. Enough is enough. We will look at what is going on. If the state Labor government in Victoria does not take matters seriously at a federal level, we will definitely look into this.

**Nuclear Weapons**

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (19:49): I take this opportunity to reflect on an aspect of President Obama's leadership that may well be sorely missed in the near future, especially if countries like Australia are not prepared to act more conscientiously on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Earlier this year, President Obama presided over the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, a series of meetings he initiated in 2010. At that summit in April, there was a particular focus on the dangerous and provocative conduct of North Korea—which was underlined when the regime of Kim Jong-un decided to fire short-range missiles to coincide with the meeting.

There is no doubt we are in desperate need of concerted efforts to reduce conflict, build regional and global cooperation, and both resist and wind back nuclear weapon capability. Yet, in March, Donald Trump—then a candidate, now of course President-elect—said that countries like South Korea, Japan and even Saudi Arabia may need to develop nuclear
weapons. That would represent a very risky and unwise approach to nuclear weapons proliferation. As Sam Kleiner, a postdoctoral fellow at Yale observed recently in The Atlantic:

For 70 years, American presidents of both parties have understood the simple arithmetic involved—that the more countries have nuclear weapons, the more opportunities there are for nuclear war to break out, whether by design or by accident.

I had the privilege of attending a ceremony in Nagasaki in April as part of the Mayors for Peace initiative that saw the first Australian sculpture installed in the Nagasaki Peace Park located alongside the cenotaph that marks ground zero. The sculpture, titled Tree of Life: Gift of Peace, was created by the Anangu communities of Yalata and Oak Valley at Maralinga as part of a project overseen by the Alphaville arts organisation, with funding support from the cities of Fremantle, Cockburn and Subiaco in my home state of Western Australia. The Anangu people were harmed and dislocated as a result of the British bomb tests at Maralinga, and so the Australian sculpture represents a gift from one atomic survivor community to another.

During my time in Japan, I was able to speak with people who survived the atomic bombs that fell on their cities. These men and women are known as 'hibakusha', or atomic bomb survivors, and needless to say it was deeply affecting to hear from people who had experienced and survived a nuclear blast. At the time, there was speculation about the possibility that Mr Obama could become the first American President to visit Hiroshima. The hibakusha that I spoke with all expressed hope that this would occur, and it was wonderful that, at the end of May, President Obama took his place at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. He said, on that occasion:

We may not be able to eliminate man's capacity to do evil, so nations—and the alliances that we've formed—must possess the means to defend ourselves. But among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear, and pursue a world without them.

We may not realize this goal in my lifetime. But persistent effort can roll back the possibility of catastrophe. We can chart a course that leads to the destruction of these stockpiles. There is no reason that we should expect a future without the use of nuclear weapons unless we strive relentlessly to bring about their abolition. To those who might claim that such an outcome is unrealistic or fanciful, I say that without the courage to imagine and pursue a world free of nuclear weapons, we are enabling the delusion of those who believe that violence and war achieves anything, and we are biding our time until the next atomic disaster.

In the past, Australia has played a constructive and often successful role in fighting nuclear proliferation. But recently that has not been the case. It is not widely known that in August it was Australia's representative who forced a vote and voted against the adoption of a United Nations report that was the first step in negotiating 'a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination'. A fortnight ago, when the UN General Assembly decided to start those negotiations, Australia was one of 38 countries that again voted no. I am sure that would disappoint a clear majority of Australians. In fact, a 2014 Nielsen poll showed that 84 per cent of Australians want their government to be part of a global effort to prohibit nuclear weapons.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Tim Wright and his Asia-Pacific colleagues within the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for their advocacy on this issue. I
am also pleased and proud that the Labor Party, at our most recent national conference, adopted the following position as part of our platform:

Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, Labor firmly supports the negotiation of a global treaty banning such weapons and welcomes the growing global movement of nations that is supporting this objective.

As the representative of a community in Fremantle that has played an active role in opposing nuclear proliferation, I intend to make that part of my work in this place.

Fisher Electorate: Mental Health

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (19:54): I rise today to talk about the very important issue of mental health and to inform the chamber of a newly established facility on the Sunshine Coast that promises to become one of the leading mental health hubs in the nation. Despite the Sunshine Coast being known for its wonderful lifestyle, it is a sad fact that it is recognised as a hot-spot for youth suicide and home to a growing number of people with mental health challenges.

One in five Australians will suffer from a mental illness in any given year. Each day, five males and two females commit suicide. In 2014 alone, 108,120 years of potential life were taken away by suicide. Despite the obvious social consequences that accompany mental illness, there are significant economic consequences that must also be considered. The costs associated with mental illness in Australia equate to around $60 billion. That represents 4 per cent of our GDP and is the equivalent of 12 million working days being lost each year.

Numerous organisations work alongside the government to combat mental illness on a daily basis. Community groups are also tackling the issue. On Sunday, 16 October I took part in the first ever Walk for Mental Health. This event saw Australian Rotary Clubs from Alexandra Headland, Maroochydore, Kawana, Buderim and Mooloolaba come together to raise money. And I want to give a big shout-out to my good friend Vicki Stewart for organising that fantastic event. I am happy to report that around $4,000 was raised for Australian Rotary health research and the funds will support scholarships for PhD students researching mental health issues.

Earlier I mentioned the Thompson Institute. The University of the Sunshine Coast is currently developing a dedicated world-class facility focused on addressing mental health issues in the community, particularly depression and dementia. After more than four years of planning and a very generous donation from philanthropists Roy and Nola Thompson, the Sunshine Coast Mind and Neuroscience—the Thompson Institute—will be a hub for mental health research, teaching and public clinical services.

Earlier this year, Professor Jim Lagopoulos was appointed the inaugural Director of the Thompson Institute. Jim has 20 years of experience as an intraoperative neurophysiologist and was the Director of Clinical Imaging at the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Research Institute for the past five years prior to moving to the Sunshine Coast. Jim's pioneering techniques in the use of MRI, magnetic resonance imaging, on brains have brought science closer to finding the cause of schizophrenia, and he will be continuing his own team's research on neuroimaging. Just as importantly, he will be educating the next generation of brain scientists and specialist doctors and will work closely with the team at the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital.
The Turnbull government recognises the numerous mental health challenges that exist in Australian communities. That is why we are investing $192 million to strengthen mental health care, establishing a further eight suicide prevention regional trial sites and an additional 10 headspace centres.

Our nation recently commemorated Remembrance Day, and it would be remiss of me not to mention the prevalence of mental health issues among those who have served our nation in the Defence Force during times of peace and war. The Turnbull government is committed to improving and maintaining the sound mental health of our veterans and ex-service men and women. In our 2016 budget, we announced $46.4 million, so that anyone who has served in the Australian Defence Force, even for one day, has access to free treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and alcohol and substance abuse. It should be noted that a connection is not required between these conditions and their service. Eligible veterans need to contact the Department of Veterans Affairs and they will be sent a white card that may be used to pay for their treatment. This treatment is uncapped and fully funded.

I should also note that the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provides counselling and group programs to veterans, peacekeepers and eligible family members. This service plays a crucial role in helping to assist the lives of our veterans and their families, and the Thompson Institute on the Sunshine Coast is there to help them.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Hayes: to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) since 2014, Da’esh (also known as ISIL) has been carrying out terror campaigns against Christians, Assyrians, Mandeans, Yezidis, and other ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria;

(b) these campaigns have taken the form of mass murders, torture, rape, kidnappings, sexual enslavement and other crimes; and

(c) these atrocities constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide;

(2) noting that the United Nations mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria has declared that Da’esh’s actions against the Yazidi people amount to genocide, calls on the:

(a) Australian Government to refer to the Da’esh atrocities as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide; and

(b) United Nations and Member States to co-ordinate measures to prevent further atrocities occurring in Syria and Iraq and take all necessary action to hold those responsible to account; and

(3) commends:

(a) the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Lebanese Republic, the Republic of Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, for their ongoing support and efforts to shelter and protect those fleeing the violence in Syria and Iraq; and

(b) those nations that are providing a permanent home for Syrian and Iraqi refugees who are escaping persecution and violence.

Ms T. M. Butler: to move:
That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) 1 December marks World AIDS Day, which is held every year to raise awareness about the issues concerning HIV and AIDS, and is a day for people to show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died; and
   (b) the theme for World AIDS Day this year is ‘HIV is still here—and it's on the move’;
(2) acknowledges the roles played by people living with HIV and their friends, family, supporters, AIDS activists and researchers, past and present, in making living with HIV possible; and
(3) will support actions to reduce stigma and prevent new HIV transmissions, and work towards a cure.

Mr L. S. O'Brien: to move:
That this House:

(1) congratulates the Government on the success of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF);
(2) acknowledges the significant and positive impact that the NSRF is having in rural, remote and disadvantaged regions around Australia; and
(3) notes that the:
   (a) Government is investing $125,286,955 million in 40 projects around Queensland under 3 rounds of the NSRF; and
   (b) NSRF is delivering infrastructure projects to create jobs in regional areas, improve community facilities and support stronger and more sustainable communities across Queensland.

Mr Broad: to move:
That this House:

(1) congratulates the Government on the success of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF);
(2) acknowledges the significant and positive impact that the NSRF is having in rural, remote and disadvantaged regions around Australia; and
(3) notes that the:
   (a) Government is investing $153,814,329 million in 53 projects around Victoria under 3 rounds of the NSRF; and
   (b) NSRF is delivering infrastructure projects to create jobs in regional areas, improve community facilities and support stronger and more sustainable communities across Victoria.

Ms Marino: to move:
That this House:

(1) congratulates the Government on the success of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF);
(2) acknowledges the significant and positive impact that the NSRF is having in rural, remote and disadvantaged regions around Australia; and
(3) notes that the:
   (a) Government is investing $66,336,110 in 34 projects around Western Australia under 3 rounds of the NSRF; and
   (b) NSRF is delivering infrastructure projects to create jobs in regional areas, improve community facilities and support stronger and more sustainable communities across Western Australia.

Mr van Manen: to move:
That this House:

(1) notes that:
(a) the ‘Declaration of Intent on a Strategic Dialogue’ between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Netherlands was signed by Foreign Minister Bishop and Foreign Minister Koenders on 2 November 2016, in Canberra;

(b) the Declaration has been updated from the one signed in February 2014 by Foreign Minister Bishop and the then Foreign Minister Timmermans to reflect current events and increased closeness between our two countries through our shared commitment to achieve accountability with respect to the downing of MH17; and

(c) the Declaration commits Australia and the Netherlands to enhanced cooperation on international security, trade and investment, human rights and development issues; and

(2) welcomes enhanced economic and security cooperation between Australia and the Netherlands.

Mr T. R. Wilson: to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) on Friday 11 November, Australia commemorates Remembrance Day;

(b) the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is a significant anniversary for this country as it signifies the ending of a war where over 60,000 Australians lost their lives;

(c) of these 60,000, over 16,900 Australians remain unknown or unaccounted for on the Western Front;

(d) it is on Remembrance Day that the body of an unknown Australian soldier from the Western Front was laid to rest in the Hall of Memories at the Australian soldier; and

(e) in July 2016 six formerly unknown Australian soldiers were given Headstone Dedication at the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery;

(2) acknowledges:

(a) that many communities across the country pause to remember the sacrifice of Australian service men and women; and

(b) the significance of this day to all unknown Australians killed in action; and

(3) notes that during the ‘Century of Service’ that is occurring between 2014 and 2018 Australians are given a chance to remember the service and sacrifice of all who fought during World War I.

Mr Irons: to move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the actions this Government has taken to establish the Commonwealth Redress Scheme (CRS) for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse;

(2) congratulates this Government for leading by example by establishing the CRS for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse and for inviting other governments and institutions to ‘opt in’ to the scheme on the responsible ‘entity pays basis’ recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;

(3) acknowledges the courage of the survivors who presented evidence to the Royal Commission and that their past and continuing advocacy for redress is vital to the successful implementation of the CRS; and

(4) recognises that this Government acknowledges that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse need and deserve equal access and treatment.

Mr Hill: to move:

That this House:
(1) notes that:
   (a) there is a current controversy pertaining to the so called ‘palace letters’ between the then Governor-General Sir John Kerr and Her Majesty The Queen in the months leading up to the dismissal of the Whitlam Government; and
   (b) this correspondence has been declared ‘personal’ and therefore secret at ‘Her Majesty the Queen’s instructions’; and
(2) acknowledges that:
   (a) these letters are a matter of our national history which should be made available to the Australian people;
   (b) regardless of the merits or otherwise of the dismissal, Australians deserve to know the extent to which The Queen involved herself in the sacking of an elected Australian Government; and
   (c) the very notion of ‘personal’ letters between the Monarch and the Governor-General offends all concepts of transparency and democracy that we hold dear; and
(3) call on the Australian Government to take steps to have the documents released.

Mr Ramsey: to move:

That this House:
(1) recognises that:
   (a) the Strzelecki Track is a vital freight and tourist route connecting Adelaide to the Moomba Gas fields in South Australia’s far north-east and South East Queensland;
   (b) the route is used extensively by pastoralists, mining vehicles and tourists and is no longer fit for purpose due to pot holes, bulldust and closures from flooding;
   (c) it can take more than 12 hours for heavy transport to negotiate 338 kilometres from Lyndhurst to Moomba;
   (d) the Track is used by many tourists heading into the heart of Australia and visiting some of the wonders of outback South Australia and Queensland and with a proper standard road there is great potential to grow this industry; and
   (e) the Track is also used by heavy transport which supports the exploitation of the Moomba Gas Fields and trucks carrying supplies to, and cattle from, properties and they are totally reliant on this route;
(2) notes that:
   (a) the Track cuts through remote and inhospitable country where emergency services are reliant on the Royal Flying Doctor Service;
   (b) more than 30 road trains a day navigate the Track each day carrying vital equipment for the gas industry and thousands of dollars of damage is done to each of these trucks on a daily basis; and
   (c) rain can close the road for up to six weeks as it did in 2010 when large sections were washed away or left underwater and on average shuts the road for 45 days a year; and
(3) calls on the state and federal governments to work together in an urgent manner to bring about the sealing of this vital route.

Mr Gee: to move:

That this House:
(1) congratulates the Government on the success of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF); and
(2) acknowledges the significant and positive impact that the NSRF is having in rural, remote and disadvantaged regions around Australia; and
(3) notes that the:

(a) Government is investing $205,622,942 million in 70 projects around New South Wales (NSW) under 3 rounds of the NSRF; and

(b) NSRF is delivering infrastructure projects to create jobs in regional areas, improve community facilities and support stronger and more sustainable communities across NSW.

Mr Wallace: to move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates the Government for pursuing an extensive technology reform agenda that will change the way Australians interact with Government services for the better;

(2) recognises the:

(a) actions the Government is taking to renew Centrelink’s aging information technology system through the Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation program, which will improve the user experience for the many Australians who access these services each week, and ensure the long term sustainability of our welfare system;

(b) actions the Government is taking to upgrade and modernise the health and aged care payment system, and improve the services offered by Medicare to all Australians; and

(c) investment the Government is making in digital services such as myGov, to further improve this service which is now used by more than ten million Australians; and

(3) congratulates the Government on pursuing a courageous reform agenda which is sorely needed to correct six successive years of under-investment by Labor.
Dr ALY (Cowan) (10:30): I rise to table a petition. The petition has 335 signatures and it speaks to the appalling state of the internet, particularly in the suburb of Greenwood in my electorate of Cowan, where homes and businesses have been waiting for more than two years and are looking at a further wait of at least two years for adequate access to the internet. The petition requests first of all that they prioritise the NBN in areas that have no access to broadband; that the copper in Greenwood is tested for its NBN capability; and that the MyBroadband website is updated with data that actually reflects the current information about the appalling state of NBN in Cowan. While we continue to wait for basic internet coverage in Cowan, I have started the Internet Action Group within my electorate, which consists of a coming together of residents, businesses and private providers to find a more suitable and immediate response and immediate solution to the lack of access to the internet within the Cowan electorate.

The Cowan electorate spans some 180 square kilometres. Within those 180 square kilometres I can safely say that very few households actually receive adequate NBN. Those that do receive NBN are consistently making complaints about the speed of their uploads and downloads. Other areas, such as Greenwood, have absolutely no access to the internet whatsoever. In response to that, residents have gathered together and looked at local solutions, whereby they have approached private providers to supply towers on houses and on businesses to at least provide some form of internet for houses. In my office alone I have had several people come to me to talk about how the lack of internet has affected them, among them a young man who is trying to start a business in Cowan but has no access to the internet to be able to do so.

In tabling this petition, which has been passed by the Petitions Committee, I would hope that this issue is addressed as soon as possible and that we get adequate internet access in Cowan.

The petition read as follows—

The Australian Government’s myBroadband website details many parts of the Cowan electorate as having ‘D-E’ grade broadband internet quality. Many residents in areas such as Greenwood are unable to access ADSL and are relying on costly and data limited mobile broadband services, this whilst the myBroadband shows Greenwood to have an A rating for ADSL availability. The construction of the NBN is not scheduled to commence in parts of the electorate such as Greenwood until 2018. As the NBN rollout schedule indicates the start of construction and not its availability to consumers, residents of this area will thus have to wait even longer (estimated to be 18 months) to gain access to good quality internet. This is of deep concern to those who do not currently have access to quality broadband services, especially when areas with better quality existing broadband internet are receiving the NBN sooner. This prevents persons from effective communication, able to run businesses from home and most importantly deprive them and their children from equal opportunity for online learning.

from 335 citizens.

Petition received.
Dunkley Electorate: Peninsula Home Hospice

Mr CREWTHER (Dunkley) (10:33): Today I rise to talk about a federal government election commitment that has recently been approved for a great local Dunkley organisation, the Peninsula Home Hospice.

Last week I was thrilled to announce that the Minister for Regional Development, Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash, approved funding of $535,790 for Peninsula Home Hospice under the Community Development Grants Program. This funding approval delivers on an election commitment I made to the people of Dunkley.

This much needed funding will cover a large portion of the cost of the new fit out of Peninsula Home Hospice's building in Main Street, Mornington, which has now been completed. I was pleased to have made this announcement at Peninsula Home Hospice's annual general meeting last week, alongside CEO Rachael Bovenizer, Helen Fairlie, the chair of the board, and Tom Pickford, the treasurer. During the meeting, I was able to see firsthand the new refurbishment that has been built with these funds—and the building looks great! This funding will have terrific flow-on effects for the entire communities of the Mornington Peninsula, Frankston City and even the City of Kingston, up to Mordialloc Creek.

Established on the Mornington Peninsula in 1984, Peninsula Home Hospice is an accredited, not-for-profit, community palliative care organisation providing home-based specialist health care and support to people living at home with a terminal illness. Its services are also extended to the families and friends of its clients, as it recognises that family and friends too need support during these times.

Specialist palliative care aims to relieve symptoms, improve quality of life and support families through the illness and into bereavement. The hospice assists people with illness to maintain their independence and to live life as fully as they can. There are a variety of services that the hospice provides, including nursing, medical consultancy, counselling, art therapy, music therapy, spiritual support, client-care volunteer support and bereavement services.

I am very proud to have been able to advocate on behalf of Peninsula Home Hospice and to secure this much-needed funding as one of my election commitments to Dunkley. I was very pleased to have prioritised this as one of my election commitments to be rolled out as soon as possible, given the enormous need within our electorate. This is terrific news for this not-for-profit organisation, which provides this much-needed home-based palliative-care support in our community. I congratulate Peninsula Home Hospice for its efforts and advocacy for this funding, and I look forward to working with Peninsula Home Hospice as well as the community as we continue to help those in need in palliative care and through the bereavement phase.

Medicare

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:36): I rise again today to talk about our ongoing battle on this side of the House to save Medicare. Of course, we have seen the continued attack by the Liberal government on our universal health-care system and particularly on the institution of Medicare. It was not that long ago that the Liberals attempted to bring in the unpopular $7 GP co-payment, otherwise known as the $7 GP tax. Labor stood strong against this, along
with the community, sending a clear message that we would defend our universal health-care system.

But of course, when the Liberal Party could not get away with that, they then brought in the GP tax by stealth by freezing the Medicare rebate levels. This is having a significant impact on bulk-billing in the community. We have seen the eroding of the ability to access bulk-billing and the eroding of our universal health-care system. I will continue to fight against this, as I know many of my constituents in my electorate will.

This has been raised time and time again because of the impacts it is going to have. My electorate is not a wealthy electorate. It is one where every dollar in the pocket counts. If parents and older Australians are having to fork out for every visit when they have to go to a doctor, this is going to have an impact on their quality of life. As I have said many times in this place, it will be those who simply cannot afford it who do not go to the doctor and then have an illness or health condition get worse and worse until it becomes a chronic problem. That is not the type of health-care system we want to see in Australia.

I have had thousands of constituents sign my petitions against this really unfair freeze to the Medicare rebate and the resulting increase in costs. My constituents have said many, many things, but I think one of my constituents from Reynella sums it up: 'It will hurt those who can least afford it and destroy the concept of universal health care.'

But it is not just constituents raising this issue. Doctors and GPs alike have raised it as well. Kate, a GP registrar from the southern suburbs, explains: 'I work in a relatively low SES area with 80 to 90 per cent pensioners and health card holders. We elect not to charge a gap for low-income people, but, if the Medicare freeze remains, we will be unable to pay staff and rising costs, and we will have to keep charging to keep running.' This is a serious attack on our universal health-care system. It is time that the Liberal Party stopped this attack and recognised that Medicare is an important institution.

Petition: Road Infrastructure

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (10:39): Today I want to bring to the attention of the parliament a petition by local residents in my electorate of McPherson on the southern Gold Coast to the Queensland Department of Main Roads and Transport regarding the need for sound barriers to mitigate noise from the M1. I raise this to acknowledge their very real concerns and to add my voice to their campaigns to have a sound barrier installed along the Somerset Drive off ramp onto the M1 at Mudgeeraba. I thank and recognise Mr Doug Whittaker, who has organised this petition on behalf of the local residents affected.

The M1 is of course a vital part of the Gold Coast's transport infrastructure, and I have spoken many times in parliament about the need for further upgrading and improvement of this major motorway. I was delighted earlier this year to help secure federal funding for the upgrade of the M1 from Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes and to receive advice recently from the Minister for Urban Infrastructure that work is progressing on getting a firm price from market on this section of the upgrade. This is positive news for my constituents, who experience the daily gridlock and delay on this section of the M1.

But it is also incumbent on the state government to ensure that the amenity of local residents who live nearby is not adversely affected. As the petition points out, the volume of
traffic on the M1 has increased significantly since the Glenwood Park estate in Mudgeeraba was built in 1999. This estate runs beside the Somerset Drive off ramp, and the need for a sound barrier is becoming increasingly urgent. The fact is that a precedent has been set regarding the need for noise barriers, with barriers installed on the Somerset Drive on ramp of the M1. I believe it is only fair and reasonable that residents living beside the off ramp are also given the respite that a barrier provides.

I call on the Queensland government to favourably consider this petition and to ensure that the barrier is in place before the planned upgrading occurs. The petition has been presented directly to the Standing Committee on Petitions, and I look forward to a favourable response from the minister.

This is understandably something that has a significant impact on the wellbeing and amenity of the residents affected. As I mentioned, the M1 is a crucial transport link, and I will certainly continue to work with local residents and all levels of government for further improvements and upgrades that are increasingly necessary to ensure locals and tourists alike can enjoy living in, working in and visiting our region. I seek leave to table a copy of the petition.

Leave granted.

Longman Electorate: Electrical Safety

Ms LAMB (Longman) (10:42): Last week I met with a constituent, Derek Green, to discuss the importance of electrical safety, training and awareness. Derek runs a small business that operates as a registered training organisation. He is really making a difference in electrical safety through education, support and compliance. Derek has over 34 years experience in the electrical industry, so he really knows what is talking about when it comes to electrical safety. Derek felt compelled to come and see me after witnessing a recent surge in electrical safety incidents. Many of these events have resulted in significant physical injury to those involved, and in Derek's view many of the incidents could easily have been avoided if adequate education and training had been provided.

More can and should be done to improve the safety of workers, when it comes to working dealing with electricity. We know that. Derek spoke to me about his belief that the current electrical safety training programs for most workers are in his view either inadequate or nonexistent. Derek advised me of his particular concern about the minimal training that is given to apprentices in the construction industry as they begin to learn their trade. We need to make sure that these workers are given the right information so that they can come home safe at the end of every workday.

But electrical incidents are not just confined to the construction industry. Derek has recently witnessed accidents right across a range of industries, including agriculture, transport, arboriculture and civil works. It is important that workers in every single industry are taught about the dangers of electricity. A worker has the best chance of being safe when they are fully aware of the dangers that surround them.

The other thing that Derek raised with me was around education for school leavers. Workplace safety is a topic that he is really passionate about. It is his hope that year 12 students are provided with some form of workplace training. Many of these school leavers are preparing to enter the workforce for the first time, and he really believes that training of this
type would be incredibly valuable. From our conversation, I made a commitment to Derek that I will work with our state members of parliament in the electorate to look at how a program could be run out at a local level.

Young people can have a really positive impact on their workplaces with their confidence and their sense of infallibility. However, these traits can also lead to issues around workplace safety. Workplace safety is not just a responsibility of the employer but also of the employee. We need to educate our young workers to be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others. We need to teach them that one mistake, especially with electricity, could mean severe injury or potentially worse.

**Sharma, Mr Manmeet**

**Warren, Ms Elly**

**Mr HOWARTH** (Petrie) (10:45): This morning I want to talk about communities—specifically, about acts of crime and how they can tear communities apart or bring them even closer together. Two weekends ago, I represented the Australian government at a local vigil for Manmeet Sharma, an Indian Australian who was murdered on Friday, 28 October. Mr Sharma was 29 years old. He moved to Australia about nine years ago on a student visa and became an Australian citizen. He was a part-time singer in Brisbane and would sing at weddings and other functions in his local community. He died after he was set alight at a Moorooka bus stop—he was a bus driver—in a horrific attack that shocked the community in Brisbane, right around Australia and in Mr Sharma's native India.

I did not know Manmeet Sharma, but I know that a community is only as strong as its members, and he was part of a very strong local community. Australia is known as the land of opportunity, a safe country. We live in a great country, and this attracts great people—people who work hard because they appreciate the chance to make something of themselves. Not only did Manmeet grasp this opportunity; he shared it with others. I have heard of his generosity and compassion—that he would go out of his way to help an Indian newcomer find their feet here in Australia. This is commendable because in doing so, in helping fellow Indians come to Australia and build a new life here with their families, Manmeet became an ambassador.

The vigil was attended by me as the federal member, by the state member for Sandgate and by Brisbane city councillor Amanda Cooper. The council has donated $10,000 to Manmeet's family. Manmeet's death shocked the council and all the bus drivers throughout Brisbane.

I also want to mention Elly Warren, the young lady from Melbourne who was killed while travelling in Africa. It is alleged that she was raped and murdered in Mozambique, in south-east Africa, while on a driving trip. People in my electorate are sad when they hear what happened to Elly, Manmeet and other Australians.

One of the most important things for the Australian government is to protect its people at home. I note that, in relation to Manmeet, the Queensland state government has ordered an investigation regarding treatment provided to the accused murderer from public mental health services. We have a responsibility to make sure that people are rehabilitated whilst in prison, but we also have a responsibility to make sure that justice is served for people like Manmeet—and his family—when they are murdered, and we need to be making sure that the
community is protected. State governments need to be ensuring that they legislate for this as well.

The community is thinking of the friends and family of Manmeet and Elly at this time. They are in our thoughts and prayers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): I thank the member for that heartfelt contribution.

Centre for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:48): Computer chips are becoming smaller and smaller, but the amount of information that they are storing is becoming larger and larger. People working with computer chips at the cutting edge these days are now working with chips so small that they cannot be seen by the human eye. They are at the atomic scale, storing much more information than conventional computer chips, and will be much faster than today's computing and computer chips. Welcome to the world of quantum computing, computing which will be able to store much more complex information in a much smaller bit, which will revolutionise the way we do things throughout the world. These computers will be able to solve many of the world's challenges that are well beyond the reach of today's fastest supercomputers.

Internationally, Australian researchers are involved in a race, a race to develop the world's first workable quantum computer, so powerful that in the long term it is expected to exceed the combined power of all of the world's computers at the moment in certain applications. I am very proud to report that the current leaders in this race are Australian researchers. I am even more proud to report that they are based in the community that I have the privilege of representing in this parliament, at the University of New South Wales, at the Centre for Quantum Computation & Communication Technology, a centre of excellence, led by Professor Michelle Simmons.

A team of 180 researchers from many different universities are achieving remarkable gains. Some of their achievements include the world's first single-atom transistor; the world's first qubit based on the spin of a single electron on a single phosphorus atom embedded in silicon; and the world's first quantum logic gate in silicon. UNSW houses a unique Atomic Fabrication Facility and nanofabrication facilities, with the goal of this facility being to develop a scalable quantum computer prototype using scanning microscopy and scanning electron microscopy.

Last week, I was fortunate to visit this wonderful facility and had the privilege of meeting with Professor Simmons and some of her team. I spoke to some of the young scientists that are working there from the United States, from Norway and from other parts of the world. I said, 'Why are you working here?' Their explanation was simple. They want to work with Michelle Simmons, and they want to work at the University of New South Wales because we are leading the world when it comes to research into quantum computing. Their silicon approach is revolutionising the way we develop quantum computers. When we talk about innovation and science and research, its cutting edge is happening at UNSW. I thank them for the tour, and I look forward to working with Michelle and her team to realise this journey.
Meningococcal Disease

Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:51): I rise today to talk about meningococcal disease. This is a disease that has recently affected my communities of the Riverland and the south-east. Meningococcal disease is an acute bacterial infection that can cause death within hours if not recognised and treated accordingly. In Australia, there are five main strains of the disease, all of which now have vaccinations. Since the C vaccine was introduced in 2014, the most common strain of the disease in Australia is now the B strain. Given the quick progression of the disease, early action and treatment is vital. But diagnosis can sometimes be challenging because the symptoms mirror those of influenza.

Given the nature of the disease, there is a strong community push for inclusion of the vaccine for the B strain to be added to the National Immunisation Program. Under the National Health Act, the government cannot include the new vaccine on the NIP, or the National Immunisation Program, unless it has first been recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee. The PBAC is an independent expert advisory committee comprising doctors, other health professionals and consumer representatives. The process of PBAC considering products for listing on the PBS or NIP is evidence based, and so it should be. It considers each listing submission having regard to the safety, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the medicine or vaccine for its intended use. The same evaluation requirements are applied in all cases to ensure consistency and fairness in the listing process.

The government cannot interfere with the listing process. It is not for politicians to determine which vaccines will be included in the program or which medicine is on the PBS; it is for the medical experts. The PBAC considered Bexsero, the meningococcal B vaccine, for inclusion in the NIP in November 2013, July 2014 and July 2015. On all occasions, the PBAC has rejected the submission on the basis of cost-effectiveness and clinical uncertainty.

I understand the concerns of the community on this question. As a father of two young children, I get their fears. They can be terrifying. That is not withstanding that the rates of meningococcal, particularly for the B strain, in this country are in decline. So I am calling on GlaxoSmithKline, or GSK, the manufacturer of Bexsero, to make a further submission to the PBAC and to work on the cost-effectiveness in that submission so that young people in Australia can get access to the vaccine, free of charge, in the same way that young people living in the United Kingdom can. I trust that this further application will be made. I am standing firm with my community, who are concerned about this issue.

Shipping

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (10:55): I rise to propose specific solutions to the problem of cruise ship pollution in White Bay in my electorate. In June, I contacted the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Darren Chester, to offer bipartisan support for action to ensure that cruise ships on Sydney Harbour use low-sulphur fuel. At that time, the New South Wales government announced that their regulation to impose a 0.1 per cent sulphur content limit on fuel used by cruise ships in Sydney Harbour would not come into effect because recently introduced federal legislation had inadvertently made the New South Wales government's new regulation inoperable. This New South Wales regulation remains in place, although it does not have effect in law.
Residents living close to the White Bay terminal have been legitimately concerned about the health impact of the sulphur based fuels being used by cruise ships since the terminal opened. They have been active on this issue for many years. Today I propose both a short-term and a permanent solution to this problem of air pollution. There is no reason that the Australian Maritime Safety Authority cannot immediately fix this through a marine order that places in federal regulation the same low-sulphur fuel requirements for cruise ships as previously set in regulation by the state government. I call on Minister Chester and the government to do this as a matter of urgency.

Cruise ships docked in dense urban areas need strict regulation of their emissions, but we know there is also the technology available to allow emissions from these ships to be eliminated. Ship-to-shore power must be delivered. It allows cruise passenger ships that are docked to be able to access land based power. This can eliminate the need for ships to burn fuel while in port and provide a permanent solution to the problem of air pollution from cruise ships. It is now five months since I received assurances from the minister that this issue would be addressed, but for more than five years Balmain residents have been advocating for proper environmental regulation of this cruise passenger terminal. I am pleased that the cruise ship industry has agreed to voluntarily adhere to the use of low-sulphur fuel as an interim measure, but Commonwealth action is now required to secure permanent protections. I believe that Minister Chester understands this. Where the Commonwealth makes legislation that has unintended ill effects, the Commonwealth has a responsibility to find a remedy. I am proposing a constructive way forward, but I am also putting the minister and the government on notice that if they continue to fail to act I intend to propose and fight for proper environmental protections against cruise ship emissions for my local community.

Saint Josephs Riverwood Sports Club
Bankstown District Amateur Football Association
Australian Air League

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (10:57): Recently I attended the presentation day of Saint Josephs Riverwood Sports Club. This fantastic group in my electorate gives the local kids the opportunity to play a wide range of sports: cricket, netball, Tee Ball, Oz Tag and touch football. It was a terrific presentation day down there at Peakhurst West school on Ogilvy Street. It was good to see all the kids there having such a great time, making use of the dunking machine, the jumping castle and various other things on the day. I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the hard work of the committee led by its President, Matt Carr. Saint Josephs Riverwood Sports Club has been a very important part of our community for some 45 years, and this season was as successful as all the others. Thank you so much for what you do in promoting sport and healthy lifestyles for kids in our region. I look forward to continuing to work with the club in the future.

The Bankstown region has a very active football community. Recently I attended the AGM of the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association held at the Bankstown Sports Club. Six of the 21 football clubs in the Bankstown region are within my electorate. It is always good to catch up with those clubs and learn about the issues that they are facing in their respective suburbs. Thank you to Chairman Glenn Rufford for his chairing of the AGM and also to General Manager Shane Merry, who only recently took on the role but has already had a very substantial and positive impact on the football community in our region. Of course
more people play football every weekend than are involved in any other community activity, so the BDAFA is a particularly important organisation in our community. I am proud to be a supporter of the BDAFA. I look forward to further activities next year.

The largest Air League squadron in Australia is in my electorate at Riverwood. It was nice to attend its recent ceremony for Remembrance Day. It was a very respectful, thoughtful and well-organised ceremony. It was a great credit to Officer in Command Chris Bailey and all of the young men who were involved in the service. There are more than 100 young people involved in the Riverwood squadron learning about aviation and learning ways of working together. They are growing immensely as individuals in the process. To Chris Bailey and everyone at the Riverwood squadron: thank you very much for your continuing great efforts in our community.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz):** In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has now concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Mahon, Hon. Hugh**

Mr **PERRETT** (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (11:01): I am very pleased to move:

That this House:

1. recognises that:
   a. prior to the passage of the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987* the Houses of the Australian Parliament had the power to expel a Senator or Member of the House of Representatives;
   b. the expulsion of a Member of this House is the most drastic of sanctions;
   c. on 11 November 1920, the then Member for Kalgoorlie, Mr Hugh Mahon, was expelled from this House; and
   d. Mr Mahon is the only Member to have ever been expelled from this House;

2. acknowledges that Mr Mahon was expelled:
   a. by a motion brought on hastily and with limited time for debate;
   b. by a vote of the House on party lines; and
   c. without the due process and procedural fairness that such an important issue deserves; and

3. recognises that:
   a. it was unjust on the limited evidence for the institution to which Mr Mahon had been democratically elected to reverse the decision of his constituents; and
   b. the expulsion of Mr Mahon was a misuse of the power then invested in the House.

This motion recognises the unjust expulsion of a member of this House 96 years ago. This motion is motivated by two of my former colleagues—Sharryn Jackson and Melissa Parke. I note that the current member for Fremantle will be following me speaking on this motion.

Hugh Mahon was a founding member of the federal parliament. The Hon. Mr Mahon served as a member for 17 years and is the only member ever to have been expelled from federal parliament thus far. Thankfully, our parliament no longer holds the power to expel an elected member, but it did right up until 1987, when it passed the *Parliamentary Privileges Act*. 
Hugh Mahon represented the federal seat of Coolgardie and then Kalgoorlie for the Australian Labor Party. Mahon, like most of the founding members of the Australian parliament, was not born in Australia. He was Irish. He came to Australia in 1882, having been a journalist and political activist in his mother country. He had even spent time in a Dublin jail with Charles Stewart Parnell, the famous Irish national land leaguer.

Mahon was not known for his frivolity. He was once described as 'a democrat whose snobbish coldness of demeanour would make a snake shudder'. The events that led to Hugh Mahon's expulsion from parliament reflect more on the character of others that on Mr Mahon himself. It is important to put some context to the timing of the expulsion to understand the political climate surrounding the event. Hugh Mahon was expelled from parliament on 11 November 1920, a mere four years after the Easter 1916 uprising. One month before his expulsion, in October 1920, in Cork, Ireland, Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney died in jail after a 74-day hunger strike. MacSwiney was imprisoned after having been charged with sedition by the British.

Mahon attended an Ireland league meeting in Melbourne on 7 November where he savagely attacked British policy and the Empire. He referred to the British Empire as 'this bloody and accursed despotism'. Two days after the league meeting Prime Minister Billy Hughes, a former Labor member, read a portion of Mahon's speech in parliament and asked Mahon if it were correct. The Hansard reflects that Mahon protested that he had never been disobedient to the rules of the House or shown disrespect to the Speaker of the House. When Prime Minister Hughes asked whether the House could take it that the report of his statement was correct, Mahon responded, 'You are not to take anything of the kind.' A letter was sent to Mahon advising him that a motion was to be moved in parliament calling for his expulsion. Mahon informed the Prime Minister in writing that his speech was not seditious or disloyal and that the reported extracts were incomplete and taken out of context.

Unfortunately, Mahon was unable to be present in the House when the motion was moved to expel him due to an accident. In his absence the motion that Hugh Mahon be expelled from the House, having by seditious and disloyal utterances been guilty of conduct unfitting to remain a member of this House, was moved. The motion was passed with only Mahon's 25 Labor colleagues dissenting, ending the parliamentary career of Hugh Mahon, a member democratically elected by his constituents.

As Martin Luther King Jr once said:
The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Upon his expulsion, Hugh Mahon showed his true loyalty to the parliament. Even though he knew there was no substance to the complaint made against him, he respected the fact that a majority of the House had voted to expel him. Hugh Mahon's living descendants can be proud of the way he conducted himself during what would have been a very difficult time for him and his family. They can be proud of his loyalty to his Irish roots, to his beloved Labor Party and to the nation he had served loyally and faithfully for 17 years as a member of this House.

Hugh Mahon's expulsion can be seen, with the benefit of hindsight, as mere grubby political manoeuvring, especially when the sword thrower at the time of his expulsion, later, in a condolence motion made in the House of Representatives upon Mahon's death, professed an unceasing respect and admiration for Mahon and his fervent love for his country—not
sentiments that could coexist with a genuine conviction that Mahon had uttered 'seditious and disloyal' statements.

I believe it is important that this House, the modern parliament, now recognises, although belatedly, that the expulsion of Mahon was a misuse of the political power that the House possessed at that time. I acknowledge the distress that this event has caused the Mahon family, and I hope that his descendants are able to take some comfort from this motion. I fervently hope that this recognition today by my colleagues will correct the true legacy of one of this parliament's founding members, the Hon. Hugh Mahon.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): I thank the member. Is there a seconder?

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the seconder.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (11:06): I would like to identify with all the remarks of the member for Moreton, in the first instance, and secondly say that the world has changed for the better. As you said, in 1987 we passed legislation in this House that made sure that we could not expel a member inappropriately from this House. The great losers in the Hugh Mahon case, in my opinion, were the electors of Kalgoorlie. It is very important that we as a nation have respect for the decisions taken by the Australian people. The decision taken by the Australian people all those years, more than 90 years, ago was that they elected Hugh Mahon to this House.

You had to get into the mind of Hugh Mahon to understand why he made the remarks that he made then, but in this day we would say he had the right to make them, through freedom of speech. We have the rule of law. We have the opportunities for free association. Can I go on? I think every member in this room understands exactly what I am talking about. The fact that, even after he was expelled from the parliament and the word 'sedition' was mentioned as to his remarks, it was never taken to court, it was never tested in a courtroom, probably proved more the case that it may have been political manoeuvring at the time rather than the remarks that somebody made at an Irish Ireland League event.

It was an Irish league event. We do not understand—although I spoke to an old priest one time. The member for Menzies will enjoy this. It was at the time when the republic was being discussed in Australia. I was talking to this priest, and it became very clear out of our conversation that he did not have a high regard for the English or their government.

I say to you today that Hugh Mahon came out here as virtually a refugee. He came out here under another name so he would not be rearrested in Ireland for the actions that he had taken in protest there. He came out as a refugee to get away from the persecution that he felt that the English government were perpetrating on the Irish people. Isn't it right, then, that in this new, free nation, Australia, which he was in, he could express those opinions and express them as a member of parliament at an Irish league function after the death of somebody who had been on a 74-day fast protesting against the English tyranny over the Irish, as they saw it at that time?

Isn't it right that he, Hugh Mahon, would be so offended that he would, from Australia, use the strongest language to condemn those that he saw as oppressing his people?

And Australia was so important at that time. When you read what happened around that time, the women, and many of the men, who were deported to this country were activists—
many of them Irish activists. That is why we are like we are as a nation, because of our roots that go back to those activists. And remembering that for many of the women who were deported out here in those days, the laws were such—this may be irrelevant—that the man owned all of the goods and chattels of the woman, and if the woman ran out of money and the man moved onto another woman with money that first woman was left in dire straits. These women probably had two options: prostitution or theft. Australia received the benefit of these educated, talented women in those tragic times.

Having said that, we recognise that in this day and age, Hugh Mahon would never be removed from this House. It would not happen because now, as a matter of privilege, we have a committee, which I chair. There has to be a reference to that committee from the parliament, and then there is time for reasonable discussion and consideration of what may be a member's inappropriate actions. We respect the people of Kalgoorlie and the family and descendants of Hugh Mahon, and we hope that this motion today brings them some pleasure.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (11:11): I thank the member for Moreton for bringing forward this motion, which seeks to redress an injustice done almost 100 years ago. And I thank the member for McMillan for his thoughtful contribution.

On 11 November 1920, Hugh Mahon, who was originally the member for the Federation seat of Coolgardie, and subsequently the member for Kalgoorlie, was expelled from his place in the House of Representatives. His seat was declared vacant and he lost the by-election that followed. As a new member, I am thankful to say I have limited experience of the parliament's disciplinary procedures, but I know enough to understand that expulsion is an extraordinarily harsh measure. In fact, as the motion makes clear, this process only occurred that one time. It was a political act, and it was poorly considered.

Hugh Mahon's crime was to call for an Australian republic at an Irish national demonstration in Melbourne on 7 November, an occasion that was made more febrile by the news that the mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, had died after a hunger strike of 74 days. It was a time when the question of Irish nationalism was alive and hot, and of course sharp sectarian divisions were well and truly present here in Australia. The rally considered and passed three motions, the last of which read:

That this meeting of Australian citizens, in view of the policy of oppression and tyranny pursued by the English Government in Ireland, and which has brought eternal disgrace upon the whole British Empire, of which Australia forms a part, pledges its support to any movement for the establishment of an Australian republic.

In the parliamentary week that followed, and on the basis of newspaper reports, Prime Minister Billy Hughes moved a motion that read:

That, in the opinion of this House, the honorable Member for Kalgoorlie, the Honorable Hugh Mahon, having, by seditious and disloyal utterances at a public meeting on Sunday last, been guilty of conduct unfitting him to remain a Member of this House and inconsistent with the oath of allegiance which he has taken as a Member of this House, be expelled this House.

And so it was done by a vote on party lines of 34 to 17. Hugh Mahon himself was absent from proceedings and was not able to speak on his own behalf, but afterwards he was unrepentant and was reported as saying in The WA Record:

The indignity surely attaches to the garrotter, not to his victim.
While one should hesitate to judge history through the prism of a contemporary perspective, it is clear the expulsion of Hugh Mahon was hasty and unfair as a matter of process, and that it delivered an outcome that was hugely disproportionate to any real offence or danger. I accept that calling for an Australian republic at the time was freighted with heavy meaning. Even so, the expulsion of Hugh Mahon was a misuse of power.

There have been a few instances where our version of the Westminster system has produced travesties, and it is a curious echo that 11 November was the day on which Hugh Mahon was expelled from parliament in 1920 and also the day on which Gough Whitlam was dismissed as the prime minister in 1975.

In the case of the Dismissal, the fundamentally antidemocratic and dangerous outcome was enabled by structural flaws that were, in part, subsequently addressed by constitutional change, especially with respect to casual Senate vacancies. In the case of Hugh Mahon, the reform necessary to prevent a recurrence of his mistreatment was eventually delivered in the form of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987.

But neither outrage would have occurred without a certain amount of malice aforethought; and, ultimately, those responsible for that kind of misjudgement have to take responsibility for it. It is fortunate no-one was similarly expelled in the interim period. At the time, Hugh Mahon himself considered the implications of what had occurred in the following terms: 'This episode may serve as a precedent when Labor is again in the ascendant. If a future Labor government's interests should be promotable by expulsion of an obnoxious opponent they will find the track cleared and the procedure simplified by Hughes.' We can be thankful that such a course was never taken. After all, two wrongs do not make a right.

Let me say in conclusion that, like Hugh Mahon, I support an Australian republic and that in my view the achievement of full sovereign autonomy for our nation through a proper process is well overdue. Our current Prime Minister, nearly 20 years ago, was part of an effort towards that end. In my view, it is high time we returned to that cause. When we do cross the twin thresholds of constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians and the achievement of an Australian republic, I look forward to the creation of a new national day that marks a more inclusive, independent and mature Australia that is better connected to the culture and heritage of our first Australians and that grows free from the tether of its colonial past.

This motion calls for recognition that what was done with the expulsion of Hugh Mahon from parliament was wrong. I do not think there can be any doubt on that front. When we do achieve an Australian republic, which I hope is soon, it will be, among many other things, a form of vindication for Hugh Mahon. It will be a long-awaited achievement of independence.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (11:16): I, too, wish to make a few preliminary observations about the motion moved by the member for Moreton. My observations are preliminary for three reasons: firstly, that the research that I did over the weekend is necessarily incomplete; secondly, that research raises as many questions as it provides answers, so far as I am concerned; and, thirdly, a general reluctance on my part to revisit matters of a different age—this one now almost a century ago—and a preference to allow history to decide these matters as people see it in the future.

However, I want to place my remarks in context and that context is the role of Billy Hughes. Hughes was obviously a complex character. At best, he was a fierce nationalist and a
defender of the British Empire. But he was also prepared, at the time, to fuel the fires of sectarianism in a way that few other people in this country have done. As I wrote in my recently published book on Joseph Lyons:

No issue since Federation has caused as much political turmoil in Australia as the conscription debates during the First World War. Neither the Vietnam War nor the Whitlam Government dismissal, two divisive events of more recent times, generated the bitter passions that erupted in 1916 and 1917 when Labor Prime Minister Billy Hughes proposed to introduce military conscription … The Great War also exposed an undercurrent of ugly sectarianism in Australia which was exacerbated by the conflation of the troubles in Ireland and the war against Germany. In 1913, the Irish Home Rule Bill had passed the House of Commons three times, overcoming the constitutional block of the House of Lords, but it was effectively ignored by British military forces in Ireland and the Asquith government, leading to the Easter Rising of 1916 and the subsequent execution of its leaders. To many Irish nationalists in Australia, respect for English constitutionality was shattered.

In 1917, Billy Hughes seized upon a statement made by the then Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, to establish a sectarian issue about which he could rally support for his second attempt to introduce conscription. Dr HV Evatt's book Australian labour leader: the story of W.A. Holman and the labour movement, a biography of the New South Wales Premier William Holman and a supporter of Hughes, sets out the strategy of the Little Digger—and it was clear:

Mr Hughes made his fight definitely an anti-Mannix fight, as a matter of tactics. Mannix, he said, is against the British Empire. Very well, then, we are against Mannix. At one time it looked as if the whole organisation of the campaign was very much less concerned with the defeat of the Hun than with that of the turbulent Catholic prelate.

Hughes, as I said, unleashed a torrent of sectarianism that swept the nation. Large rallies across Australia often erupted into chaos and violence. Speakers were targeted for physical attack.

My father, who was born into an Anglican family in 1911, recalled the bitter divisions and recriminations in a small Victorian country town during his childhood. Indeed, at that time in my electorate, a place where people of German heritage had immigrated, many were rounded up and detained. German place names were changed. Hence, in my electorate, Wilhelm and Bismarck streets and German Lane were renamed King, Victoria and George streets. The fact that these original street names had been chosen by Lutherans who had settled in Australia after escaping Prussia's rising militarism from the 1860s was lost in the fervour of the times.

We know this issue split the Labor Party nationally. In November 1916, two weeks after losing the first conscription vote, Billy Hughes walked out of the Labor Party caucus, taking 23 supporters with him. With support from the liberals, Hughes formed a new Nationalist government. The following May he won the 1917 election and subsequently introduced the second conscription referendum. So determined was Hughes to pass the proposal that he censored the no case. Despite this, the proposal was lost by a larger margin than the first referendum was, partly because the news of the horror of the great world war—a century ago on the Somme, at places like Fromelles and Pozieres, thousands of young Australians were killed in bombardments—was reaching home. Indeed, in that second referendum, a majority of Australians on active service voted against it, a reversal of the position in the 1916 referendum.
So these matters need to be taken in the context of the times. They were times which we hope are not repeated so far as the conduct of politics in Australia is concerned. That is why they are preliminary remarks about the issue.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz):** The time allocated for this debate has now expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Turnbull Government**

**Mr ZIMMERMAN** (North Sydney) (11:22): I move:

That this House:

1. acknowledges that the Government won the election and has been getting on with the job of governing; and
2. congratulates the Government for the following achievements:
   - securing Australia’s 25 consecutive years of economic growth;
   - protecting our borders and making our nation more secure with over 800 days having passed without a successful people smuggling venture;
   - delivering:
     - a personal tax cut to 500,000 middle income Australians;
     - a fairer and more flexible superannuation system; and
     - $11 billion of budget repair;
   - establishing a process which makes bank Chief Executive Officers answerable to the public through appearances before Parliament;
   - legislating to protect volunteer firefighters from union takeovers;
   - reintroducing bills to restore the rule of law on the nation’s construction sites;
   - securing the naval shipbuilding industry and jobs for the future;
   - strengthening trade and defence ties with Singapore, creating thousands of new jobs;
   - strengthening the United States alliance in defence, counter-terrorism and cyber security;
   - reintroducing legislation to crack down on illegal firearms trafficking;
   - increasing protection for women and children against domestic violence;
   - growing our industries with record commodity prices and a $2.5 billion water infrastructure rollout to support farmers and the resource sector;
   - fixing the problems in Vocational Education and Training and cracking down on dodgy providers;
   - increasing digital literacy and improved school resourcing;
   - supporting more Indigenous Australians through skills, jobs and language;
   - signing new City Deals to improve housing and expand public transport;
   - accelerating the broadband build and connecting rural Australia;
   - securing an agreement with the states and territories on energy security and reforms for affordable, reliable power;
   - protecting Medicare, improving primary health care, making over 2,000 medicines cheaper and simplifying private health care;
   - saving lives through a National Cancer Screening Register;
(u) supporting the South Australian steel sector and jobs by providing a $49.2 million loan to Arrium;
(v) addressing long term welfare dependence;
(w) delivering better:
   (i) tax arrangements for working holiday makers and backpackers; and
   (ii) child care for 1 million Australians and lifting immunisation rates;
(x) showing a commitment to new resettlement programs for genuine refugees as a result of strong border policies; and
(y) boosting Australia's place in the workforce with access to new markets and stronger ties including with East Asia, Europe, and the United Kingdom.

I am proud to move this motion and to be part of a government driven by the goal of creating more opportunities for all Australians. This motion lists just some of the achievements of the Turnbull government in the first 100 days since the election in July. What it records is this government's determination to provide all Australians with greater prosperity and more jobs, a fairer society, and a government that responsibly manages its finances. It is a list of achievements founded in the very Liberal principle of the importance of allowing individuals to get ahead and fulfil their own aspirations.

Ultimately, our success as an economy will always be founded on the jobs created by individuals and business, not Labor's approach of relying solely on government. It is why we have been working hard to provide the economic climate for businesses to grow, invest and create jobs for all Australians. While Labor continues to put partisan politics ahead of good policy, the Turnbull government is getting on with the job of delivering for our nation's future. This year Australia recorded 25 years of unbroken economic growth. Our economy is growing by three per cent, faster than any of the G7 economies, and last year 300,000 new jobs were created, the strongest growth in employment since 2007. It is why our economy is truly the envy of the world.

These results have not happened by accident. They have required strong economic management and an understanding that we need to open doors to new markets, ensure our economy is competitive and create new opportunities such as those that will flow from our investment in science and innovation. It is why we have moved so quickly to deliver tax relief for middle Australians, tax cuts for hardworking small businesses, and a fairer, more flexible superannuation system. We have supported the growth of our exports by working to secure freer trade with our neighbours. In a world where the barriers of protectionism are tempting some nations with false promise, we have continued to be a strong advocate for free trade. We understand that economies like our own, which have always relied on our great export industries, have the most to gain.

We have been getting on with the job of ensuring the federal government is living within its means rather than burdening future generations with debt. In just the first 100 days, we have enacted $11 billion of budget repair bills.

We have also recognised that the productivity of our economy depends on ensuring that businesses can operate without the threat of workplace lawlessness. We know from the indisputable evidence documented in two royal commissions that too many of our building and construction sites are beset by thuggery and intimidation. There is no area where the
government has a clearer mandate to act, yet those opposite would prefer to put the interests of their union overlords ahead of the rule of law and the productivity of our economy.

It is the same approach from Labor that saw them place the unreasonable demands of the union movement ahead of volunteer firefighters in Victoria. In contrast, we have sent a clear message that this government sees volunteer firefighters as decent, hardworking people who embody the very volunteer spirit of Australia. They should not be a membership recruitment drive for the firefighters union. They are mums and dads, and they are community heroes who risk their lives for others. So, in our first 100 days, we have enacted legislation to protect the volunteers of the CFA, and we are proud of that fact.

Sadly, much of our work is not just looking to the future but fixing the problems left by the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments. We have fixed the problems in vocational education and cracked down on dodgy providers. We have created a national broadband network that is financially sustainable and now actually reaching consumers.

We have got on with the job of restoring faith in the security of our borders. No area more dramatically highlights the failings of Labor than their approach to border security—50,000 arrivals through people-smuggling operations, thousands of children in detention and, tragically, 1,200 lives lost at sea. I am proud to be part of a government that has broken the people smugglers’ business model, closed 17 detention centres and ensured that no children are held in detention in Australia. And we have now created a pathway for refugees on Nauru and in Kevin Rudd’s detention centre on Manus Island.

The Prime Minister promised this would be a government and parliament of delivery for the Australian people. This motion highlights our determination to do just that, from strengthening our economy to supporting families and those in the education system, from improving health care to tackling the scourge of domestic violence. We regard the trust of the Australian people as a deep responsibility, and everything this government does is about returning that trust so we create a fairer, stronger and more prosperous Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr Tim Wilson: Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are putting your hand up. It is difficult for that to be recorded by Hansard. I assume that you are reserving your right to speak?

Mr Tim Wilson: I am.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (11:27): I rise to speak to probably one of the weirdest motions that have ever been introduced into this parliament. This government needs a motion to acknowledge that it won the election. That is the first sentence. It actually needs to be told—

Mr Pasin interjecting—

Mr DICK: Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I were the member for Barker, I would not be saying too much about records, considering that he was one of the members of this place to receive the largest swings against them—a 12 per cent swing against the member for Barker. I would have a look at your own house if you think—through you, Mr Deputy Speaker—that getting a 12 per cent swing is a great result and that you should be congratulated. I would take a look in the mirror.
We know that the government today need a motion to tell them that they won the election. This motion goes on and on and on about wanting congratulations, not listing the things that they will do. I will give a point to the member for North Sydney: 100 days was a month ago. If you are going to introduce a motion, perhaps be on time, rather than being desperate to want some acknowledgement, because no-one else is saying you are doing a good job.

The second point congratulates the government for securing Australia's 25 consecutive years of economic growth. Well, I can tell you that this government is not responsible for 25 years of economic growth. It cannot actually get it right. Let us talk about a couple points in this. Shall we talk about the NBN? I would like to also talk about—and I like this clacker; this is my favourite—delivering better tax arrangements for working holiday makers and backpackers. Where are we with that? How is that going for you? Are we debating that? Are we dealing with that this week? No, we are not. I will come to superannuation. Today we have just seen a major report showing that there will be a $24 billion blowout over the deficit over the next four years ahead. Well done to this government! Well done! They want to be congratulated for not cutting the deficit but increasing the deficit. That is right. This government is making it worse. It goes on and on. What a motion to congratulate them on Medicare!

I note that this government likes to talk tough when it comes to Medicare, but the facts speak for themselves. We have seen a 0.7 per cent drop in bulk-billing rates in my home state of Queensland in the September 2016 quarter—a drop of 47,000 services that are bulk-billed in Queensland. We know that those opposite are not interested in universal health care. We know those on the North Shore of Sydney are not interested in access to quality health care. We know those in the leafy affluent suburbs of Sydney do not necessarily focus on quality health care. Well, I can tell you that in my community in the electorate of Oxley, the birthplace of Medicare under the great reformer Bill Hayden, we do care about Medicare. I know that the people of Oxley and the people of Queensland depend on quality access to health care.

This motion today also talks about the NBN. We only need to look at what happened last week: a 147 per cent increase in complaints around NBN. It was going to cost less and deliver more on time. And what has happened? We have seen a blowout in regional Australia. Regional Australia, time and time again, has been left behind by this government.

This government wants to be congratulated for passing the backpacker tax. Where are we up to with that? Absolutely nowhere, just like the mess that they created with superannuation and just like the mess they created with paid parental leave version 68—which is coming down the line from this government—because they are hopelessly divided. They cannot stick to the commitments they made at the last election, and yet they have the gall and the hide to come into this place and want to be congratulated for the litany of messes that they have created in the first 100 days. I point out again that this government talks tough but delivers little for the people of Australia.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:32): I start by congratulating the member for North Sydney for his wonderful contribution and motion moved before the chamber today. It is quite embarrassing to follow on from the diatribe that we received from the other side from the member for Oxley, because the objective of this motion is quite clear: to recognise and respect the government that has governed for all Australians. It is to break the tradition of the
Labor Party in the past, where they governed for their union mates—the select few friends that they have—and where they pieced together different constituencies to develop some sort of a majority.

Liberals always have and always will govern for the whole nation. We look at the opportunities of what we can do to advance the interests of the whole country and move it forward together. That is why we should be proud of the fact that together, when we used to have a Labor Party that was constructive, worked with the Australian people and sought proper economic reform, we were able to achieve 25 consecutive years of economic growth. We congratulate the previous governments who contributed to that. But we know full well that the Labor Party today would take the exact opposite position and the exact opposite approach if they were given the keys to the treasury vault. That is why this government is working successfully to make sure that we can build Australia's future and the opportunities of the 21st century. It is not just that we believe in economic growth as an end in itself, but because it enables us to deliver the social dividend to be able to help the less fortunate and build people up, rather than do what Labor wants to do, which is to constantly take resources from some to the advantage of the select few who give them patronage or relationships.

Another very important thing is the achievement of this government around border security. Having worked in this space and worked with the people who have suffered the human consequences of the tragedy of Labor's policies, I say this is one of the proudest objectives and achievements of this government. I have been into detention centres and seen the human consequences of what happens when children are held in long-term detention. They ought to be ashamed of themselves for their legacy. One of the proudest achievements of this government is that we have got children out of detention on the Australia mainland. You have not seen the consequences of the legacy of your failure. You do not understand how much harm you do to children. That is why we are proud to have closed detention centres across this country, we are proud to have got children out of detention, and we are proud now to have looked at very serious avenues to close down Manus Island and Narau, not just so that we can, obviously, save Australian taxpayers' dollars but so that we can give people pathways in life, so that they can get on with their opportunities and be able to move on with their lives. That is a very proud legacy of this government, and we have to particularly congratulate the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection for his achievements in that space.

Now we are looking at the future. Now we are looking at how we can make economic opportunity for every Australian by changing laws, particularly around the establishment of the ABCC, to reduce the cost of construction on Australian worksites so that we can actually get costs down, increase the affordability of housing and create an environment where we can get better bang for the taxpayer's buck. That should be the focus, and not just at a national level; it also delivers huge benefits to the states. That would be an incredibly important legacy should it be achieved, and I am very hopeful and optimistic that it will. It will be for the benefit of the Australian people but at the cost of the select few who Labor take their directions from. That is why they oppose it. It is not for some sort of great benefit for the Australian people; it is because it undermines their position as the Labor Party, where they are interested in doling out favours and opportunities for their Labor mates.

Finally I want to pick up on a very important point. The success of this government is that it has shown leadership—leadership that is so often absent when the other side are on the
government benches. The leadership of Malcolm Turnbull, the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce—by projecting a vision of how we can create a country where everybody moves forward together that is built on an economically and socially forward-looking agenda while also preserving the institutions and culture that make our party great and looking to a sense of responsibility for every individual—is why this government is achieving what it is achieving today, why it will achieve things in the future and why it will continue to govern for every Australian. And you know the best bit? The best bit is that there is so much more to come. (Time expired)

Ms KEAY (Braddon) (11:37): The previous speaker, the member for Goldstein, talked about leadership. Well, this government had 17 backflips in the first seven months of Prime Minister Turnbull's leadership. I do not think that is leadership at all. In contrast to the member for North Sydney, I will not be congratulating the government on what I see as an epic fail for the people of Braddon, Tasmania and, indeed, Australia. You just have to look at the Liberals' Tasmanian backbench to see where they got it all wrong.

While the member for North Sydney will boast about what he calls 'achievements', I beg to differ on many points. When the members on the right side of the chamber refer to the government's so-called protection of Medicare, I can only shake my head. Since the start of this month, GPs have been raising their fees in response to the government's continued rebate freeze, hurting rural regional and rural Australian electorates like my own in Braddon. As a result, GPs are under more pressure to stop bulk-billing and pass costs on to patients, which is making it incredibly difficult for those already struggling to be able to afford to see a doctor. Preventative health is also suffering. While a focus on chronic health is welcome, shouldn't the government also consider that preventative health is economically prudent and that keeping people from getting chronically ill in the first place actually saves money?

When it comes to education, the member for North Sydney simply spruiks changes to vocational education and training, which in fact have only been made better thanks to Labor's amendments in the Senate. What about Gonski? The coalition continues to deny schools $3.9 billion in Gonski funding in 2018-19 alone. Meanwhile, many schools continue to struggle to deliver effective education, despite their best efforts. It is no wonder that the member did not list this as an achievement. Leading up to the election and again in his speech, the member for North Sydney continues to talk about welfare dependency while ignoring the fact that 5,200 jobs have been lost since the election. Cuts to pensions and additional barriers for people trying to access all sorts of assistance are certainly not the way to offer help.

And more on jobs: another epic fail from the coalition has been this constant bungling of the backpacker tax, which the member describes as simply 'better'. Now that is just some mighty spin there. The reality is that both the agriculture and the tourism industries have been left in limbo for many months, while the coalition has refused to consult with them about their tax. Starting at 32½ per cent and then trying to put through 19 per cent, what the coalition did not say was that this was going to make Australia uncompetitive and result in a declining number of backpackers coming to Tasmania. Treasury modelling actually says that. While fruit has been left rotting on the ground, the member and his Tasmanian Senate colleagues have simply ignored the interests of the various stakeholders and barged their way through; yet, with four Senate sitting days, that backpacker tax is still not being debated.

A government member interjecting—
Ms KEAY: We have got on board. You just won't debate it. Unfortunately, this approach is something we have all become used to. Surely the coalition realises by now that the loss of the so-called three amigos to Labor at the election was a reflection of how this government has failed to listen to the voters of Tasmania. There were plenty of examples, too. There was hardly anything for the Cradle Mountain infrastructure upgrade—which would grow the economy and grow jobs in northern Tasmania—except for a measly million dollars, despite support from the tourism industry and the region's nine mayors. There continues to be no sound plan for the NBN on the west coast of Tasmania, even with the NBN Co admitting that the government's plans might not even work. And the issue of mobile phone access in rural and regional Australia has left many communities wondering what century they are in, thanks to over-promising and under-delivering by this government. Then there was nothing of value for money for important infrastructure projects in my community such as the Wynyard waterfront, which, again, would support the local economy and jobs. So, yes, feel free to espouse the many so-called positives of the government's term so far, but the reality is that regional and rural areas like mine in Braddon in north-west Tasmania will continue to suffer while the coalition focuses on giving handouts to the big end of town.

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (11:42): I rise to support this motion and to note the government's achievements and progress in the months since the election. As a new MP, I have been proud to see so much of the government's agenda and so many of its election commitments being passed through this House so quickly and to see so much being passed through the Senate. These achievements have obviously been underpinned by meaningful conversations and genuinely constructive negotiations with other parties, particularly in the Senate. I believe that is what Australians want to see from their government—cooperation, collaboration and negotiation in Australia's best interests. Despite some of the partisan rhetoric coming from those opposite on this motion and at other times when the TV cameras are on, they know, as I have come to realise, that the vast bulk of work done in this place is achieved with bipartisan support and genuine negotiations made in good faith and in the best interests of Australia.

I note that in popular commentary there presently exists a theme of general dissatisfaction with politics and governance, not just here in Australia but around the world. In some other countries, the rise of populist policies has been linked to an apparent ruling class in capital cities that seems to be blind to or even actively encouraging the stagnation or decline of the living standards of their citizens. There is little doubt that in some parts of the world many people have been left out or have felt left out of the benefits flowing from new technologies, increased trade and transitioning economies. Here in Australia our living standards and economic growth have continued to grow, even through some tough times, with markedly better outcomes than in many comparable countries. That Australia has just achieved a milestone of 25 years of uninterrupted economic growth speaks volumes for the good work done in this place in a bipartisan fashion, including by this government and by many of our predecessors going back decades. Yet some dissatisfaction with government, and not just at the national level, is still evident and palpable in many places. I do believe that this can be explained by lingering doubts and fears resulting from the pace of change and the transition, as in some of those other economies.

Yet I also believe, very strongly, that much of the pain felt in Australia over recent years can be attributed to our style and the results of our model of governance. The past 10 years
saw an unprecedented level of instability emanating from Canberra—a high level of turnover of governments and a high turnover of personalities, a churn of policies affecting many key industries, and the loss of significant experience and corporate knowledge in our model of governance. That instability has undermined confidence and increased risk, and as a result it has choked investment and spending by households and businesses alike.

This is the best-placed government that Australia has had in many years to deliver the sort of continuity and stability that has eluded us for too long. Merely in being re-elected, this government is the first in 12 years to be re-elected and returned to office in its own right. This government has started to deliver what we critically need: a more predictable and certain future everyone can bank on and invest in. I suspect it will take some time for decision makers, the media and commentators—indeed the broader community—to move on from those past years of unpredictability. It is worth everyone asking themselves the question: what does a more stable and predictable model of governance look and feel like, and who might be incentivised to try to stop us from achieving it?

I am very proud to have played a part in some of the government's key achievements so far and I applaud the government's significant early wins on budget repair—$11 billion so far, and counting. I want to highlight the government's recent tax cuts, which will benefit tens of thousands of residents in Brisbane. I also want to congratulate the government for its vision for our defence industry. I have already heard from so many local businesses around Brisbane, including advanced manufacturers and specialist service providers, who are benefiting from this vision and are creating jobs and opportunities for people in Brisbane right now.

I am also very proud to be a member of the House Economics Committee and to have played a role in the recent bank hearings. I also want to recognise the importance of the government's registered organisations bill and the ABCC bill. Both passed this House last month and are due to be decided by the Senate in the coming days.

During the campaign I had so many tradies, project managers and subcontractors all coming up to me on the street to tell me terrible stories about what was happening on the building sites in inner-city Brisbane, and then to learn that new apartments in our inner-city are between $60,000 and $80,000 more expensive for young or new home owners, when the CFMEU has been involved in the construction on those sites, has been devastating for so many people.

While it may not suit the short-term interests—maybe—of the opposition or indeed some in the media, this government is delivering on its commitments and agenda as well as delivering in the important area of stability. I very much look forward to working hard to continue to deliver in the very best interests of our country.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:47): When I first read this motion by the member for North Sydney I thought he must have gotten his speeches mixed up—that he actually submitted his material for the 'open mic night' at the Canberra Comedy Club. This is genuinely good comedy. 'Securing Australia's 25 consecutive years of economic growth': the member for North Sydney claims that this government can make claim to that. Great comedy. 'Establishing a process which makes bank Chief Executive Officers answerable to the public through appearances before Parliament': when I read that I was rolling in the aisles. Then I read on: 'securing the naval shipbuilding industry and jobs for the future'. Are they on drugs
over on that side of the parliament! They did their best to absolutely destroy Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, in the wake of destroying Australia's automotive industry.

But when I read on I just became angry, because they make some claims in here that are downright lies. 'Increasing protection for women and children against domestic violence', is one of those. All this government has done for victims of domestic violence and their children is made life harder. That makes me and many others very angry. I will get to that in a moment.

Regarding the claim of 25 years of economic growth I am going to give those opposite a history lesson. They may not know it but it was actually the Hawke and Keating governments that laid the foundations and started the process of the 25 years of economic growth that Australia has seen. They were the ones who opened up our economy, reduced protection, floated the Australian dollar, increased competition into many markets, made our industrial relations system much more competitive through reforms in the accord years and the introduction of enterprise bargaining, and introduced compulsory superannuation so that Australians began saving for their retirement. All of these reforms were Labor government reforms and they are the reforms that laid the foundations for Australia's economic growth.

What did the Liberals do during the Howard years? They did their best to blow it. They introduced middle-class welfare, through baby bonuses and the like, and tax cuts for the most rich in our economy. None of it was saved for infrastructure or anything like that. They introduced middle-class welfare and tax cuts for the rich. What is the current government's economic record? They have increased the budget deficit. They have increased debt. Real incomes in Australia are falling to some of their lowest levels and, as a result, living standards in Australia are falling. Australians are actually worse off than when the Liberal Party was elected. We have got underemployment and youth unemployment in the regions that is out of control and we have got business investment falling. Australians are worse off.

The claim that the bank CEOs were held to account is simply laughable. An invitation to Canberra for a two-hour cup of tea and a rap over the knuckles is no substitute for a royal commission. I think all we need do is ask the thousands of victims of banks over recent years what they think of this claim of holding the CEOs to account. I know what they will do with that—they will laugh.

When I read the claim about increasing protection for women and children against domestic violence I got downright angry because all this government has done is the opposite. This government has cut $52 million from services that support victims of domestic violence and their families. There have been cuts to community legal centres, cuts to the Aboriginal Legal Service and cuts to legal aid. Community legal centres are having further cuts—30 per cent of their funding will be cut from 1 July 2017. There will be $88 million cut from the national partnership on homelessness.

Where do those opposite think that victims of domestic violence go when they leave home with nothing more than the clothes on their back and their kids? Where do you think they go? They go to community legal centres. They go to the Aboriginal Legal Service. They go to legal aid. All this mob have done is cut those vital and important services. How dare they come in here and make claims about increasing protection for women and children against domestic violence. Those are downright lies.
The motion goes on to say that they are supporting vocational education and training. I can tell you that in the electorate I represent we have got 1,000 fewer apprentices in training than when this government came to office. That is their record on vocational education and training. Those who are speaking in support of this motion ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mr DRUM (Murray) (11:52): I can proudly say that I am talking to this motion and I am certainly not ashamed of myself. I think this is an opportunity to stand up and tell the parliament and the people of Australia what is happening in my electorate in relation to a whole range of infrastructure projects, tertiary education, employment and business opportunities, and initiatives that are going to drive amenity in my area and certainly be a rolled-gold advertisement for what a government can do when it simply puts its nose to the grindstone and gets things done.

We campaigned fiercely on a strategy of jobs and economic growth. The $20 million Regional Jobs and Investment Package that has been put forward by Senator Fiona Nash has garnered a lot of interest in my electorate. The Hume region and the Goulburn Valley region are going to be very active players in this space. Last Friday representatives of 13 local government areas, the Committee for Greater Shepparton, the Committee for Echuca Moama and local RDA representatives were all there to give advice and their opinion on how this $20 million can best be spent. Collectively this is some of the best regional development acumen that we have. They were brought together to work out the best use of the funding for further growth in regional jobs.

In relation to infrastructure in the electorate, there is a $97 million commitment from the federal government to go with the commitments from the Victorian and New South Wales governments to the Echuca-Moama bridge, which is a vital piece of infrastructure that is going to give the local transport industries a real boost and provide great amenity for the river towns of Echuca and Moama into the future. That is a flagship project in my area that has been waiting somewhere around 40 to 50 years for funding, and it is Darren Chester and the Nationals who have led that charge to get that funding allocated for that area.

Another project in relation to water development is the $20 million for the mid-west pipeline based around Wedderburn, linking the Grampians system to the Goulburn-Murray system. It is an amazing piece of infrastructure. There is going to be hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of pipeline linking up and proving secure high-quality water to around 600 to 700 residences, many of them active farms and also some lifestyle properties as well. There is $20 million from the federal government into this pipeline project, which is for communities that have been waiting 20 and 30 years and have never had secure water in the past. Also there are some significant road upgrades to the Goulburn Valley Highway and the arterial route around Shepparton. Some very dangerous roundabouts are going to be fixed, building on the road safety issue.

When we want to have a comparison between how the coalition goes about its work and how a potential Labor government would go about its work, all you have to do is look at the Victorian Labor Party, and you will see the sheer hundreds of millions of dollars that have been ripped out of the roads budgets over the last two years—$160 million in local roads and bridges. That project was just abandoned by the Andrews government. That funding was given to local governments so that each council could spend, on average, $4 million per year.
on their local roads and bridges. That was just abandoned. We have had this incredible desire to spend every available piece of income in Melbourne and a total abandonment of regional Victoria by the Andrews government. So, if we want to know how the Labor Party might potentially act if it ever had the opportunity to govern, we simply have to look at the fights that have been picked between Daniel Andrews and the CFA. It has been a disgraceful term in office whose impacts are still being felt on a daily basis. In comparison, we have had the way that Barnaby Joyce was able to jump in and assist the dairy industry in times of crisis, and thank goodness we have the packages available.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): I thank the member. Can I remind members, as the Speaker says, to refer to people by their titles rather than their names.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:58): It was a real surprise for me as well when I read this motion put by the member for North Sydney, a motion that can only be said to be self-congratulatory. I am pleased to stand here, because I find most of the content of this motion highly contestable. Five minutes will not allow the kind of forensic response that I would like to give, but I will look at a few of the most outrageous claims in this motion, the first being, as highlighted by previous speakers, that the member for North Sydney wants to claim that in the first 100 days of this government it secured Australia's 25th consecutive year of economic growth, which is absolutely astounding.

Of course, the maths is simple: 2016 minus 25 takes us back to 1991. What was happening then? Our proud period of continuous economic growth began then, when we were in the middle of the Hawke-Keating Labor governments, who successfully took Australia into the global economy and did so while preserving an egalitarian society—something this government might want to take a close look at—introducing HECS and Medicare, and increasing the welfare wage. Then the Howard government came into government, cash-splashed its way through a mining boom and passed tax cuts giving us the structural deficit that we are looking at, which those opposite sometimes claim is an emergency and then for the next two years completely and utterly ignore. A Labor government saved us from the global financial crisis by acting quickly, acting on excellent advice and ensuring that Australia's economy—unlike most economies in the world—survived what was a tsunami of economic impacts. Of all the developed nations, we fared best because of Labor's economic policies. This government has nothing to do with 25 years of consecutive economic growth.

The next point that made me laugh, as it has many others, was the notion that the protection of the borders should be something to be celebrated. The irony of this is—this day, this week, as we come back to the parliament—to find that those opposite are talking now about introducing the Malaysia solution that they opposed five years ago. One can only wonder at what history will say of this and the five intervening years, when their opposition to a regional solution proposed by the Gillard government for asylum seekers was beaten down by those opposite and some of their friends on the other side. What will history say of the LNP's politicisation of human suffering across the last five years when, eventually, they land on a solution that they so drastically opposed?

There are a few other points that I want to make with just under two minutes to go. One would be celebrating the fairer and more flexible superannuation system. Well, yes, congratulations to those opposite for reinstating Labor's policy that, in the first iteration of this government, they undid—that would be the low income superannuation contribution.
They have tripled the deficit but they want to congratulate themselves on their handling of the economy. They want to congratulate themselves on getting bankers to come into the parliament to have that cup of tea and talk for two hours to a government-controlled committee, rather than having the royal commission that Australians so sorely want to see to call banks to account for some of the heinous things that were going on in that sector.

The other one they want to congratulate themselves on is increasing protection for women and children against domestic violence. This is absolutely outrageous. I can only assume that the member for Sydney has included this to take a swipe at the former Abbott government—who slashed funding in this space—and they want to now claim they are doing a great job because the current Prime Minister put some funding back. But that funding came too late for community organisations to hang on to staff, came too late to ensure that programs that were in place continued through those years.

They have also claimed fixing the problems in vocational education and training, and cracking down on dodgy providers. It only took them four years to get around to that and we are yet to see how the implementation is going to go; we have some grave concerns about that. The final joke, of course, is that they are including education in their list of achievements. That is just a joke. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: 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.

Employment

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (12:03): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that the unemployment rate in Australia has barely fallen from immediate post Global Financial Crisis levels;

(b) Treasury projections that the unemployment in Australia is unlikely to improve in the next three years under current policy settings; and

(c) significant labour market indicators such as rate of under-employment and levels of long term and youth unemployment, are continuing concerns within the community and amongst economic commentators, as is the comparative decline in the availability of full time jobs;

(2) further notes that:

(a) rates on unemployment in many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have fallen significantly since 2012 while Australia's unemployment rate has remained stagnant; and

(b) Reserve Bank of Australia observations about the likely limited effect on economic activity of further interest rate cuts;

(3) recognises:

(a) the negative impact on the federal budget in continuing high levels of unemployment;

(b) the cost to individuals, the community and the economy in people not being able to find work; and

(c) the Government's failure to grow full-time employment opportunities; and
(4) urges the Government to give higher priority to addressing labour market stagnation and take whatever steps it can through fiscal policy and selective initiatives to address this ongoing blight on Australian society.

Last week, Australians woke to the news that wages growth had hit all-time lows and that the task of finding a job or even some extra hours was at least as difficult now as it had been during the global financial crisis. What was not news was that this government had simply no plan for the unemployed, unless that plan was to wait for something to turn up—like Charles Dickens's Mr Micawber in my favourite Dickens novel, *David Copperfield*.

An honourable member interjecting—

**Dr FREELANDER:** No, I have plenty of time on my hands to read—I always read. Providing tax cuts on the never-never to large foreign companies is not a labour market policy; it is not even a sensible variant of trickle-down economics. Last week's ABS data were, in short, as disappointing as those in the preceding months and for much of the last three years.

Yes, the number of jobs have been growing. It really takes a recession of disastrous proportions to totally kill off jobs growth. For the first time in about a year there was a small increase in full-time jobs. That was where the good news stopped. Wages growth is so slow and so at odds with the government's budget projections that it actually threatens a return to budget surplus. Australia's headline unemployment rate remained firmly stuck in a rut. In October 2012 our unemployment rate was 5.3 per cent; it is now 5.6 per cent. Employment measured by the number of hours worked—the total work effort—continues its decade-long decline.

All up, the Abbott and Turnbull governments have made no real net progress on unemployment and employment since the first half of 2013. That is despite wages being completely becalmed. The budget and subsequent estimates of unemployment continue, even if the world economy stays out of strife, at around 5½ per cent until 2019-2020. That is not great news if you are looking for work or looking for extra work hours. It is bad news too if you are one of the 160,000-plus Australians over 15 who have been looking for work for over a year—a figure that has worsened in the last two years.

Youth unemployment is substantially higher than it was in October 2014, and underemployment has risen from just over 800,000 in 2012, to over 1.1 million in August this year. Of the 400,000 jobs added between October 2014 and 2016, barely 30 per cent have been full-time. The only thing that has stopped the unemployment rate rising is the continuing decline in labour force participation. It is now down to levels not seen since November 2005. That is all despite being in our 26th year of uninterrupted economic growth, all-time-low interest rates, a small but significant improvement in our terms of trade, a more export-friendly dollar and a shift in the balance of economic activity away from much less labour-intensive industries.

While rates of unemployment in America, the UK and other OECD countries have halved in recent years, ours has stagnated and continues to stagnate. What is to be done? Policymakers must stop ignoring poor employment outcomes or treating unemployment as some sort of statistical residual, too hard to fix. The economic problems of this decade are different to those of the seventies and the nineties. The stagnation in real wages and the marked decline in the wage share, once seemingly almost unthinkable prospects, are part of a
new reality that requires a rethink of priorities. By extension, continuing a fighting-inflation-first policy only make sense if you have in mind what you are going to do second, especially if unemployment remains at unacceptable levels and the inflationary risks are virtually abated.

Let us stop blaming the victim when we talk about unemployment. If there are six or seven times as many people looking for work as there are jobs to go around, unemployment is inevitable. It is not a choice. Unemployment and underemployment have a real human cost, especially with young people. The government needs to stop fooling itself that all is well with the Australia's labour market. It is not. Shying away from an aspirational unemployment target speaks more to political management than economic management. Selective government investment in infrastructure and investment in our people and our future would be timely and welcome. Giving tax cuts to big business will not, in any substantial way, improve unemployment, and it would be much better spent on infrastructure investment. Repeating a mantra of jobs and growth is not an excuse for action. It is time to act on unemployment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:08): It is great to have the two docs talking about job creation—specialist docs at that, but whether they are experts on job creation is another matter! I think it is fair to say that both sides of politics have taken this area of jobs very seriously. Both have reasonably good claim to have negotiated tough periods. The GFC was a significant test on any Australian administration and the results were reasonably good, although there is some debate about how that was achieved. Even now we have even more significant but more subtle challenges for the economy.

If there is one thing to remember in a debate about jobs, it is that you cannot ever afford to clear the larder of surplus for investment in the economy when you think things are really desperate and dire because, sure enough, five to 10 years later there will be other challenges. We will need to have money in the drawer for those needs as well, and for the needs of our children. But that is a debate for another day.

Today I want to make two or three points about jobs. It is an important issue and I know a lot of people will be listening to this debate, and I congratulate the member for bringing this motion today. The first point is the sense that there is a bit of a jihad against part-time work. I think that is quite unfair. Secondly, we need to remember that in absolute terms Australia, even by OECD measures, is performing very well. But the member has chosen specific measures that are relative and show that Australia is not competing as well in job creation as some other countries. But, remember, that many of those are coming back from a far larger fall post-GFC and now look relatively good in their movement. We accept that. But it is always tempting in these debates to just chop and change and top and tail the element that suits your purposes and your numbers. But over a longer period Australia's low unemployment rates, though concerning youth unemployment rates, are still the envy of most of the OECD.

With respect to the speaker on the other side if there were to be really good comparison it should be with Canada, and equivalently-sized, resource-based economy. I will pause and look at Canada for a moment, which, under a left-wing government is genuinely struggling
with unemployment—this year ticking off at seven per cent. That represents hundreds of thousands of Canadians, who would probably be engaged in work if they were living in an Australian system. Canada has genuine problems with youth unemployment, with an almost equivalent economy to Australia, where we are rolling along in the mid-5s. The story post-GFC is really how a resource economy like Australia lost so much—and here is a member who knows exactly what we have been through. No, we did not raise the coffers to solve this commodity crisis problem. But the OECD stepped forward and said, 'We know that you did not have money in the hopper, because it all went in 2009 and 2010.' They said: 'The fall in commodity price has been a break on wage growth, but it may well have helped to limit job losses and the otherwise rising unemployment that we see in other countries.' So you have this value judgement about whether you really want wage growth or broader employment. Most of us would agree that the social protection in being connected to employment is incredibly important. The OECD talks about non-educated, employed jobseekers—they call them NEETs. Australia is performing better than the OECD on the proportion of our potential workforce that is actually educated and trained and job ready. They agree that we have the most aggressive in the world efforts to connect, through big investments in jobactive services and Work for the Dole. It is worth remembering, and the member should take this back to his electorate, that under the hegemony of Rudd and Gillard Work for the Dole withered and atrophied away to about 15,000 people. That vestigial remnant of Work for the Dole is now systematically being brought back to 10 times that size—150,000 Australians.

I want to pose this last question, which concerns this almost jihadic approach to part-time work. People move between the two. It is way more important to note simply how many hours are worked in the economy, and that has gone up by about 3 million hours or 0.2 per cent, which is very small but steady and trending upwards. Most of that is population, I agree; not much of it is participation, regretfully, and, definitely, we will both agree that not much of it is productivity.

Going back a step on this, we need as many households as possible having at least one person working in some form. So don't begrudge part-time work for the role it plays in the first step back into the workforce, because Australia, the UK and New Zealand have the highest proportion of households that have no-one working at all. That is our common challenge. But part-time work is playing a big role in that. What we are seeing at the moment is that part-time work as a proportion of our economy is from 31 to 32 per cent. We have seen, particularly for males, a fall in full-time work and a move across to part-time work. But the overall hours are increasing. What does that suggest? It suggests a better spread of employment opportunities across the population. The enemy in this debate, we both agree, is households that have no work at all.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (12:13): When taking office, the current Prime Minister promised Australians that he would provide substantive 'economic leadership'—advocacy, not slogans. So when this same Prime Minister based his entire election campaign on a three-word slogan—'jobs and growth'—Australians had good cause to be suspicious. Unfortunately, we already have plenty of evidence to show that there is little substance behind this Prime Minister's empty rhetoric.

Where are the jobs the Prime Minister promised Australians at the last election? Well, there are now 25,655 fewer jobs in the economy since the Prime Minister was re-elected in July.
Look below the headline rate and the story is even more grim. Australians who want more work—who want to work harder and want to work longer hours—cannot get it. Australians who are working more productively and more efficiently in the workplace cannot get a raise in return. For many Australians the connection between hard work and return, or a willingness to work hard and to be rewarded for it, has been broken.

The underemployment rate in Australia today is 8.7 per cent, the highest on record. A total of 112,100 full-time jobs have been lost this year. In its place, part-time employment, as the previous speaker noted, has increased by 132,000. This does not reflect a choice on the part of Australians to prefer flexibility or balance between work and home life. It reflects the large number of Australians who want to work more being denied the opportunity to do so.

We see a similar story in wages growth. In the September quarter of this year wages growth was just 1.9 per cent, a new record low, following on from a record low in the previous quarter. Indeed, it was the 16th consecutive fall in the growth of annual wages. This does not reflect a failure on the part of Australian workers. Their productivity has continued to grow but their wages are not reflecting it. This is not right.

Australia has always been a place of ‘wealth for toil’, where if you work hard, if you do your part, you will be fairly rewarded. It is a simple concept but it is a powerful and important one, but it is currently breaking down. There are many factors that are helping to break this link between work and reward in Australia, but the most scandalous at the moment is the rampant exploitation of the nearly one million temporary migrant workers currently living in Australia. Last week, WEstjustice, the Western Community Legal Centre in my electorate, released an alarming report documenting working experiences of newly arrived and refugee workers in Melbourne’s west. The west justice report found widespread abuse across numerous industries, including hospitality, retail, construction and care work; two workers paid one salary between them and others paid as little as $8 an hour; and, that workers who complain are often fired. This very impressive WEstjustice report comes on the back of Senate and state government inquiries into migrant worker exploitation and invaluable journalism from people like Adele Ferguson uncovering rampant exploitation at 7-Eleven, Caltex and other franchises. I note, just before coming into the chamber today, more video evidence of payback rorts at 7-Eleven—more evidence of temporary migrant workers at 7-Eleven being forced to pay back part of their minimum wages to franchisees. It is a scandal and an outrage.

This is not confined just to newly arrived and refugee workers. Exploitation affects wages growth for all Australians. As Bill Shorten told the inaugural Harvester Oration in Sunshine in my electorate last week: ‘This is about the oldest truth in the Labor tradition: if one worker is exploited, underpaid, treated badly—then we are all diminished, we are all worse off.’

Unlike the current Prime Minister, Labor wants to put Australian jobs first. We took a policy to the election promising to hold franchisors accountable for the exploitation of their franchisees—for their shameless, scandalous theft from workers occurring in this sector across Australia; to licence labour hire companies, which are in the business of trading human labour—you need a licence to drive a car to a farm but you do not need a licence to hire out the labour of dozens of Australian workers; and to increase the penalties on those caught exploiting their workers.
Since the election we have committed to increasing labour market testing requirements for 457 visas, ensuring that Australians have a chance to apply for jobs before they can be offered to temporary migrant workers, who are more vulnerable to exploitation. This is a crucial thing for young Australian workers who are trying to break into the market. Why are those jobs being denied to them for imported labour? We are doing this to put Australian jobs first—to restore the Australian bargain: a fair reward for a fair day's work. These are the issues that the Prime Minister would be focusing on if he really cared about jobs and growth. (Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (12:19): I have the ABS figures in front of me. It is interesting to note that since December 2013, a few months after the coalition was successful in the previous election, close to 500,000 new jobs have been created in our economy—half a million jobs under this coalition government. We would have liked to have created more. We would have liked to have seen greater wage growth, but you have to put that in the context that we have seen one of the largest declines in our terms of trade in the nation's history. If we are getting less for our major exports—for our coal, for our iron ore—of course that puts downward pressure on wages, yet despite that, there are 500,000 new jobs under this coalition.

I would like to compare that to the previous six years of Labor government, where we saw the unemployment queues in this country increase by 200,000 people, despite a deficit. The government was spending an extra $300 billion of borrowed money to pump into the economy, and still the unemployment queues of this country increased by 200,000 people. Compare that to what happened under the previous coalition government. When we are looking at what policies we should take forward to get that unemployment down, how about we look at the lessons of our recent history to see what happens? We know under the previous Liberal government, the Howard-Costello government, we took 300,000 people that were on the unemployment queues and put them into work. We reduced unemployment. The queues were 300,000 people shorter, and yet under Labor those queues increased by 200,000. We could fill the MCG twice with the number of people that Labor added to the unemployment queues of this country.

Why is it so? Do you know what happened? During that period of time, I remember one of the things that the coalition government did. They lowered the rate of company tax. They lowered that rate from 36 per cent down to 30 per cent. I can hear members on the Labor side saying, 'Oh, that's terrible. They gave all this money, all this extra tax revenue, back to the big businesses. Isn't that terrible?' Do you know what history actually shows? Companies were paying more tax, not just in gross terms, but as a percentage of GDP. The tax revenue flowing into the Treasury was greater at 30 per cent tax than it was at 36 per cent. In our history, every single time we have lowered the corporate rate of tax, we have simply got more taxation revenue. Going back to when our taxation rate for companies was previously 49 per cent, we were only getting 2.5 per cent of GDP as tax revenue. When we lowered it down all the way to 30 per cent, we were collecting over five per cent of GDP as tax revenue.

It is quite simple. What we have to understand here is that government does not create jobs. It is government policy, it is government interference in the marketplace that takes away jobs, that creates deterrents for companies going out there and investing and employing. That is what we have to get back to. We have to get back to making sure there are incentives for a person that wants to be an entrepreneur and has their own capital on the line to say, 'You
know what? I'm going to take a risk. I'm going to give this person a job.' That is what creates jobs in this economy, and that is why we need to look at what our corporate tax rates are. The Labor side say it is for big business; above $1 million or $2 million worth of sales is not a big business.

An honourable member: Many family businesses.

Mr CRAIG KELLY: Many family businesses are not going to get that tax cut. That is what we need to incentivise, because unless we have private individuals in this economy prepared to go out and take a risk and say, 'I'm going to give this person a job and employ them,' and to add value to the economy, we will never get the unemployment rate down in this country. That is something, unfortunately, the Labor side simply does not understand. They think you can get in there, and government can spend more money and borrow here, and every single time we have seen the results: more and more people on the unemployment list. With that, the coalition so far has a very proud record on jobs, and we are prepared to stand on that record. (Time expired)

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (12:24): I would like to thank the member for Macarthur for raising the important issue of the Australian unemployment rate, which is having a detrimental impact on communities across Brand, the electorate which I represent in Western Australia. It is a most timely to raise this motion because only last week the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that Western Australia has the highest rate of unemployment in the country. It is quite a record for Liberal Premier Colin Barnett to have presided over. While Australia's national unemployment rate is 5.6 per cent, WA is dealing with an unemployment rate of 6.5 per cent. In fact, just this morning Rio Tinto, the mining giant, has confirmed it is cutting more jobs across its iron ore division in WA. It looks like 500 more jobs will be lost, and that is in addition to the 170 jobs Rio Tinto cut in its Pilbara operations in March.

This WA unemployment rate may shock some people in the eastern states who consider WA a rich mining state, but it did not shock or surprise us members from the west who are seeing the impact of a faltering economy and the end of the construction boom which has enabled great mineral exports. I must add that the end of this construction boom in WA was utterly foreseeable. There has been a failure on behalf of the Barnett, Abbott and Turnbull Liberal governments to look ahead and plan for how governments could help build Australian jobs through the initiation of nation-building infrastructure projects, which only governments can get off the ground, despite what others might think.

We are seeing in our electorates the impact that rising unemployment is having on local families, local youth and local businesses. We are seeing the impact that underemployment is having on communities. Although people are in work they are not receiving enough shifts or hours to pay the bills or to put food on the table. There is just not enough work to go around. The people in Brand want meaningful jobs. They want to be able to access training that leads to real employment opportunities. They want their children who are finishing school to have a better future to look forward to than the one currently on offer.

The youth unemployment rate in Brand is more than double the national average at 13.6 per cent. That is an absolute shame. What is also an absolute shame is the government's failure to address this stagnation in the labour market and its failure to grow full-time employment opportunities. I see the costs regularly that this is having on people, on
communities and on the economy. It is leaving vast numbers of people with little hope of gaining employment because the jobs just do not exist at the moment and there is little hope of them emerging in the future.

Without sound investment and without strong government leadership and vision—again, for large infrastructure projects—these jobs will not exist for some time to come. Our young people deserve better than this. Our young people are still applying themselves to be the best they can be and they deserve to be able to find a job to start their working lives. Nowhere was this application more visible than on Friday in Orelia where I had the good fortune to be at the opening of the Peron Trade Training Centre located at Gilmore College in Kwinana. This process and plant engineering centre is a very special initiative that is supported by local industry. Here students will gain invaluable experiences through the vocational education and training in many aspects of the oil, gas and chemical engineering industries.

It was also an initiative of my predecessor. The Hon. Gary Gray AO was instrumental in setting it up. Gary pushed hard for this facility to be built at Gilmore College in Kwinana because he saw how important it was to give local students the skills that they need for the workforce. The facility allows local students to believe in themselves. It shows them that they have the right to first-class training opportunities and with that the right to work. It must be said that these training opportunities and facilities have been denied to this area for many years. The proud students and the families at the college who I spoke to are optimistic of a bright future. We need to provide them with employment opportunities in order for them to avail themselves of that right to work and to realise their optimism.

Gilmore College is only minutes from the Kwinana industrial strip, an area which delivers billions of dollars to the WA state economy. It has historically employed many people from the local area. It could also be home to a new outer harbour. This would be a long-term, nation-building project that would create much-needed jobs and economic opportunities for the people living in local communities, for WA and for the country. The government is failing to consider the need for this project and its importance to WA and the nation. It is failing to invest in a project that is estimated will create 25,000 new direct jobs and will help grow local, state and national economies. The government is instead pursuing an outdated road toll and freeway project that will smash through the suburbs and wetlands of Fremantle. In an unbelievable piece of shocking planning the Perth Freight Link will end two kilometres short of the freight destination of the port of Fremantle. It truly beggars belief.

The Kwinana outer harbour project goes beyond providing employment during its planning and construction phase and will provide trade, industrial and business development opportunities for decades to come, which of course will lead to significant employment opportunities in the future and the future of young people of Kwinana and Brand. I urge this government and the Barnett government to have a go at looking at the future.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (12:29): This gives me great pleasure. I thank the member for Macarthur for moving this motion because it gives us an opportunity to advocate for a strong economic growth agenda as the most effective means to address unemployment. The coalition wants job growth because, in the end, job growth provides the opportunities for Australians to stand on their own two feet, to be independent in their own financial affairs and to be able to help support themselves as well as their family. But one of the most important
things about people standing on their own two feet is not just that they are able to help themselves up but that they are also able to help others.

More importantly, we want strong job growth as Liberals because we want taxpayers. We want people to share the burden of managing the cost of our society so that we can help people who are most vulnerable—to be able to assist those people who are not in a position to change their circumstances, such as people with a disability or pensioners, or to be able to underwrite and support the important health services that people need across the country. That is why we believe in job growth. That is why we stand for liberalism and everything else that we believe in. That is why we are achieving it under the Turnbull government. The role of government is to create the environment for economic freedom so people can go on in enterprises, invest and offer opportunities to Australian jobseekers.

The reform era of the past 30 years has enabled unbroken economic expansion, and that is an exciting thing. It has enabled the opportunity to create jobs for the 21st century so capital can be directed to opportunities to create jobs for the people who need them and so we can always stay ahead of the pack—rather than the reactionary mindlessness of protectionism, which has previously existed in this country and is being dismantled, where we saw shipping, telecommunication and airline industries which were deregulated and enterprise bargaining superseding centralised wage fixing. The tax system has also been modernised.

What that has allowed is business and enterprise to move capital to invest into the future, and that is what we should want. As a result, only a dozen economies are bigger than Australia's and only one country has reached our per capita wealth. We must continue this economic progress, advocate for economic openness and remain firm against the growing antiglobalisation sentiment which, frankly, we are starting to see from the other side as they seek to replicate Donald Trump's sentiments because they think it will give them some sort of political leg-up—something that I am very concerned about. The justification for economic rationalism is to protect or, to quote, 'save local jobs', but history shows it does exactly the reverse. When are they going to learn the lessons of history? Protectionism will do little more than entrenched unemployment in Australia, favour those who have invested in the past, and support and protect their industries at the expense of exactly the same people that Labor claim they want to get jobs for.

The difference between us and them is that they are interested in protecting the interests of those people who are members of unions; we are interested in creating the opportunities for people who do not have jobs. The quality and quantity of the jobs in the future rely on access to overseas markets, allowing us to export our competitive services alongside our natural resources and value-added manufacturing. That is right—the economy is built from the bottom up; it is not just delivered by some government bureaucrat in Canberra. We are about community control, not about Canberra control.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr TIM WILSON: Unproductive areas in the economy will always attract technological disruption. We are producing more with less, which requires flexibility in the labour market. We know that high unemployment protection has a negative influence on youth unemployment levels. While it is true that there has been growth in underemployment,
economist Tom Kennedy stated that 'employers were increasingly seeking working arrangements with the flexibility to adjust hours', rather than have positions bound on them. Over the past year, the number of full-time jobs dropped by 0.4 per cent while part-time employment increased by 4.6 per cent. That means more people are being employed in diverse sectors and meeting modern lifestyle flexibility arrangements.

Full-time work, of course, is preferable for many people, but not everybody—particularly for women, who are balancing challenging circumstances around family arrangements. We should stand up for them, create the opportunities for them and not try to dictate to them how they live their lives. While many people are engaging in multiple part-time jobs, those who argue for inflexible industrial relations are now the enemy of worker security, because when you do not have a situation where people can get jobs and they are bound only to do it based on what the Labor Party and the trade unions think, they will not get jobs in the first place.

(Time expired)

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Order! The member for Lingiari is not allowing the chair to proceed with the—

Mr Snowdon: Sorry.

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 sitting.

Cashless Debit Card Trial

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (12:34): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that reducing social harm caused by welfare-fuelled alcohol, drug and gambling abuse is a key priority nationally and for local communities;

(2) recognises that the Government is currently trialling the cashless debit card in two communities—Ceduna in South Australia, and the East Kimberley in Western Australia—in partnership with local community leaders in those communities; and

(3) acknowledges the:

(a) hard work, dedication and commitment of community leaders in Ceduna and the East Kimberley in co-designing the trials with Government, and their leadership in its implementation and delivery in their communities; and

(b) positive initial results of the cashless debit card model in the two trial communities, including the strong positive feedback from the community on the ground.

The trial thus far, as it stands in both the East Kimberley and Ceduna, is an example of the rewards of strong and resolute leadership from the federal government and from the state government in South Australia, who have become our partners in this trial, but also and particularly of local leadership, where a point was reached that enough was enough. Too many of their families and friends were dying prematurely from alcohol and drug abuse. Too many families were being destroyed by alcohol-fuelled violence. Too many children were being damaged by violence and neglect.

The cashless debit card was introduced in Ceduna on 15 March this year and in the East Kimberley region on 26 April. My direct contact is primarily with the Ceduna region, and
most of my experience with the trial is in that spectrum. However, I have also viewed the data from the East Kimberley trial, and their experience seemed to be relatively uniform.

The card directs 80 per cent of a welfare recipient's income to a cashless debit card account. The other 20 per cent is allocated to a standard account. There are only three restrictions on the way a recipient can spend the 80 per cent. It cannot buy alcohol. It cannot be spent on gambling. And it cannot be converted to cash, which helps eliminate drug purchases. These three limitations are embedded electronically in the card, which is visibly identical to a standard debit card, and follow the recipient wherever it is used in Australia.

So many people no longer carry significant levels of cash. We are indeed the tap-and-go society, virtually everywhere. Anything from a chocolate bar to a coffee or a box of tissues can be bought with a simple wave of this undistinguishable card. For those very few places not participating, the recipient still has 20 per cent of their welfare income available. Honest appraisal would suggest that this is probably more than the average welfare recipient spends on luxuries.

There have been a number of critics of the trial, with groups like the Greens trying to whip up public concerns about personal freedom and choice. I say to them: these communities have made a choice. They choose to take control of their lives. They choose to help those who cannot help themselves. They choose to have safer families and choose to try to help their friends and families overcome their addictions. They choose to live longer.

In the Ceduna region, arrests under the Public Intoxication Act have fallen by more than 50 per cent. Much lower levels of alcohol are being registered at the sobering-up unit. Poker machine revenues are officially down by 15 per cent. However, the assessment area covers the district council areas of the Streaky Bay, Elliston and Lower EP councils as well, which are unaffected by the card, suggesting that the figure is probably double that in Ceduna and at least a 30 per cent drop on gambling revenues.

There has been a strong uptake in financial counselling and capability services. Fewer people are requiring homelessness services. Anecdotally, food and clothing sales are up, and the grocery supply trucks to Oak Valley have gone from one a fortnight to one a week. In fact, the biggest issue facing Oak Valley at the moment is the overcrowding in housing as a result of the far greater number of residents living back in community rather than living rough on the outskirts of Ceduna.

In Wyndham, admissions to the sobering-up unit are down 69 per cent—69 per cent—and there has been a 28 per cent fall in the call-outs for the ambulance service.

These are far better results than anticipated, which are undoubtedly improving community and household safety. The results also fully justify the actions of the local community leadership teams that have led the change. Certainly they have come under pressure, but they have stood firm in pursuit of building safer, stronger communities, and they are to be congratulated. It is very enlightening that there have been a couple of spates of cash inflows into the community. While statistics are yet come to light from the most recent bout, there is no doubt that they have resulted in a serious relapse of behaviour—drunkenness, violence and antisocial behaviour. It is also important to note in the Ceduna circumstance that Ceduna is not a predominantly Indigenous town; it is predominantly white, so this policy is affecting people right across the community and is having a very good result, it must be said.
So far, this is not any more than a trial and any decisions about other communities and wider adoption are some time off. However, if the trial improves the lives and the community of Ceduna, why would it not do the same in Port Augusta, Adelaide or in the middle of Sydney? (Time expired)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mr SNOWDON** (Lingiari) (12:40): I thank the member for Grey for putting this notice of motion on our business for today. Let me say at the outset that I have no in-principle opposition to a debit card. I have made that clear in the past. I was very opposed to the BasicsCard, which was introduced in 2007 as a result of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response by the Howard government. It stigmatised people. It was selective in its use. It did not apply across the board. It was very difficult to use and people found it severely wanting, including commercial providers of services. For example, commercial providers of services were excluded. In one instance I can name, because they were a suitcase shop they were excluded, while Woolworths, who also sold suitcases, were not. That was a major issue. However, at the time the legislation for this was introduced, I said:

So, if a person falls within a category identified as a compulsory participant, they will have their payments restricted. This happened under income management when it was broadly applied. This would inevitably mean that, regardless of your status and regardless of your history of being an employer or an employee, paying taxes, raising children and being a responsible member of the community, you will be impacted by this. You will automatically have your income debited through the debit system and have 80 per cent of your income quarantined.

That remains the case. I do not think there should be a blanket application of this debit card. We understand that the majority of people who are subject to this card are able to manage their own finances. I do not believe that a blanket approach is warranted. We now know it has been used for six months—as we see in Ceduna and also at Kununurra. It is true to say, however, that communities are a bit conflicted by the outcome so far. Some are claiming, as the member for Grey has done, that gambling and alcohol have been significantly reduced—I hope that is the case—while others say the community has only been superficially consulted and there have been not significant changes. I think the consultation issue is extremely important.

There is some qualitative research which has been done in the East Kimberley which tells us some of the following: cashless welfare card holders are using their cards as a bartering tool—this is happening—exchanging the debit card for alcohol and drugs and resorting to cheaper, heavily intoxicating liquor to suit their budget. Cashless welfare card holders are being exploited. Taxis and shops are holding onto the cards when the cardholders pay. People trading with the CWC holder are purchasing items on the card that are worth far more than the item exchanged. Illiterate CWC holders are at a disadvantage. All prior financial obligations have to be arranged, loans deducted et cetera, and they are more likely to be ripped off when trading. There is a whole range of issues and I could go on and on about the list of issues that is confronting people. There is a question about sly grogging and drug dealing. I think these cards have got to be done in conjunction with other measures such as a banned drinkers register in the Northern Territory—which should apply in Kununurra and does not.
I also make the observation that retailers can opt out. They do not have to be part of this scheme. I have a list of organisations in the member's electorate who have opted out and organisations in the member for Durack's electorate who have also opted out. It is not compulsory for people who sell liquor to accept the card. This was the case with Opal fuel and we legislated in this place to make sure—

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON: No, that is not true. The Smoky Bay and Districts Community Club, for example, has excluded itself. The Thevenard Hotel has and the Penong Hotel has. In the case of Kununurra, the Pumphouse Restaurant has, the Drysdale River Station has and El Questro has. I understand why El Questro has because their clientele is a very different group. They are whitefellas and they have money—so they do not accept the card. I think there are real issues here about the application of the card.

I think there are obviously benefits to some. I accept that and I think it is important that we see how this works over the longer period. I am looking forward to seeing the independent evaluation when it is undertaken and knowing who the independent evaluators are. It is extremely important that we understand this cannot be done in isolation. It must be done in terms of liquor, in terms of supply measures which need to be done and are not being done in the case of the Kimberley but which are being done in some measure at Ceduna. There is a lot more debate to be had about this and a lot more consultation that needs to take place to get what community members want, as opposed to what so-called community leaders think.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (12:45): I am very pleased to speak on the member for Grey's private member's business. Social harm caused by welfare-fuelled alcohol, drug and gambling abuse is a key priority for this government, and that is the reason the government initiated and has started trials of the cashless debit card. I do want to underline the word 'trial' because indeed it is a trial and we will assess this in another six months' time.

The Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage report, which was released on Thursday, found rates of family and community violence were unchanged between 2002 and 2014-15, and that risky, long-term alcohol use was similar during the same period. The proportion of adults reporting substance misuse in the previous 12 months increased by seven per cent to 31 per cent during the same period, according to the report. Despite numerous initiatives by governments across all tiers and of all persuasions during this period these results are, I think, incredibly disappointing for all of those who are in this House. They illustrate what I said in this place only last year, following the Closing the gap report, that more needs to be done.

The cashless debit card, which has been trialled in Ceduna in South Australia and in the East Kimberley in my electorate of Durack, was introduced to reduce social harm caused by welfare-fuelled alcohol and drug abuse—particularly with respect to domestic violence and mental health issues—and to increase childhood school attendance overall. The trial of the card in Kununurra and Wyndham, which started in April, has had a profoundly positive impact on the West Kimberley, leading to a decrease in crime and also to a decrease in general antisocial behaviour in the region. Senior Sergeant Steve Principe, head of Kununurra Police Station, said that since the trial started there were fewer intoxicated people in public, which is great news for the people and the businesses in the West Kimberley, and also for tourists as well. And more positive news: the ambulance call-outs have dropped by 30 per cent from this time last year according to the local ambos. There has been a dramatic decrease...
in alcohol-related hospital emergency room visits since the trial began in April, which illustrates the flow-on effects that reducing alcohol consumption can have.

The success of the trial in the East Kimberley is, without a doubt, due to the leadership and courage of the local Indigenous leaders. I would like to pay tribute today to Ian Trust and I would like to quote some words of his that I have read just recently:

Unlike other reform efforts undertaken by government, it has been the Indigenous leaders of the East Kimberley who have led this reform…

And he goes on to say:

We believe it's a model that could drive reform across the country.

I accept that this is still a trial and that there is still a long way to go, but I have to say that from where we are in the East Kimberley I do agree with Mr Trust's observation.

Under the trial we have seen a reduction in family and domestic violence incidents. I am particularly proud that this government announced another $100 million last year with respect to the Women's Safety Package, and that last month the Prime Minister launched the third action plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. I am very pleased that in January the Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre, which is based in Durack, was awarded an additional $150,000 to help to address domestic violence. The funding was to allow the centre to provide workshops and smaller focus groups designed to be managed by a group of Indigenous leaders and supported by staff experienced in running committee initiatives, while promoting and enhancing the safety and wellbeing of women and children. This is real action run by locals in local communities. I do congratulate them and June Oscar for that particular grant.

With the time remaining I want to make the point that, with every scheme we have, whether or not it is an alcohol management plan, there is always someone out there who will scheme the system. There is always someone who will take advantage of the disadvantaged. This is a trial. So far, there are some who are knocking it, but there have been a lot of positive impacts from the cashless welfare card, and I think we need the time, another six months, to run before we can fully assess it. We need to hang in there because, by and large, the benefits outweigh the negative impacts of the card to date.

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (12:50): I rise to speak on this motion by the member for Grey in relation to the cashless welfare card. I have to say at the outset that I am quite shocked that government members want to congratulate themselves in the Indigenous affairs space. I hear the member for Grey when he says this is applicable to everyone, but let us not kid ourselves: this is aimed at Aboriginal people. This is not an issue for chest beating and self-congratulations when it comes to this government's record in Indigenous affairs. While the government has made much of some positive initial results, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the results that we are speaking about today are very early and not the result of any comprehensive analysis or proper evaluation, and I find that unacceptable. In fact, the government has refused to provide any detailed analysis to any stakeholder who has requested it.

I am also sceptical of reports based on assumed correlations and individuals' views. The government must tell us what its evaluation framework is. It has so far refused to do that. The recent Productivity Commission report highlighted that many programs designed to help
Aboriginal communities never undergo any proper analysis or evaluation. I am concerned that the government is repeating that mistake here.

Over the weekend I had the pleasure of visiting the Northern Territory to deliver the Menzies School of Health Research oration. I spoke about the need for government to recognise that the solutions to the issues in Aboriginal communities need to be found within them, not imposed on them as this card has been. Advocacy organisations have been defunded, and the voices of the Aboriginal community increasingly are being stifled. Cutting funding to the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and to vital Aboriginal legal services—

Mr Ramsey interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): The member for Grey will desist.

Ms BURNEY: are not the actions of a government which is serious about ending Aboriginal disadvantage.

Mr Ramsey interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms BURNEY: Half a million dollars cut from the Indigenous affairs budget is an issue of major concern, particularly when it comes to any policy which—

Mr Ramsey interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Grey refuses to take note of the chair.

Ms BURNEY: by its very nature must limit the freedoms of Aboriginal people. I spoke in Darwin about the 1886 Coranderrk petition by William Barak, who lamented that his people were not able to leave their reservations when they needed to and that they were deprived of the basic rights to make their own decisions.

The motion congratulates the communities in Ceduna and the East Kimberley for their work with government in helping to design the trial, and I do agree with that sentiment. But I also note that the grassroots Aboriginal communities in Ceduna and in the Kimberley have raised concerns directly with me that they have not been properly consulted. Early success cannot be used as an excuse to impose this system on more communities without consultation and cooperation.

I have noted in recent weeks that the government is yet to announce a new trial site for the program. I was the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs in New South Wales when the third trial site was supposed to be Moree, and the Moree community would have nothing of it. I urged the government not to react by forcing an unwilling community to take part. That would be the return of paternalism in its worst form.

If the trial is working, and I hope it is, it is only because the government is engaging with the local community and allowing their voices to be heard. If those opposite believe that this is working purely because it limits welfare funding, they do not understand the nature of disadvantage.

I would also like to note for this place that the wording of the motion is problematic. Welfare does not fuel alcohol dependence or drug addiction. These are symptoms of much deeper problems. While removing the ability of addicts to purchase alcohol or drugs will help in the short term, it will not solve those underlying issues. What is required is proper
treatment centres, not an imposed so-called solution. Those issues can only be solved by people on the ground and well-funded and culturally appropriate social outreach programs. If you ignore the cyclical nature of these issues you are only treating the symptoms, not the cause.

I am glad to hear of some positive changes very early on, but I urge those opposite not to see some positive results as a reason to return to the dark old days of paternalism and punitive measures. We have seen time and time again that punitive measures and paternalistic approaches do not work. They will not work. They never have worked and they will not do so in the future. I join with the member for Grey in welcoming some early positive outcomes, but I also say that this cannot go anywhere without a proper evaluation. And it is just not fair.

Mr RICK WILSON (O’Connor) (12:55): I rise today to support the motion put forward by the member for Grey. I support his words and also those of my colleague the member for Durack—my two closest neighbours. We share many common communities. The member for Barton mentioned that, in her previous position, she was privy to the fact that the community of Moree refused to take on a trial site. That is of great interest to me, because I want to talk today about a community in my electorate who were desperate for a trial site but did not have the opportunity because the government was negotiating with Moree at the time. I would like to open my comments by saying that, across the House, I am sure we all agree that reducing social harm, particularly in these remote communities, is bipartisan and a priority for the parliament in general.

My electorate of O’Connor is home to many remote communities that are struggling with high levels of unemployment and social dysfunction. Tragically, in late 2015, we had a spate of youth suicides in the small community of Leonora. The town was in absolute despair. Four teenagers had taken their own lives in a town of 240 people. While visiting the town in the aftermath and speaking to some locals, a very well-respected and very dear lady, Nana Gay Harris, approached me to say: 'How can we stop this? How can we do something about it?' All that I could offer that was not already in place or was not already being implemented was a cashless welfare card, which I stressed was not a compulsory thing for the community. The community would have to agree to it, embrace it and endorse it.

Within days—and I give him great credit for this—Minister Alan Tudge was on a plane and on his way to Leonora. We had a community meeting with many Indigenous leaders, local shire councillors and other people. Among some of the people who were there were Geraldine Hogarth—and I want to give Geraldine a shout-out; she was recently appointed a member of the Order of Australia; Nana Gay Harris; Bruce Smith, who is a very senior Indigenous elder in the area; as well as Patrick Hill and Peter Craig, who are two local shire presidents. The community leaders were very receptive to hosting a cashless welfare card trial. I have to say there were a couple of people who did not like the idea and felt it was an infringement of their rights. That is quite a valid point of view. They made their views clear. But certainly the majority of the people in the community, and very much the majority of Indigenous leaders in the community, welcomed the idea of a card. That meeting was followed by extensive consultation by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, who went and met with individuals and family groups across Laverton and Leonora shires. I strongly believed then and still strongly believe now that we have to take this opportunity for governments and communities to work together for a better future.
Unfortunately, there were some other trial sites being considered—the aforementioned Moree—and then an election intervened. Leonora and Laverton, who were desperate to host a trial, missed out. In discussions with the minister recently, he has indicated that we are now going to wait until we see the trial outcomes. I am very encouraged by the early results, and I will come to that in a minute. I sincerely hope that the bipartisan support that we saw for the initial trial will be continued, if the government decide to extend the trials at other sites.

I will just touch on some of the results that have already been mentioned, which I think are well worth mentioning again, and that is that Ceduna's poker machine revenue was 15 per cent down between April and August as opposed to the equivalent period in 2015. The monthly apprehensions under the Public Intoxication Act were 54 per cent lower between March and June 2016. These are not verified numbers, but I am assuming that they are reasonably robust. If you take out all of the people gaming the system, a 50 per cent reduction in the number of people presenting as intoxicated is a significant figure. If we go to Kununurra, where we saw a 69 per cent reduction—these are extraordinary numbers—I think the early stages of this trial are very encouraging and give me great hope that we can make a real difference in the communities that desperately need our help and that desperately need us, as a government and as a parliament, to come up with real solutions that work.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:00): It is with great pleasure that I rise to make a contribution to this debate today on the motion before us from the member for Groom. What an important issue it is. This is an opportunity for the Australian parliament to give serious consideration to how we might best address some of those community issues that people have raised with us time and time again around how best to tackle issues of family violence, unemployment, health and education.

What the contributions before me from both the member for Lingiari and the member for Barton really pointed to was that, rather than members opposite engaging in self-congratulation on the early results of the cashless debit card system, it was time for us to ask important questions, to make some observations of those early, initial results and to ask ourselves seriously: is this the best approach that the Australian parliament can offer? We know that the cashless debit card was designed, in the first instance, to try and deal with some of the very real issues that community members raised in terms of the impact of gambling, alcohol and drug abuse in some of the communities. Whilst promising signs are there—we heard members opposite refer to the downturn in the income generated by pokies in the town of Ceduna, which is a great thing—let us see more money being spent in town than put through the pokies for anybody. This is a scheme that was very explicitly applied to the whole of the community. I would be very interested to hear a little more from members opposite as to the scheme's impacts on and benefits for the non-Indigenous communities. I have not heard anything about how many non-Indigenous people have been caught up in the cashless debit card process. I would be very interested to hear some figures around those non-Indigenous people who are taking part in the program, what the results were for those people participating in the program, and, importantly, what their feedback and lived experience were of that program, because we know that there is not universal endorsement of these schemes.

Regrettably, members opposite who were interjecting throughout the member for Barton's speech earlier on very clearly demonstrated the problem with trying to silence dissenting voices on this issue. I think it is very short-sighted of government members not to want to
take genuine critiques of the program seriously. If you are dead serious about wanting to ensure that this program is the best it can be, the first thing you would do is take that critique on board, see if you can adjust the program and see what needs to be modified. This is a trial. This is the perfect time in which all members of this parliament, and, indeed, the community, should be taking an opportunity to stand up and see what is working and what is not, and to take seriously those criticisms that have been made. It is not just the member for Barton raising this. We know there are members in your own community, Member for Groom, who have raised some concerns around the use and deployment of the cashless card in your community. It is no secret. It is a matter of public record.

We know that at least two-thirds of those on the cards in Ceduna are Indigenous people, so we know that it is going to have a disproportionate impact for Indigenous people. We know that a Ceduna resident and elder, Ms Sue Haseldine, said that those caught up in the trial who were not addicted to alcohol or drugs have been particularly frustrated with this system. She expressed grave concerns around the fact that there was a lot of depression for those people whose kids are going to school in Adelaide. When those kids need money you cannot send them a BasicsCard; you need some cash to be able to forward to your kids there, but those parents were absolutely deprived of that. And there are many other genuine concerns.

I think that this parliament would be better focused by taking on board those critiques, reminding ourselves: if we genuinely want to deal with violence, domestic violence and health issues, let's not cut our budgets; let's make some serious inroads into those issues. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): 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.

Working Holiday Maker Program

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:06): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the Fair Work Ombudsman's (FWO's) report "Inquiry into the wages and conditions of people working under the 417 Working Holiday Visa Program" (October 2016) found that more than one third of 417 visa holders claimed that they were paid less than the minimum wage;

(b) the inquiry found that the 417 visa program created an environment where unreasonable and unlawful requirements are being imposed on visa holders by unscrupulous businesses;

(c) the FWO, Ms Natalie James, said in a statement that the inquiry confirms that overseas workers seeking regional work to satisfy the 88 day requirement and obtain a second-year 417 visa are particularly vulnerable to exploitation;

(2) acknowledges:

(a) that in 2015-16, 76 per cent of litigations filed by the FWO involved visa holder workers;

(b) that the inquiry found instances of employers engaging in sophisticated labour supply chains involving sham contracting, where workers were in fact employees, to exploit vulnerable 417 visa holders to gain a competitive or commercial advantage through the reduction of labour costs; and
(c) findings from the inquiry found that the 417 visa program has been used to source an unpaid workforce, thus facilitating an unfair commercial advantage to these employers, distorting the market place and placing pressure on the domestic employment market;

(3) expresses its disappointment in the Government for announcing yet another taskforce, the Migrant Workers Taskforce, to look at the issue of worker exploitation, while there is still no legislation that has been presented to the Parliament that will change the law to protect exploited workers; and

(4) calls on the Government to join the Opposition in preventing workers from being exploited by supporting its legislation before the Parliament, the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Australian Workers) Bill 2016.

A few weeks ago, in October, the Fair Work Ombudsman handed down another damning report into the misuse and abuse of 417 visa holiday workers here in this country, typically known to all of us as backpackers. Whilst the government continues to twist itself in knots around backpackers and the backpacker tax, what they are not doing is addressing a number of the claims and findings that have been recommended by this Fair Work Ombudsman report.

It found that a third of 417 visa holders that it surveyed were not being paid their proper entitlements; in fact, they were being paid less than the minimum wage. It also found that a number of workers were forced to pay for their second engagement, commonly known as the '88-day requirement', to obtain their second year of work rights. The report also found that not only had some of the workers had to pay for this engagement but they actually had to hand money back. The report also found that backpackers were quite often housed in unacceptable conditions, with up to 10 people in a room, they were billed ridiculous amounts for their board and were left feeling very isolated and lonely.

This report that was released by the Fair Work Ombudsman cannot be ignored by this government. They continue to ignore report after report from the Fair Work Ombudsman, and it is time that they started to act. It is time that they started to crack down on the labour supply chains involving sham contracting. It is time that they stopped the exploitation of vulnerable backpackers here in our country, who are essentially here as guest workers.

The backpacker visa was originally designed as a cultural exchange. It encouraged young people from overseas to come to this country, to travel and to work. Equally, Australians have done the same overseas. But more recently, in the last five years the visa has become a backdoor way for employers to engage cheap labour. I know those opposite like to smirk, but you cannot smirk about the fact that a third of young backpackers employed on this visa are being underpaid. They are being exploited by unscrupulous employers and by labour hire companies.

Just some local examples: in my own electorate of Bendigo, DON KR, rather than hiring young university students or young people in our community, have engaged a labour hire firm that employs backpackers from Taiwan. These workers, when we have spoken to them directly, are not being paid the minimum rates. DON KR says that they are looking into the fact. But even if they were to be paid the award rates, they are still undercutting the collective agreement that exists in that workplace by at least $4 an hour. It is unfair that local workers are missing out to backpackers.

There is also a problem not just in the meatworks and not just in horticulture but also in construction. There is a problem even in industries like social work. One case that was
brought up was that, in the state of New South Wales, there are Irish backpackers working as social workers to some of the most vulnerable children that we have in our country. They are a not-for-profit that has a contract from the New South Wales government, that has engaged backpackers to be social workers to support children who are in the foster care system. It is just disgraceful that we are living in a situation where, to fill labour shortages, a visa that was intended for a cultural exchange is being used. These backpackers are not aware of their rights and, because of that, are not being treated with the respect or paid the wages that they are entitled to.

The other problem with the backpacker visa, which the government is choosing to ignore, is that one in five backpackers walk onto a farm. They like to pretend that backpackers only serve the bush, when they do not. Four out of five backpackers will never set foot onto a farm, meaning that four out of five backpackers are directly in conflict and directly in competition with young Australian workers. Given the fact that a third of them are being underpaid, they are directly putting pressure on our local jobs market. I call on the government again to do something about the endemic problem that we have in our community with the exploitation of guest workers. It is time the government supported Labor's proposals to protect workers, to make sure that any worker here in this country is paid properly and treated with respect.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (13:11): I rise to speak to this motion. Of course, the Labor Party continually tries to create the sense of crisis in our visa system that does not exist. Broadly speaking, the 417 and 462 systems work very well in supplying a cultural experience and labour solutions to companies all around Australia where it is difficult to get labour. Australians, of course, do take advantage of this same system overseas, making a holiday in many parts of the world on this visa system.

The member for Bendigo is pretty emblematic of the current dilemma in the modern Labor Party. She does not know if she is supporting Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton; she is coming at it from both angles. She is anti-foreigners, and yet she is promoting foreign workers, even in the United Voice union on 457s. The United Voice union, of course, is the number one union that took advantage of 457 visas, including for the positions of workplace relations advisers—foreign workers coming in to advise unions on Australian workplace relations. So when we hear the Labor Party try to lecture us on the use of foreign workers, they could start with the union movement; they could start with the use of foreign workers within the union movement, because if you do not think that there are any Australians qualified to advise on the Australian workplace relations system, then you would be wrong. It is false for her to get up and say there is a crisis in our system.

Of course, the Australian government takes very seriously the issues of visa fraud, illegal work and the exploitation of foreign workers. This government has already made changes to the working holiday-maker program, which is not acknowledged in this motion. Since late 2015, the member for Bendigo—if she had bothered to look it up—would know that this government made applicants for a second-year working holiday-maker visa need to demonstrate that their three months' specified work was paid in accordance with Australian workplace law—an improvement that this government made already in 2015. This provides a
strong incentive for working holiday-makers to inform themselves about pay and conditions, and discourages working holiday-makers from willingly undercutting Australian wage levels.

While the member for Bendigo calls in this motion for the government to take legislative action, she would be aware that the Department of Employment informed the government's taskforce that the government intends to amend the Fair Work Act 2009, and it will protect vulnerable workers by increasing penalties, including introducing a new and serious contravention penalty for deliberate or systemic exploitation. We will strengthen the evidence-gathering powers of the Fair Work Ombudsman, and expressly prohibit providing false or misleading information to fair work inspectors. We will introduce new provisions to capture franchisees who fail to deal with exploitation by their franchisees, and expressly prohibit behaviour in which an employer pays the correct wages to an employee, but then forces them to repay an amount. These changes are already in the works.

Of course, the member for Bendigo does not want to look at sensible government improvements; she wants to create a series of false claims of hysteria and panic about our system. This government is making sensible changes to the 417 and 462 systems. We are certainly making sensible changes to the backpacker tax, and I reject the comments of the member for Bendigo on this topic. At the moment it is the Australian Labor Party that is standing up for the right of a backpacker to pay no tax or to pay less tax than Australian worker.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HAWKE: I know that gets some reaction from members opposite. You are advocating for Australian workers to be taxed higher than foreign labour. That is what you are advocating for. That is why it is hard to figure out if you are coming from the left or coming from the right. You are promoting xenophobia in this country by attacking foreign workers on 457s—deliberately knowing what you are doing in Mackay and North Queensland, attacking foreign workers in the field. At the same time you are undercutting the ability of Australians to get jobs. You are coming at it from the left and the right. Nobody knows where you are coming from in relation to these topics.

But what we do know is that this is bad for our economy. It is dangerous for our economy and for our society. 457s have a legitimate role in meeting workplace shortages and a legitimate role in meeting shortages in our economy that we are unable to fill, especially in rural and regional areas. But is not unreasonable for the Australian government to say that backpackers should pay a decent rate of tax that does not provide a disincentive but also means that Australian labour is not uncompetitive with backpacker labour. That is what this government is doing—sensible reforms in this place.

Labor is, of course, playing all politics. They are not looking at the economy or at what is best for the workers—the visa system, for rural and regional areas and also for our broader economy. I think it is emblematic of this motion that the member for Bendigo, who comes from the United Voice union, the number one union in Australia that makes use of 457s, stands up in this place and tries to condemn the government, which is actually getting on with the practical reforms that will make these visas work better and make sure that visa fraud and legality are stamped out.
Ms Ryan (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:16): I would like to point out to the member for Mitchell that this motion actually does call on the government to bring that legislation into play—this government's legislation, the great reforms he thinks they are going to do one day. Well, 'one day' is this summer period across Australia, where international young people, generally, travelling in Australia will be inundating this country coming in on 417 visas. So action on this needs to take place in the next two weeks. Perhaps those opposite would like to pay some attention. Rather than trying to vilify members on this side they should go back and do the work they have set up and have not yet completed. None of us on this side are surprised by that. This government has proven itself to be absolutely work-shy when it comes to getting legislation through the parliament, or doing the job that the Australian taxpayer is paying them to do.

These statistics regarding the exportation of 417 working holiday visa holders should be a source of shame for this government. Thirty-five per cent of 417 visa holders said that they were paid less than the minimum wage. We know what that means on the ground. It gives some businesses an unfair advantage against good Australian businesses doing the right thing and paying people a fair wage. Fourteen per cent said they had to pay in advance in order to get regional work—a worker pays a company in advance to get the work! If that is not an Australian I am yet to see it. Also, only 21 per cent of people signed a written agreement. Perhaps the most concerning stat is that six per cent of workers had to pay an employer to confirm that they filled their regional work requirement—pay them to do what is a statutory requirement for those businesses.

These workers are necessary. We know that. Farmers say over and over again that backpackers fill shortages in the Australian food production industry. In essence, they need those workers to get their food to market. No-one on this side is worried about that. Unfortunately, when you have a government that openly states its disregard for workers, and for workers' rights, businesses feel emboldened and free to exploit workers who do not know their rights. From young adults living in my house and from nephews and nieces who have travelled overseas and had friends come to visit, I have firsthand knowledge of the number of young people I have seen come from family homes who have been employed in this country on a 417 and are not being paid what they deserve to be paid. The stories are there if those opposite would like to connect with someone in the community and ask the question at the barbecue they are having over Christmas. See if you have some friends who might bring some 417 visa visitors to Australia to your Christmas day and ask them how they are being paid; you will be surprised.

In 2011-12, just five per cent of dispute forms lodged with the Fair Work Ombudsman related to visa holders, while in 2015-16 that figure increased to 13 per cent. Worse yet, of the people who approached Fair Work who were visa holders in 2011-12, 23 per cent were 417 holders. By 2015-16 that number skyrocketed to 44 per cent. This is happening in our community and it is increasing, because this government quietly gives the nod to those businesses that it is okay to exploit these young people. It is okay to get an unfair advantage compared to companies doing the right thing. This government is giving them acquiescence because this legislation has not been brought on. The Fair Work Ombudsman recovered $1.37 million for 417 visa holders in 2015-16. That should give you some insight into the level of
what is occurring here, because we are not talking about people who earn an enormous amount of money in these jobs. It is generally people who are lucky to be paid at base level wage. So I suggest that those opposite start getting busy, get rid of their work-shy habits, stop these underpayments that are occurring across the country, which have the flow-on effect of driving down Australian wages and conditions, and make sure that the four out of five backpackers who do not work on farms are not being exploited by businesses while this government sits idly by and watches. Let's see if we can get busy and do it before the summer period.

**Mr WALLACE** (Fisher) (13:21): The Fair Work Ombudsman's inquiry into the wages and conditions of people working under the 417 working holiday visa program commenced over two years ago and raises issues that the government has since taken strong action to address. Allow me to remind the member of the positive improvements the government has already made. In 2015, the government made it illegal for people to pay for or employers to charge for a visa outcome. Established 417 visa holders who are seeking a second year visa also need to provide a payslip as proof that they are officially being paid before an additional visa is granted to them.

In 2015 the government also established Taskforce Cadena, through which the Fair Work Ombudsman and Australian Border Force can together investigate and address cases of migrant worker exploitation. Taskforce Cadena is a joint agency task force comprising the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, its operational arm, the ABF, and the Fair Work Ombudsman. Taskforce Cadena also involves collaboration with other agencies, such as the AFP, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Taxation Office, as well as local law enforcement agencies.

Since its launch, Taskforce Cadena has completed more than 11 operations, resulting in the detention of at least 95 unlawful non-citizens and the execution of more than 31 warrants. Some of these matters are ongoing, with Australian Border Force investigators preparing briefs of evidence for consideration by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. People involved in the organisation of visa fraud and illegal work can face penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment or fines up to $100,000. People involved in the exploitation of foreign workers are liable for civil penalties of up to $10,800 per breach for a person or $54,000 for a corporation.

The Turnbull government has made it clear on numerous occasions that attempts to exploit Australia's temporary visa programs will not be tolerated. The task force continues to gather intelligence across all industries where illegal work practices involving unlawful non-citizens and illegal foreign workers may be taking place. Its operations send a strong message to individuals and syndicates involved: if you are in Australia without a valid visa, if you are working in breach of your visa conditions or if you are exploiting foreign workers, you will be caught. We make no apologies for that.

Recently, the government announced that employers of working holiday-makers will be required to register with the Australian Taxation Office, ensuring that government sees how people are being employed. The government also has a comprehensive plan to protect vulnerable workers, such as migrant workers. Well before the Leader of the Opposition was talking about this issue, the government had established a Migrant Workers' Taskforce to
rectify instances of exploitation, and announced new powers and funding for the Fair Work Ombudsman. Legislation to implement these commitments will be introduced early next year.

In contrast, when in government, Labor had no plan to protect vulnerable workers. In fact, when the Leader of the Opposition was the relevant minister he slashed funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman by 17 per cent and cut Fair Work Ombudsman staffing by 20 per cent.

In my region of the Sunshine Coast, backpacker labour is key to the harvest of strawberries, pineapples and other fruit and vegetables. Labour on temporary visas is also vital to the survival of the dairy, horticulture and fishing industries, which would face the prospect of shutdown without it.

The coalition government put forward a fully-costed reform policy to reduce the tax rate for working holiday-makers from a proposed 32.5 per cent to 19 per cent. The coalition’s reform package had come after extensive consultation with industry, had been endorsed by the National Farmers Federation, was aimed at ensuring certainty for farmers so they could plan to hire backpackers over the picking season, ensured tax rates were internationally competitive and ensured fruit and vegetables were on the table at Christmas at the most affordable prices. Thank you.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (13:26): I think that one of the problems we have that has emerged in the modern economy is this misuse of the term 'migrant labour' or 'skilled migration' compared with what is actually happening under this government, which is the operation of guest worker schemes. It does not matter whether we look at the 457 visa category, or at the 417 visa category or at the student visa categories; what we see now emerging in this country under the Turnbull government, and before that the Abbott government, is a system where in one instance large numbers of people are here on visas, ostensibly to travel, but are actually really here just to work. Or they are here ostensibly to study, but in reality are just here to work. That is the way these visa categories are now operating.

If we look at the 457 visa category, what was meant to be a small number of very skilled occupations has now got bigger and bigger, taking in hairdressers, bricklayers, electricians, auto electricians and the like. What we have is a system where workers come here, essentially as guest workers, and are vulnerable to exploitation because they have a visa hanging over their heads. We know now that there are labour hire companies that operate both in the country of origin and internally in Australia. They are often separate institutions, but set up in much the same way—in a deliberate way—to exploit these workers. They promise them the world and then extract the maximum amount of their wages out of them while they are here.

That is the way that this system is being utilised and abused, not by an employer but by an economic system where the head contractor or the head institution offloads it to a subcontractor, who offloads it to a subcontractor and so on, creating this chain where it is very difficult to hold anybody accountable. But, of course, we know from the member for Bendigo's previous motions and from my previous motions in this House that this is not a new problem, that this has existed in the retail industry and in the food production and agriculture industries. And, bizarrely, now we hear in this House—I almost fell off my chair!—that it is even in social work, in the residential care of vulnerable youth.

What we have on the one hand is a sophisticated and manipulative system, which sets out to deliberately evade the legislative intent of this parliament and all of our laws, being
operated by very large institutions in our country—chicken companies, hotels, retailers and
the like—who are completely blase about the application of law or even publicity around this
issue. They carry on regardless, with a merry disregard for this parliament, for community
standards and even for the government.

The Turnbull government to its credit, as we heard from the previous speaker, announced a
task force and the like. My only quibble with that is that he said it is a 'migrant task force'.
These people are not migrants. Migrants come, they settle, they have permanent residency and
they have the security of their visa. What we are talking about here are guest workers. They
are citizens of another country and they are allowed to work here under a strict set of visa
requirements, which are being systemically abused.

We have to have a good hard look at it and we need to take action on it, not the sort of
rhetorical action that we see out of this government, which is very good at beating up on
unions and very good at having legislative instruments beating up on unions. It is keen to take
up this parliament's time on those matters, but it is not very keen to take up this parliament's
time on legislative instruments that would help and protect migrant workers and, in doing so,
shut down these rackets—and that is what they are: they are organised rackets to exploit these
poor workers—and protect Australian workers, who, as a consequence, face unfair
competition because they are being paid award rates while these other workers are being
systemically ripped off.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (13:31): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for
Wakefield, who, on issues of workers' rights, does actually mean well and has always tried to
do the right thing. However, the problem we have is that
we have a motion moved by the
member for Bendigo, Ms Chesters, and the member for Bendigo is not here. It is the first time
in a parliament that I have seen a member move a motion, which they are apparently
passionate about, and not even bother to stay for the entire—

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr ROBERT: It is 30 minutes! If the member were that passionate about the motion, the
member would stay; the member would listen to the contributions and the member would
support their own motion. It is the first time in four terms—member for Wakefield, you came
in with me in 2007—

Mr Champion: I have been a lot less successful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Order! The level of interjection is too
high.

Mr ROBERT: Has the member for Wakefield ever seen someone not stay for debate on
their own motion? How little respect would someone have to have for their own motion that
they would not even bother to stay and listen to the debate? This is quite extraordinary. I have
never seen this. I have never seen someone not stay for debate of their motion in parliament.

We came into parliament to raise issues of concern. The member for Wakefield has sat
through this entire debate, to his credit. He has spoken about his personal concerns for
workers, which he has consistently been doing for the last nine years, to his credit, and he is
here. The member for Bendigo has done nothing in her life but been a member of the union—
and I say that without contempt or disparagement. This is an issue that, apparently, she
believes is important and she gave her speech and then left. She gave it five minutes of her
That just shows you the contempt she holds for her own motion. She has absolute and utter contempt for it. It just shows that it is all politics and no substance.

Let us talk about substance. Let us go to the substance of the 417 visa issues that were raised here in the federal parliament by the member who could not even be bothered to stay for the debate on her own motion. She did not even bother to stay for the debate on her own motion. What is the point of her coming into federal parliament to debate and argue issues when she does not even bother to stay? Let us go to the substantive point of the motion. The Fair Work Ombudsman commenced work over two years ago and raised a range of issues that the government has actually taken strong action on. My colleague the member for Fisher outlined some of those actions but let me reiterate them because they go to the substance of what the government is doing, as opposed to what the member for Bendigo is not doing—as in not even bothering to be here.

In 2015, the government made it illegal to pay or charge for a visa outcome, requiring 417 visa holders seeking a second year on their visa to provide a pay slip as proof. If their pay slip shows they are not being paid a certain amount, they cannot get an extension of their visa. In 2015, the government also established Taskforce Cadena, through which the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Australian Border Force can together investigate and address cases of worker exploitation. Recently, the government also announced that employers of working holiday-makers will be required to register with the ATO, ensuring that the government sees that people are indeed being employed. Well before the Leader of the Opposition was suddenly talking about the issue, the government had established a worker task force to rectify instances of exploitation and had announced new powers and funding for the Fair Work Ombudsman. This has been going on for over 12 months. This is substantive action for over 12 months to deal with issues.

The member for Bendigo could not even be bothered being here for her motion. That is how little regard she has for the issue. And then let us look at what the Leader of the Opposition has done or, more importantly, has not done. Show me your actions, and I will show you the value of what you say. Your words are proven true by your actions. For the member for Bendigo, who did not even bother to stay here, her actions show her true belief.

When Labor was in government, what plans were there to protect these vulnerable workers? Zero. In fact, when the Leader of the Opposition was the relevant minister, the person with the power, he slashed funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman by 17 per cent and cut Fair Work Ombudsman staffing by 20 per cent. That is what the Leader of the Opposition did. Those were his actions to back up his lack of worth. That was the importance he put on this issue. Labor can say what they like now. They can puff their chests up and talk about the action they are going to take, but, when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister, he cut staffing and did nothing. The member for Bendigo could not even be bothered to stay. Those are Labor's actions and that is Labor's worth. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** 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.

*Sitting suspended from 13:37 to 16:00*
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Mavraganis, Mr Con

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:00): I want to pay tribute to my constituent Con Mavraganis, who recently passed away. Con was a stalwart of the local Greek community in Broadmeadows, and he made a significant contribution to our local community throughout his entire life. His passing has been very deeply felt by all who knew him.

Con was only 16 when he migrated to Australia from Manna, in Corinth. Initially settling in Richmond, he then moved to Broadmeadows in the early seventies. It was during this time that he got together with other locals to become one of the founding members of the Greek Community of Broadmeadows. He would then go on to dedicate the rest of his life to building the community's infrastructure and to serving the community. Con was instrumental in the negotiations that led to attaining land on Camp Road and the building that then became the home of the Greek community's education, sporting, cultural and recreational life. From a small portable to a fully functioning reception centre, the premises adjacent to the Jack Roper Reserve in Broadmeadows would be where the local Greek community promoted its cultural heritage and educational heritage, including Greek language classes, dance classes and a very successful soccer team. Con's dedication was such that he would often offer his garage to the young kids who wanted to do Greek dancing well before they acquired their hall. He was always on call and always available. He genuinely loved Australia for the life it gave him, his family and his community. He loved his Greek heritage and promoted it at all opportunities through his work at the Greek Community of Broadmeadows and the PanCorinthian Association of Melbourne.

Volunteer Grants Program

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (16:02): Volunteers play a critical role in our community. They work tirelessly for the benefit of others. It is estimated that around six million Australians volunteer each year, including around 20,000 in my electorate on the Central Coast, so I am really pleased to be part of a government that backs our volunteers through our $10 million Volunteer Grants program.

The last funding round assisted more than 30 community organisations in my electorate. These included the Umina Beach Men's Shed, who used their grant to roll out first aid training and to help with the purchase of new equipment. The Kincumber Neighbourhood Centre were able to upgrade their computers and buy new kitchen appliances. And the local Stroke Recovery Association could reimburse fuel costs so that they could travel the Central Coast region and assist more people face-to-face who have suffered a stroke. There were also direct benefits delivered to groups like the Central Coast Potters Society, Chertseydale Community Cottage, Kariong Community Care, Point Clare Public School P&C, the Spencer Community Progress Group, and Marine Rescue—all outstanding organisations in my electorate.

Today I want to encourage all local volunteer organisations to consider applying in the next round of the Volunteer Grants program, which is now open. There are grants for between $1,000 and $5,000, with priority given to organisations working in disadvantaged communities or affected by natural disasters. Applications close on 20 December, and I would encourage interested volunteer groups to contact my office for more details. Again, on behalf
of our community I thank our hard-working volunteers for all that they do for our communities.

**Palestine**

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:03): I rise to express my concern about the treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military. Since 1967, Palestinians in the West Bank have lived under military occupation. Israeli soldiers, checkpoints, roadblocks, ID checks and even using different roads are sadly a part of everyday life. Most children must pass through checkpoints to go to school, to the shops and to visit their friends or family. Often at these checkpoints people, including children, are delayed, detained and questioned. According to Israeli figures, 414 children were held in military detention at the end of April. That figure includes 13 children detained without trial in what Israel calls 'administrative detention'. Children are being held without being charged or given a trial in military prisons. A Palestinian child as young as 12 can be imprisoned in Israel, and they often are. Just this year, a 12-year-old Palestinian girl spent 2½ months in an Israeli prison. By contrast, Israeli children in the same nation cannot be imprisoned until they are at least 14 years old.

These children appearing before these military courts are scared, pressured into confessions without legal representation, and often only given documents in a language they cannot understand. This inhumane treatment of children must stop. I call on the Australian government to raise in the strongest possible terms a request for Israel to ensure that their treatment of Palestinian minors is consistent with the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

**O'Connor Electorate: Pingelly Memorial Walk**

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (16:05): Recently, I had the privilege of being invited to the unveiling of the refurbished memorial walk and historical archives at Pingelly, one of the many close-knit communities in the Wheatbelt of my electorate of O'Connor. This memorial walk and historical archive was a three-year collaborative project undertaken by the Pingelly RSL and the Pingelly Museum and Historical Group, as well as the Pingelly Community Resource Centre, who were supported by several community groups and local volunteers.

The importance of preserving stories and passing them on as an inheritance to our children has not been lost on the Pingelly community. This collaborative community project not only contributes to the beautiful aesthetic of Pingelly but is also a place to remember and reflect on the sacrifices that were made and are still being made for our freedom. Many of the men who left the Pingelly community to serve their country sent their pay packets home to their mothers, their wives and their families. A large proportion of them did not return home, and yet their legacy remains within the Pingelly community and is now conserved in this beautifully refurbished memorial walk.

It was an honour to witness the unveiling of this memorial walk and historical archive in the presence of notable men who served and continue to serve our country, such as George Smith. Mr Smith spent three years as a prisoner of war in Changi prison. Damien Spencer, the RSL president and another returned serviceman, is a volunteer with the local firefighting brigade and also the ambulance brigade.
People such as these are invaluable assets to their communities. The refurbished memorial walk and historical archive is a great achievement that has been, and will continue to be, celebrated and valued by the Pingelly community.

**Dismissal**

Mr HILL (Bruce) (16:06): Despite a lot of local talk, we do not yet know what Donald Trump's election means for Australia, but it does highlight the need for Australia to pursue our national interest within the alliance framework, never being subservient to any foreign power. This requires us to modernise our Constitution and to have an Australian as head of state. We are pursuing closer ties in our region, yet we cling to the British monarchy. Monarchies are undemocratic, illiberal and non-egalitarian, and these are not Australian values.

We have heard the conservative arguments that it does not really matter, as, in effect, the Governor-General is our head of state and the British Queen plays no role in Australia. But a Federal Court case heard last week raises serious questions as to the role of the Queen personally in the dismissal of the democratically elected Whitlam government over 40 years ago. The so-called palace letters between the then Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and the Queen in the months leading up to the Dismissal remain hidden from the Australian people. The correspondence is a matter of our national history yet has been declared personal, and therefore secret, at Her Majesty the Queen's instructions.

The very notion of personal letters between the monarch and the Governor-General offends all concepts of transparency and democracy that we hold dear. Australians must know the extent to which the Queen personally involved herself in the sacking of an elected Australian government. I hope the court case succeeds, as I cannot support the Prime Minister's suggestion of a formal approach to the Queen asking her to release our own national records. What a toadying, unedifying, humiliating lot of colonial nonsense! The very suggestion highlights the need for our own head of state, accountable to the Australian people.

**Victorian Opera**

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:08): Today I rise to congratulate Victorian Opera on its incredible success. Victorian Opera is the shining star in the performing arts base, through innovation, technology and resourcefulness. We support and congratulate the Victorian Opera and call on it to be upgraded to Australian major performing arts group status.

Victorian Opera, under the careful stewardship of its founding director Richard Gill, and its current acting director, Richard Mills, has proved that an insightful curation of opera can attract new audiences, to push boundaries and champion Australian artists and stories while also being commercially successful and being attractive to audiences. Recent shows include *Four Saints in Three Acts*, an irrational opera featuring talented young artists and quirky 3D scenery; and *Laughter and Tears*, a spellbinding mix of circus and singing, featuring Circus Oz and the Darkest Night, the darkest operatic moments and our brightest talents in a unique streaming event.

The Nugent National Opera Review handed down 118 recommendations, which included improved access, artistic vibrancy and how the company should operate through a government framework of management and financial viability. Victorian Opera have been recommended to join the club of Australian major performing arts groups. We congratulate
them on their success and resolutely support this push as a recommendation of the Nugent review.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I am disappointed that the member for Goldstein did not take the opportunity for a performance!

Halit, Mr Patrick

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:10): Colleagues, I would like to congratulate, acknowledge, honour and thank 'Postman Pat' Halit after 60 years of service to delivering mail. He began work with the PMG, aged 15, at Warburton in 1956 and worked for one year in the general post office. In 1957 he transferred to Melbourne for training. He worked in various post offices in Melbourne suburbs and country areas. He was appointed as a senior clerk at Seymour and was promoted to postmaster at Eildon in 1972. He settled there, brought up his family, was involved in the community and stayed as postmaster for 44 years. It has been a staggering 60 years of service to the people of Victoria.

Sadly, I cannot be at the party in Eildon on Saturday night to acknowledge his service. But thank you to Pat, to your family, to your wonderful wife, Jeanette, and your three children, Lana, Shaun and Josh, on behalf of a really grateful community. We are grateful not only to you, of course, but for everything that Australia Post does: bringing the mail, being there, being the link in our community. I just cannot even begin to imagine the technological changes that you have experienced in that time and what is ahead of us over the next—imagine!—60 years. But, to all the people who deliver our post and to all the people of Eildon, thank you very much. Have a wonderful night on Saturday. Know that I am there with you in spirit, and thank you, Pat.

Collins, Mr Wayne

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (16:11): It was with a tinge of sadness that, a fortnight ago, I was at the retirement of Wayne Collins, from ECHO, as part of St Mark's Church. Wayne has been in that role for over 12 years. I also thank his wife, Karen, and his children, who often would have to give up dad to help out the Emerald community. Wayne, you have been an absolutely fantastic ambassador for helping young people not only in Emerald but through the Dandenong Ranges.

It was refreshing to hear young person after young person who was at the send-off tell me personally what a magnificent job Wayne has done, quite often bringing them from a path where they were going down the wrong way to their actually becoming outstanding citizens. I spoke to Wayne Burgess, a former principal at Emerald Secondary College. Wayne brought the chaplaincy program to the school. When it comes to emergency services in the area—I spoke to Ben, who is the captain of the Emerald SES—Wayne is the person you go to if you want something done.

In this short time, we cannot express our gratitude and our thanks to Wayne for what you have done for the community and for all those young lives you have helped. We truly respect you. We honour you, and we look forward to working with you in the future. Good luck in your retirement.
Chifley Electorate: Bidwill Shopping Centre

**Mr HUSIC** (Chifley) (16:13): In the lead-up to Christmas, as we race to get things done, we also race to get the shopping done. I feel particularly badly this year for Bidwill residents, who will be forced yet again to travel some distance to get their basic needs because of the lack of a viable shopping centre in their area. I previously expressed my disappointment about the development. After it had finally opened, after a long community campaign, it suddenly shut, earlier this year. Residents have been forced, as I said, to travel some way to get basic necessities or have been forced to use the local pub just to get milk and bread.

I previously criticised the developer, who was not too happy about that. I told him that, if he had reopened his shopping centre by the time he had promised, July, I would go to the public square outside Bidwill and I would apologise to the community. Guess what? I will not have to make that apology, because the centre still remains shut.

But it is not necessarily him who should be held to account for this but rather the Baird government, which owns the site through Housing New South Wales, which has failed to come up with a game plan to get this shopping centre reopened. It bumbled its way through it, and Bidwill residents have been forced to pay the cost. Perhaps the person who should stand in front of that community or in that town square is the New South Wales Minister for Social Housing, Brad Hazzard. He should explain to people why Bidwill residents still have to wait for basic shopping necessities.

North Sydney Electorate: Research and Development

**Mr ZIMMERMAN** (North Sydney) (16:14): I am fortunate to represent an electorate which includes what is arguably Australia’s third or fourth largest CBD in North Sydney, along with other major commercial centres like Chatswood. My electorate is home to thousands of businesses across the electorate that work in the full range of services that you find across Australia. But one of the unheralded developments which has occurred in recent times has been the growing importance of my electorate in the area of innovation, particularly in relation to health research and the digital economy.

Very quietly, we are seeing more and more businesses emerge in North Sydney, which are working in areas like health research—for example, recently, I visited a firm called Saluda, which is doing groundbreaking work in relation to the treatment of chronic pain, and other companies like Phebra and NewGenics, who are leading groundbreaking research in relation to cancer. Similarly in the area of the digital economy, we are home to major firms like Vodafone, the NBN, ASX’s technology centre, 3P Learning, which as any parent will know, is the parent company for Mathletics, which is helping children around the world learn maths and literacy skills.

I am committed to promoting my electorate as a centre for innovation. For that reason, I recently established the North Sydney Innovation Network, which is promoting North Sydney as a great centre for innovation in our nation. I want to congratulate all those businesses who are working so hard to make our electorate a vibrant centre for innovation in our country.

Jindalee Bowls Club

**Mr DICK** (Oxley) (16:16): I rise to brief the House on a shocking violent crime that happened in my electorate on Saturday night. The Jindalee Bowls Club in the electorate of Oxley was robbed of $5,000 at gunpoint at approximately midnight on Saturday evening. The
Jindalee Bowls Club contributes significantly to our local community, particularly across the Centenary suburbs, which is a very close-knit community.

They do great work at the Jindalee Bowls Club, and I thank the chairman, Betty, and her colleagues for the long hours they put in to ensure that the club runs smoothly and provides a place for members of the community to meet and, importantly, socialise together. The club was rebuilt after the 2011 floods like many homes and businesses across the south-west suburbs of Brisbane.

I also brief the House that the Centenary Meals on Wheels operates out of the Jindalee Bowls Club. They do terrific work looking after the frail, those in need and many vulnerable people in our community. I pay tribute to the president, Richard Stanton, and the secretary, Judy Murphy, for the work that they do.

It is my hope that we will not see any more crimes at the Jindalee Bowls Club or across the whole of the south-west of Brisbane. I will continue to support clubs like the Jindalee Bowls Club and every other bowls club, who provide fantastic opportunities for our seniors, sportsmen and sportswomen across the community.

Child Sexual Abuse

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:17): I rise today to speak—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

Mr IRONS: We are never short of a comment from the member for Moreton. I rise today to speak about an important anniversary that occurred on 16 November. On Wednesday last week, I attended a morning tea to acknowledge and recognise the seventh anniversary of the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians. It is a very significant day for the hundreds of thousands of people who identify as care-leavers and for those who survived institutional child sex abuse while in care.

Although this is not a traditional anniversary—five years or 10—this seventh anniversary marked yet another significant turning point for care-leavers in our nation's history. Earlier this month, I joined with Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, to announce the Commonwealth Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sex abuse. This seventh anniversary marks further recognition and acknowledgement of the pain and suffering endured by care-leavers, and the Redress Scheme is an important part of that healing process.

I would like to make a special mention of Cheryle Warner, a care-leaver herself, who has been on her own personal journey on the path to redress. It was great to see Cheryle at the morning tea and it reminded me that she once told me that redress was critical in restoring people's honour, dignity and self-worth. I am proud to be part of the government that has established this scheme.

I would also like to thank Relationships Australia for their role in organising the anniversary morning tea. I was also very pleased to see Western Australia's Senator Rachel Siewert joining the morning tea with the care-leavers for what is a very significant day for them.

Pronia

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:19): On Tuesday night, last week, I was the keynote speaker at the annual AGM of the Australian Greek Welfare Society, which has been
rebranded and is now known as Pronia. For over 40 years, Pronia has provided settlement services to the broader Greek community and has always been available to assist members in those early years, those critical early years, of migration to Australia. In addition to settlement services, Pronia has provided and continues to provide a very comprehensive aged care volunteer program and services, which see thousands of wonderful volunteers look after and visit many of the elderly of the Greek community who are now residing in nursing homes. The Greek community is one of a number of migrant communities that is now ageing, and aged care services are critical. The Greek community is also receiving new migrants from Greece as a result of the economic situation there, so a whole new wave of migrants are in need of important settlement services.

Outgoing CEO, Ms Voula Messimeri, has spent 27 years of her professional life at the helm of Pronia. I want to thank her for her great service to the organisation and, in particular, for the tremendous amount of work that she has done in the broader community, especially as an adviser on multicultural policy at both federal and state government levels. I wish her very well in the future.

Victoria: Bushfires

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (16:21): As summer approaches, I take this opportunity to remind the residents of Menzies, especially those in the eastern part of my electorate in suburbs such as Warrandyte and Wonga Park, of potential bushfire dangers. Significant areas of the electorate are bushland settings and are, indeed, semi rural. These areas have been endangered before, in particular, in the disastrous 1983 Ash Wednesday fires. I recall those 1983 fires vividly. As a young lawyer at the time, I was part of a group which provided emergency legal advice to victims in the weeks after the devastation.

The reality is that significant parts of Greater Melbourne are bushfire prone. We have had just this week the first total fire ban for the summer season. Accordingly, I would like to remind my constituents in particular but Australians more generally to be prepared for the coming summer. Having had a wet spring, particularly in the southern parts of Australia, there is significant undergrowth, which of course is the fuel for bushfires. Hence, I urge constituents in bushfire areas to prepare a bushfire survival plan, to clean up unnecessary and dangerous growth and to consider how to defend their property and, if necessary, if and when to leave it. We are well served by the CFA volunteers in Victoria. Their website www.cfa.vic.gov contains excellent resources.

Australian Capital Territory: Bushfires

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:22): On the afternoon of Thursday, 10 November, the wind gusts here in Canberra neared 30 kilometres an hour. The wind was bending powerlines into the backyard of one family, and when the lines touched the house a fire broke out. I am grateful that the family had their nephew at home at the time, because it was his quick thinking that prevented a near miss from becoming a tragedy. Before the winds had a chance to spread the flames, Jayden Pappis sprang into action. He leapt the neighbour's fence, grabbed their garden hose and kept the fire at bay until ACT Fire and Rescue arrived to take over.

Jayden's courage is commendable, and I congratulate him for his bravery. With fire season fast approaching, as the former speaker said, it is a reminder that, when it comes to fire safety,
a stitch in time savings nine. So I encourage Canberrans to check the battery of your home smoke alarms. This is vitally important. If it is pipping then it means that the battery has gone flat. Clean your barbecue grease pan regularly, even though it is a revolting job, and avoid overloading power points and power boards by ensuring adequate ventilation around the board and also checking for signs of damage or discolouration. I hope Jayden's action serves as a reminder to all Canberrans to check which fire safety precautions are in place, because we cannot all expect to have a Jayden around when we need one.

Higher Education

Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (16:24): As we near the year end, there are many year 12 students and university students who patiently await their results. In December, many university students will receive their results. Indeed, 12 December is the day when the Victorian Certificate of Education, VCE, results are revealed and many of these students may choose to go to one of two of Australia's greatest universities, which are located in Chisholm—Monash University, from which I graduated in Arts and Law, and Deakin University. Both of these universities provide fine education opportunities for students across Australia.

So it was with great pride that just last week Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited and launched the Biomedicine Discovery Institute at Monash University. To see these researchers and great minds at work in the presence of the leader of our country was a great honour. Monash University is Australia's largest university, and this was the first time in just under 30 years that a Prime Minister had visited the university. Under the Turnbull government, Australia is a land which embraces and supports education and institutions such as Monash and Deakin universities, which are aligned to a pace of rapid change and innovation.

My very best wishes to all students in Chisholm for their results, but remember: your ATAR results do not define you. Rather, hard work, resilience, persistence and focus to reach your goal will always make your journey a success.

Parliament House: Catering

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:25): It is traditional at this time of year to acknowledge the many thousands of people who make the work of parliamentarians possible: the cleaners, the security guards, the Hansard operators, the library staff and, of course, our personal staff. But I want to acknowledge in particular a group of people for whom the next couple of months will be particularly challenging, and they are the staff at IHG. IHG recently was unsuccessful in renewing its contract for parliamentary catering and, as a result, most of the IHG staff in this building will not be here when parliament resumes next year.

I want to acknowledge in particular a group of managers: Timothy Stephens, Elushka Scheumann, Elizabeth Notting, Tun Disthabanchong, Clinton Day, Nathan Cooper, Yunari Heinze, Joy Lin, Ali Mazari and Marc van der Meer. Their professionalism is extraordinary. The smiles that they have on their faces as they look after us and keep us so well fed and watered in this place is extraordinary. We will miss each of them individually and the many other staff who I have not had the time to name here today. We thank them for their service, for helping us do our jobs a little better, and we wish each of them their best in their future careers. We know they will do well, and we thank them for their service to the parliament.
Kenya Go The Distance?

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (16:27): I think that I probably speak on behalf of all members when I say that, when you represent people and you scratch the surface, you find all these really good news stories of things going on right across Australia. I just want to bring to the attention of the House a group of young women who are walking 550 kilometres from Melbourne all the way to Red Cliffs—I might point out that it is nearly 40 degrees today—to raise money for a primary school in Kenya. They are calling it Kenya Go The Distance? It is for the Masinde Primary School in Kenya, which is predominantly educating young girls.

The aim is to raise $20,000, so, if you see them walking down the road in their yellow T-shirts, by all means stop and donate some money. This is about educating young girls in a community. We have found from experience, when we have delivered aid programs through successive governments, that, when you invest in the young women, those young women then ultimately come up and grow the community. I see that the Deputy Speaker, Ms Claydon, is acknowledging that.

I just want to say this. People often say to MPs, 'Surely it's a tough job,' or, 'Why would you do it?' The thing that does make it really worthwhile is when you come across these great community people, these people in your own electorates, who are doing great things for the broader humanity. I just want to say that I am proud. Can you go the distance? Yes, you can.

Bruce Electorate: Minaret College

Mr HILL (Bruce) (16:28): Last Saturday evening I was delighted to attend the year 12 graduation of a school in my electorate, Minaret College, in Springvale, and witness 87 students, fine young Australians, complete their high school with a well-worn ritual. It does make you feel a little old to be there, but, as someone who recently survived year 12 again when my daughter finished a couple of years ago, I think they are wonderful occasions—seeing how excited and happy and emotional the students and indeed the parents are.

It is an end but also a beginning. Transitions in life, of course, can be difficult times, whatever they are. Like the member for Chisholm, who just spoke, I also reminded the students that their ATAR score and their performance are a number, and it will not determine their life's courses. It may lead them on to a career, but most will have many careers. While there, I was also pleased to award a community spirit and leadership award to a student, Khaled Fares, for his work in the school and in the broader community.

I acknowledge that Minaret College is an Islamic college. Indeed, it was founded in 1992, and it was the first Islamic college in south-east Melbourne. It serves the Muslim community and encourages and requires students to take an active part in the Australian community as Australian Muslims. I acknowledge the founder and director Mr Mohammed A Hassan OAM, an esteemed leader and a gentle man, for his firm commitment to teaching students to live a peaceful existence as part of the wider community and to be proud of their heritage. Indeed, as the school clearly acknowledges, it is critically important in this time of growing extremism that we reach out to our Islamic community and engage them, including welcoming these students into adulthood.

Cotton Industry

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (16:30): I would like to spend my 90 seconds on the Australian cotton industry, which is leading the world in quality, production and reduction in
environmental care. It is very likely that all the people in this room are currently enjoying products of Australian cotton growers. Australia produces enough cotton each year to clothe 500 million people. Over the last 20 years average yields have increased from six bales per hectare to over 10. Through GPS and satellite technology, fields are better maintained to improve chemical and sediment run-off. Genetically modified cotton has led to a dramatic reduction in the pesticides used to battle the heliothis bug. The member for Wright, who is in the chamber, knows about the heliothis bug.

The average Australian cotton farm is family owned and operated and employs about six to seven people per farm. The average age of the person running a cotton farm is 39, which is very low for farmers these days, when the average age of other farmers is about 68. The average farm is 495 hectares, which comprises about 17 per cent of the total farm area. To supplement cotton, other crops can be grown, such as wheat, chickpeas and sorghum and sheep and cattle can be grazed if necessary. Flynn communities in Biloela, Emerald, Comet and Theodore produce irrigated cotton and give the industry high yields and high quality.

Moreton-Rankin Unity Cricket Game

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:31): For the last three years the Muslim community in Moreton have played a game of cricket against the Muslim community in Rankin. Jim Chalmers, the member for Rankin, and I have been fortunate enough to join in. I am sorry to report that this year Moreton lost to Rankin. The score was 91 runs to 86 in Jim Chalmers's favour. The game was played in the usual positive spirit, with just a little bit of old-fashioned rivalry. The member for Rankin took three wickets in a pretty good bowling performance—I will acknowledge that.

We started these games a few years ago with our co-captains, Ahsan Assadi and Ali Kadri, as a way of building understanding and bridging divisions in our community. Rankin won the first one in 2014. We won last year—the forces of good in Moreton—but we will have to work a bit harder to regain the cup. Congratulations to Jim Chalmers and his team, led by Ahsan Asidid. I thank Ali Kadri for getting together my team. The Moreton team had some special help from the energetic Rohingya Strikers. I would also like to mention James Stedman, who did the scoring. Thank you to St Laurence's, the local Catholic school, for providing the sporting field. Thank you to Steve Buckland and Phil Barnsley our very patient umpires. It was Steve's second time umpiring, so thank you to Queensland Cricket for making a contribution. I make a special mention to Queensland Bulls player Billy Stanlake, who I hope will play for Moreton next year.

Eaves Water System

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (16:33): If you live in regional Australia and you rely on rainwater then you know firsthand the annual pilgrimage that you will make up a ladder to clean the gutters out. My electorate is going to fix that. Eaves Water System, an innovative guttering business in my electorate, is going commercial after they secured more than half a million dollars from the Entrepreneurs' Program. Eaves Water System was established in a backyard shed at Witheren about three years ago by a local builder, Alan Haley, after he saw some of the shortcomings in the industry.

The product is designed so that people do not need to climb and clean their gutters. It is a lifesaving measure, because we lose 500 people a year from people falling off ladders when
they are cleaning their houses. It is a highly innovative product, and it gives me great pleasure to see the entrepreneurs in my electorate being rewarded for their efforts. I visited Alan and his business partner, Bill Horton, and their team the other day at their factory where I personally congratulated them. They told me that the commercialisation grant will go a long way to developing their product. With the $613,250 that they have secured through the Entrepreneurs’ Program they will be able to take the product to the next level, nationally and abroad.

I commend the boys at the Eaves Water System. I can assure you that the patents that they have in place—if you can imagine a normal piece of guttering, it has something like a roof over the top that still captures the water and the leaves goes straight off, making it heaven.

Oxley Electorate: Veterans

Mr DICK (Oxley) (16:35): I rise to brief the parliament on a round table that I hosted last Tuesday with the member for Kingston and the shadow minister for veterans’ affairs to support veterans in my local community. I, like every other member of this parliament, am committed to supporting veterans’ groups, particularly on the issue of mental health and veterans’ suicide.

It was a timely meeting after the nation paused to commemorate Remembrance Day on the Friday before. I was honoured to attend the national ceremony here in Canberra, along with my friend the member for Canberra. Representatives from each of Oxley’s RSL sub branches attended the roundtable. I thank the Centenary Suburbs RSL Sub Branch, Darra Cementco Bowls Club, Goodna RSL Sub Branch and Redbank Plains RSL Sub Branch for their attendance and for the excellent work they do in advocating for veterans. Veterans were able to tell their stories and, along with the member for Kingston, I was very happy to listen. Their stories and experiences provide invaluable knowledge on how we can and must better support our local veterans.

I would also like to thank Peter Mapp and Ted Fotek for accompanying us to inspect the proposed site of the Anzac Cove memorial at the Darra Cementco Bowls Club, a major upgrade at this important local institution. I thank the President of the Springfield Light Tower association, Damian Gillette, and past president Ralph Breaden for giving us a closer look at Australia’s first digital defence memorial, which I am proud to say is located in the south-west suburbs of Brisbane.

As the son of World War II veteran, I will always support our veterans, particularly those who call Oxley home.

Workplace Relations

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (16:36): The difference between full-time employment and working as a casual can be enormous. In the resource industry around the Bowen Basin, working as a casual usually means lower wages, inferior conditions and, most importantly, less job security. It is with great concern that I see the decline in full-time employment and the rise in casual employment in mines around my electorate. It is morally wrong for a mining corporation, or any corporation, to employ people on a casual basis, even indirectly through labour hire contractors, to have them work side-by-side with full-time employees doing exactly the same job for exactly the same hours for years and years.
on end. I have had particular concerns about what is happening in Anglo American's German Creek coalmine near Middlemount.

I have written to the Fair Work Ombudsman as it appears there may be breaches of the Fair Work Act. There are reports of workers being sacked at the same time as their positions, or similar positions, are being advertised by a labour hire company contracted to Anglo American. If any worker believes that this has happened to them, I ask them to contact me because the Fair Work Ombudsman wants to hear from those individuals. If a mine is retrenching their permanent workforce and immediately filling those positions with contract labour, that is a breach of the Fair Work Act and it is illegal. I have written to the CFMEU to ask for their cooperation in providing details to the Fair Work Ombudsman so that if there are breaches of the Fair Work Act they can be dealt with accordingly.

**Indi Electorate: Bright Marngrook Family Footy Day**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:38): Nestled in the Ovens Valley in the foothills of the great Australian Alps lies the beautiful town and community of Bright. On Saturday, I had the amazing experience of being part of the annual Marngrook family footy event with local people, the Dhudhuroa, versus the imports from Wadeye in the Northern Territory. This is a traditional game of Australian footy, Aboriginal footy. The aim is to keep the ball in the air the whole time so that all players on both sides need to work together. It makes for a great game for communities to play together. Thank you to the community for inviting me. It is so lovely to be in my own community and be part of Aboriginal people playing footy in our community.

But the highlight of the day was the welcome to country. It is one of the first times that I have been welcomed to country in the local Dhudhuroa language. For this, I acknowledge the work of Bright P-12 College and the students in year nine and 12, over 40 students a year, who are becoming technically proficient in this language. Congratulations to all involved. It was a great day of footy. I learned a great deal. I am particularly so proud that we are resurrecting the languages in our community of our great history.

To Dallas Mugarra, Gary Murray, Lee Paul, Justin Crawley, John Pryor, Nicky Bomba, Jason Reid, Andrew Nicholas, Sue Joyce, Rebecca Crawley, Lee Rosser, Principal Jean Olley, all the Indigenous students, the Kindred Spirits Foundation and our visitors from the Northern Territory, I thank you for making a wonderful day in north-east Victoria.

**Banks Electorate: Banks Junior Short Film Festival**

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (16:39): I recently held the second annual Banks Junior Short Film Festival, a competition which gives primary and secondary school students in my electorate the opportunity to showcase their filmmaking skills while talking about our great area and why we love it. It was a terrific night and I would like to acknowledge the support of the Shopfront Arts Co-op at Carlton, who cosponsored the event, as they did last year. The films were fantastic and were from a wide range of schools in our area with a diverse range of filmmaking styles.

One of the great things about the festival is that it allows the kids' films to be shown up on the big screen at the Beverly Hills Cinema in Beverly Hills. I would like to congratulate all the category winners and the finalists on their high quality films. In particular, I would like to congratulate Vincent Vangi from Mater Dei Primary School for winning the primary...
individual category. He has won a film production course at Shopfront Arts Co-op, which I think he will make great use of given his obvious artistic skills. I would also like to congratulate Oatley Public School, who won the primary group category—and particularly Liv Coxsedge, Chaila Olliffe and Abby Coxsedge for all their great work. Congratulations again to everyone involved in the festival.

Isaac Delivers

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:41): Isaac Peel is a young small-business owner here in Canberra. He runs a service called Isaac Delivers, which delivers light items to businesses around Canberra, including Fyshwick Toyota, the Erindale Centre, Canberra Imaging Group and the Wanniassa National Health Co-op. The business began delivering magazines to waiting rooms around Canberra and since then it has expanded into magazines, milk and mail. By all accounts, Isaac is great at it too because it is a business that fits him perfectly. He loves the movement, the scenery and the music that plays on the radio while he is riding in the car. He greets people with a handshake and a smile and he is excellent at remembering locations and routines.

Isaac is making a major contribution to the Canberra community but, as any small-business owner will tell you, you cannot do it on your own. Isaac Delivers is the brainchild of Isaac's band of brothers and sisters, a microboard that was formed by his family and friends to help him achieve his goals in life. I expect Isaac and his team will have an even more successful 2017 and, even though it is a big call, I am sure Isaac will deliver.

Dunkley Electorate: Community Support Frankston

Mr CREWThER (Dunkley) (16:42): Last week, I had the privilege of visiting Community Support Frankston to see them in action and to see the full extent of services they have provided Frankston and the surrounding community for the last 48 years. Community Support Frankston is staffed entirely by volunteers, four days a week, with just a few paid staff on the managerial end. Indeed, it has one volunteer who has been there for the entire 48 years altogether. Last financial year, over 13,000 hours were volunteered to support Frankston's most vulnerable people experiencing financial hardship, homelessness, domestic violence, mental illness and family breakdown, amongst other things. They coordinate emergency funding for people as a last safety net, have a mobile shower service that visits one day a week, have stocks of nonperishable food and are an endless resource of knowledge for other services that people can be referred to if they are unable to meet the needs of the clients themselves.

When I visited, I was amazed at the extent of the work of Community Support Frankston and it is a relief to know that they, among other organisations, are there for those who fall through the gaps of the welfare system. I am grateful to Steve Phillips for taking the time out of his busy day to show me around the centre and for all the work that he and everyone at Community Support Frankston do. I was proud to have been able to secure a funding grant for them prior to the election and I look forward to working closely with them for the benefit of our community.

Mayo Electorate: Kangaroo Island Students

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:44): On November 10, I was delighted to learn that the one millionth student to visit Parliament House was a young lady from my electorate, Isabella
Jenke, from the Adelaide Hills. Isabella was able to come to Canberra to see Australian democracy in action with the financial assistance from the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate, also known as PACER. This rebate provides between $20 and $260 per student to schools outside of Canberra to subsidise that important educational trip to our nation's capital.

Unfortunately, the journey to Canberra is longer and more financially burdensome for some students in my large electorate than for others. Under current arrangements, Kangaroo Island students only receive a $60 rebate, the same rebate for a student living in Adelaide, despite the fact that they have no choice but to make an expensive ferry trip—more than the cost of the rebate—to reach our mainland. Tasmanian students receive an extra rebate for air and sea travel. I have spoken personally and written to federal Minister for Education and Training, and South Australian senator, Simon Birmingham to ask him to increased rebate for island students. Minister Birmingham said it was a thrill to celebrate the one-millionth-student milestone, and for that student to come from his home state. I can only reassert my request to make this important educational experience available for a wider group of students, including students from Kangaroo Island.

**Murray Electorate: Jobs and Investment Fund**

**Mr DRUM** (Murray) (16:45): I had the opportunity last Friday to host a roundtable of economic development officers in Euroa. We had 13 local government areas from the Hume region, Echuca, Shepparton, Cobham, the committee for Shepparton, the committee for Echuca-Moama, economic development officers from Mansfield, Wodonga, Benalla and Seymour, all coming together to add their advice on the $20 million Jobs and Investment Fund that has been put forward by Senator Fiona Nash. This is going to be a locally designed and developed investment package to create jobs. It is actually putting in place the mantra that we started with earlier, during the election campaign. This is going to be a program that is locally designed for local needs and local capacity. Applications that come forward to create jobs and investment will be pitted against the criteria that have been designed for each and every area. The $20 million for the Hume region and the Goulburn Valley region is going to be well appreciated. The members who were there were able to talk about what is needed in their area, but certainly expressed a very strong idea to maybe bring together a committee of seven to nine people to lead this fund to design their own locally designed set of criteria against which each of the applications will be assessed.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon):** In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Middle East**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) 500 to 700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year;

(b) Human Rights Watch reported in April that arrests of Palestinian children by Israeli forces had doubled in the preceding six months;
(c) Defence for Children International research, based on 429 affidavits from Palestinian children, indicates that 97 per cent of children had no parent or legal counsel available during interrogation and 75 per cent endured some form of physical violence following arrest;

(d) the United States State Department’s 2014 human rights report on Israel states that military courts have more than a 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants;

(e) UNICEF has reported that ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process; and

(f) Australia raised concerns with Israel about the treatment of Palestinian minors in 2011 and 2014, however there has been little improvement concerning the treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli forces; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to raise concerns with the Israeli Government about the treatment of Palestinian children.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:47): I am pleased to support this motion moved by the member for Calwell. The motion reads:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) 500 to 700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year;

(b) Human Rights Watch reported in April that arrests of Palestinian children by Israeli forces had doubled in the preceding six months;

(c) Defence for Children International research, based on 429 affidavits from Palestinian children, indicates that 97 per cent of children had no parent or legal counsel available during interrogation and 75 per cent endured some form of physical violence following arrest;

(d) the United States State Department’s 2014 human rights report on Israel states that military courts have more than a 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants;

(e) UNICEF has reported that ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process; and

(f) Australia raised concerns with Israel about the treatment of Palestinian minors in 2011 and 2014, however there has been little improvement concerning the treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli forces; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to raise concerns with the Israeli Government about the treatment of Palestinian children.

This situation is intolerable. The Australian government has acknowledged in the past that there has been problem and it has raised it, but it has gone quiet for some period of time, and not only have we not seen an improvement in the situation but we have seen a deterioration.

The motion references Human Rights Watch in paragraph (1)(b). It is worth considering for a moment what Human Rights Watch has said. It has said:

Israel enforces severe and discriminatory restrictions on Palestinians’ human rights, and it builds and supports unlawful settlements in the occupied West Bank. Its security forces appear to use excessive force against Palestinian demonstrators and suspected attackers, raising the specter of extra-judicial killings. It has renewed the practice of punitive home demolitions.

It is also worth considering what Amnesty International has said about this point, and especially what Amnesty International has said about this practice of detention. Amnesty International has said in its 2015-16 annual report:
In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces committed unlawful killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, and detained thousands of Palestinians who protested against or otherwise opposed Israel’s continuing military occupation, holding hundreds in administrative detention.

Now, the other parts of the motion are worth considering and reflecting on themselves, because they are essentially unassailable fact.

As I noted previously, our government has raised the issue previously but no further action has been taken. It is concerning when one puts this in the context of our government's willingness to stand back and not use its relationship with the state of Israel to press for action on this important question of human rights. We saw it during the attack that was called by the Israeli government Operation Protective Edge. The Australian government sat back and did not raise concerns about human rights violations.

Yes, there were some who said that human rights violations occurred on several sides, but the Australian government said nothing about any of it. But when it comes to the detention of children at such high rates as have been seen in the motion, where it becomes almost a fact that if you are brought in for a hearing you are likely to end up in some form of detention, then Australia must act.

The government itself does not have a proud record here at home when it comes to keeping children in detention, but even the government has acknowledged—and the Minister the Immigration and Border Protection stands up in parliament and acknowledges this—that no-one wants to see children in detention. Well, if that is a good enough principle to apply here it should also apply to Palestinian children. If we as a country want to talk about the importance of maintaining strong relationships with other countries around the world then there is no point in being friends with governments if you do not use that supposed friendship to stand up to them when they do the wrong thing—to say, ‘You need to act on what is clearly an egregious abuse of human rights.’ Otherwise, if you do not stand up to governments when they do that, you become complicit in it. The standard that you walk past is the standard that you accept.

That means that the Australian government has now been put on notice. It has taken action in the past, and it is time that it renewed that action so that we address what is clearly an unlawful but also immoral abuse of children.

Mr HART (Bass) (16:52): If it pleases the House, I rise to support this motion. I thank the member for Calwell for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.

Palestinian children living in the West Bank are subject to the Israeli military law, which allows for any person as young as 12 years old to be considered criminally responsible and to be imprisoned. This fact, in and of itself, should be enough to cause concern for the international community. Five hundred to 700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year.

In my home state of Tasmania there is currently a debate about early education; not whether it is important—that is accepted as fact by both sides—it is the implementation of this vital element of early brain development and how to get the most out of our children's potential that is at stake. We know that the experiences of childhood leave lasting impressions on adults, well into their lives. Simply by reading to a child every night from birth can increase their academic success in the future. But the fruits of this labour cannot be seen for decades and are, in this case, at the heart of this debate.
What then for a child who lives in an environment of distrust and hate? The mere crossing of a street can find them face down on the bitumen, stood over by two or more grown men with fully automatic rifles as they are searched, seemingly because of no provocation. Most suffer some form of violence during their arrest. Many are arrested from their homes in the middle of the night. Scared and confused, more often than not their parents are not told of the reason for their arrest or the location of their child's detention.

Children are interrogated; position abuse, threats and isolation are all used as tactics to garner a confession. Given that a child in solitary confinement is held on average for 13 days, is it any wonder that the confession rate is over 90 per cent? Military prosecutors rely on these coerced confessions, which are rarely thrown out by judges, to obtain a conviction. Indeed, Israeli military courts have a 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants.

While many children maintain their innocence, pleading guilty is often the fastest way out of the system. For those that do go to trial, bail is rarely granted, and children remain behind bars, waiting for their day in court. On average, of cases that resulted in conviction, 50 per cent received a custodial sentence of between three and 12 months. The majority of Palestinian child detainees are transferred from occupied territory to prisons inside Israel, making family visits virtually impossible, as parents struggle to gain entry permits into Israel.

What can we expect over the next decade as these children grow into adults, who will become the decision makers of the future? Can we expect to see mutual respect—or trust, indeed—grow from these interactions? What are the lessons that these children are learning?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child compels state parties, of which Israel is one, to ensure that no child ‘be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily’ and says that imprisonment of a child should only be used as ‘a measure of last resort’ That is the last resort. Further, as a signatory to the convention, Australia is obligated to take steps to ensure that no child is subject to torture or other degrading treatment or punishment.

I note that the work of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory is acknowledging the issues within our own system and ensuring that oversight mechanisms and safeguards are in place to ensure that, where a child is detained, they are treated appropriately and with respect.

Australia raised concerns with Israel about the treatment of Palestinian minors in 2011 and again in 2014. However, there has been little improvement concerning the treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli forces. I call on the Turnbull government to raise with the Israeli government these concerns about the treatment of Palestinian children.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (16:57): I think this is a very interesting topic to be talking about. For me, as an MP who represents the Mallee, why does it matter? Why do I care? I am in the Mallee. What do I know about the Middle East? That was the thought process that went through my head as a new MP. I started to get delegations that would come and see me in my office from the Israel lobby group and the Palestinian lobby group. I got offered free trips.

I am a bit of a person who believes that you should go and have a look for yourself, so, at Christmas 2015, my wife and I self-funded a trip and went over there ourselves. We said to the Palestinian lobby group, ‘We'll give a day to you,’ and to the Israelis, ‘We'll give a day to you.’ We drove around through the southern end, up to the Golan Heights. I just want to reflect on some of what I saw.
Can I first say that it is always the children that suffer. Whenever we have a conflict of humankind where we cannot sort our stuff out, it is always the children that suffer. It was brought home to me that it actually does matter what Australia thinks, because really there are four or five major nations in the world that do take a position on these issues: the United States, Great Britain, members of the European Union and Australia. It actually does matter what our view is.

If I can reflect on what my view is, it is that little grace is given on either side. I went down to Jericho and, being a farmer, I wanted to sit down with the Bedouins. So we sat down with the Bedouins and ate some rice, and they asked whether my wife, who was accompanying me, was my first wife. I said, 'No, she's my only; I don't need more than one.' We talked about livestock, the common language. What I found was that there in the West Bank a new settlement had been put. Really, there was no justification that I could see in my mind for putting that settlement there. The Bedouins, who were accessing the well, had had their well capped and had had the water from that well taken to feed that settlement, so the Bedouins were going to have to take their water carts into town to get water.

Now, the farmer in me gets thinking, 'Well, what does a 30,000-litre tank cost?'—a couple of thousand dollars. What would it have mattered if they had just put a tank there as well, and put a water supply for the Bedouin? It would have cost about $5,000—small steps of grace! I guess this is the take-home message that I got from my trip to Israel: amazing country, amazing people—both Palestinians and Israelis—but unfortunately, increasingly fewer steps of grace. When you give steps of grace, you begin to see the person who is a Palestinian, if you are an Israeli, as a person. If you are a Palestinian, you see the Israeli not as an oppressor but as a person. I have a theory from my observations when travelling: it is that all people really just want to see their child have a better standard of life than they had. It does not have to be a First World standard; just a better standard of life.

I fear about the conflict that appears to be growing in the Middle East. It is because of that lack of graciousness with one another that the Palestinian people are seeing that their children are not having that better standard of life, which is a great political failing of the Israeli government, I have to say. Whilst the Israeli government is seeing their view that security is the most important thing to them—and I must admit, I was at the Golan Heights, and there was Syria just over there, and the Syria conflict was taking place, and I felt very safe in the Golan Heights because of the Israeli defence force—they have missed the one key point, which is that unless you distribute some graciousness, you actually undermine your own domestic security.

Those are some of the reflections I have. In the few minutes remaining I will say that Israel is a great nation and the Palestinians are a proud people. I found that even when I had the meetings on both sides, even internally, no-one could completely agree on what the answers were, and I do not profess to know the answers. But as we individually take small steps of graciousness towards one another we go a long way towards solving the problems of the Middle East. Until governments on both sides commit to that, I think we will continue to have a conflict for many years to come.

**Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (17:02):** I am pleased to support this motion. It is not hard to think about the conflict between Israel and Palestine and throw your hands up in despair. Few other conflicts on the planet create such polarised views around the globe and have such an
embedded effect upon the current structure of international relations. Few other conflicts evoke such heated discussion elsewhere than in the region from which they originate.

However, I am not here today to take a side. The story of Israel and Palestine is tragic in both its length and its depth of suffering. Whilst there are many injustices in the conflict, I am here to talk about one in particular: the increasing use of military detention of Palestinian children by Israeli forces. I am indebted to the work of UNICEF for much of the information that I will now relate to the chamber.

Israel established its juvenile military court in September 2009, the first and only military court in operation in the world. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that state parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child should establish separate facilities for children deprived of their liberty, including distinct child-centred staff, personnel, policies and practices. I agree with UNICEF’s conclusion that all children should be diverted wherever possible from entering the law enforcement and judicial systems. Depriving children of their liberty should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time period, yet somewhere between 500 and 700 Palestinian children are detained and prosecuted every year.

It is not clear what the current Palestinian juvenile conviction rate is in Israeli military courts. However, it is most distressing to learn that, according to a 2014 United States State Department report, Israeli military courts have a conviction rate of more than 99 per cent for all Palestinians. One can conclude that the juvenile conviction rate is at least very high.

The Israeli juvenile military court hears all ordinary proceedings concerning children. However, those critical issues relating to the detention of young children, such as remand hearings and bail applications, can instead be heard in the military courts used for adults. The reason that this is a problem is that the judges in adult military courts are not required to have any special training or understanding of any of this special vulnerability that children face in going through a justice system.

The concern is further compounded in instances where the Israeli adult military court mistakenly tries a minor. Even if the court later realises its mistake, that court can choose to continue to hear the case as is, as if it were a military juvenile court again, regardless of whether or not the judge has any special training to conduct such matters or any particular understanding of the vulnerability children may face.

It must be recognised that these issues are not just technical legal concerns. They cause real problems in how long children end up being deprived of their liberty, and under what conditions. The majority of Palestinian children prosecuted by Israel are charged with throwing stones. Throwing a stone with the intent to harm a person or property carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. A child aged between 10 and 13 can receive a maximum sentence of six months, but a child between 14 and 15 can receive a maximum penalty of 10 years. Throwing a stone at a moving vehicle with the intent to harm a vehicle or a person carries a maximum penalty of 20 years. Thus, a 14 or 15-year-old Palestinian child could be caught throwing a stone at a moving tank and, as long as they had the intention of damaging the tank, they could theoretically end up with a 20-year sentence.

No-one is claiming that throwing rocks at tanks is behaviour that should be blindly tolerated. But the possibility exists that, as a result, a Palestinian child could end up with a 20-
year sentence in prison, which is utterly disproportionate to the nature of the original behaviour. It is shameful that this possibility exists within a modern democracy such as Israel. I call on our government to implore the Israeli government to dramatically and drastically reform their system of juvenile military courts. We must communicate these concerns, as a matter of urgency.

Debate adjourned.

**National Security**

**Mr HASTIE** (Canning) (17:07): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that as the terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, comes under increasing pressure in Iraq and Syria, there is the risk that more foreign fighters will seek to leave, with some trying to return to their home countries, including Australia;

(2) acknowledges that the Government:

(a) has given greater support, funding and legislative powers to law enforcement and security agencies; and

(b) continues to work in close partnership with international partners to counter the terrorism risk; and

(3) notes that the national security challenges facing Australia continue to evolve.

Last month I declared that Australia, as part of the global coalition against Islamic State was trending towards victory. In October, Islamic State lost control of additional territory—four per cent in Iraq and two per cent in Syria. Therefore, since there are high-water mark of August 2014, Islamic State has significant territory—56 per cent in Iraq and 27 per cent in Syria. Right now, the battle for Mosul is being fought. Its liberation will be among Islamic State's most significant losses to date, alongside the loss of Fallujah, another critical urban centre that was once under their control. Their grip on the Syrian city of Raqqa is being eroded by militia forces, backed by Australia and the coalition. The curtain indeed is coming down on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. With every gain made, new stories emerge of the oppression and terror that people have faced under Islamic State. This only stiffens our resolve.

We cannot understand Islamic State without first engaging their world view. It is the keystone to their whole movement. It serves as the blueprint for their military strategy and their barbaric tactics. Australian academic Robert Manne has written on this subject both in *The Monthly* and in a recent book, *The Mind of the Islamic State*. I suggest that this is essential reading for Australian policymakers. He states that ideology is at the heart of Islamic State:

The more I read the more convinced I became that the Islamic State's barbarous behaviour could not possibly be grasped without some real familiarity with the character and content of their ideology. As so often in history, it is ideas that kill.

Very simply, Islamic State theology—a radical Salafist interpretation of Islam—gives rise to a totalitarian world view that is entirely incompatible with Western civilisation. Its demands are clear: all must submit to the Islamic State and become part of a worldwide caliphate. They despise our way of life and our democratic freedoms and traditions.
Territory is critical to the validation of Islamic State ideology, so every coalition advance undermines the ideological legitimacy of ISIS. As its territory recedes, we not only press the material advantage but we also strike hammer blows at their world view. This is a contest of ideas that must be waged both materially and intellectually. The liberation of Dabiq is a case in point. According to Islamic State, this small unremarkable Syrian village was to be the place where the armies of Islam would win a great battle against the West, the first in a string of apocalyptic victories. Dabiq fell to coalition backed forces last month. This is a profound setback for Islamic State, one that strikes decisively at the heart of their world view.

Australia is a partner to the global coalition which is disrupting and degrading Islamic State's activities and capabilities in the Middle East. Beyond training Iraqi troops and conducting air strikes in Iraq and Syria, Australia is working with coalition partners to tackle Islamic State's financing and economic infrastructure, to prevent the movement of foreign fighters across borders and to restore essential services in liberated population centres in Iraq and Syria. With Australian support the global campaign is making progress. This is welcome news; however, the campaign against IS is far from over.

As the caliphate continues to collapse, the bulk of its 30,000 foreign fighters will seek to repatriate themselves into communities in the West. Among that group are over 100 foreign fighters who hold Australian passports, which is to say that they are Australians in name only. They have rejected our way of life. The Australian parliament has passed five tranches of counterterrorism and national security legislation over the last two years. This legislation ensures our law enforcement and intelligence agencies are empowered to combat Islamic State and their affiliates.

Thousands of foreign fighters, without question, will flee the caliphate to hide in the West. They will come battle hardened and radicalised and will seek to sow discord and terror in our communities. Maintaining border sovereignty and rigorous immigration checks has never been so important. The Turnbull government's principled, realistic border security measures stand as an example to both Europe and the United States. By controlling the flow of migration, we have avoided the mistakes of Europe. We do not have the same security challenges on our shores. The Prime Minister and the immigration minister are to be commended for their resolve in keeping the people of Australia safe.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is the motion seconded?

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

Dr ALY (Cowan) (17:12): First of all I would like to acknowledge the success of the military action by the Iraqi Army and coalition forces, including Australia, in gaining critical territory from Daesh in Iraq. At the same time, however, I caution that we need to heed the lessons from previous conflicts against terrorist actors in the region. Almost a decade after the terrorist attacks on the United States, the prolonged war on terror has failed to actually eradicate the threat of international terrorism. While this hard power approach of war on terror succeeded in decimating the operational and tactical capacity of al-Qaeda central, the belief that the destruction of training camps would successfully eradicate al-Qaeda's affiliates and its ideology was indeed misplaced. This wisdom of employing an orthodox military response against an unorthodox enemy has rightly been questioned. The war on terror has not weakened the ability of terrorist groups to inspire, recruit or mobilise.
The last speaker, the member for Canning, spoke of the need to understand the world view of Daesh or ISIL. I reiterate what he said, but I would also say that last year Major General Michael Nagata, the most senior general in charge of coalition forces in Iraq, threw his hands up in the air and stated: 'The problem is we do not understand Daesh. We do not understand their ideology. We do not understand what they want.' I would argue that actually we do. There has been much analysis and research on exactly what their ideology is, on exactly what their world view is and on exactly what their strategic motives are and what mobilises them. What we do not understand is exactly how that speaks to and influences young people, particularly those in the West.

I am reminded here of the words of Ban Ki-moon, the outgoing UN Secretary-General, who at the White House CVE summit last year stated, 'Missiles will kill terrorists but they will not kill terrorism.' That is why we need to be vigilant and steel ourselves against the urge to find simplistic explanations and answers that do not need take into account the complexity of radicalisation and violent extremism such as terrorism and that, importantly, hold no hope of offering solutions that are viable or effective.

The lack of empirical data to support many of the myths and assumptions that have been put forward not only to explain terrorism but also to develop frameworks to address it is an ongoing issue of concern. As an academic, I sought to answer questions about why people become terrorist actors and what we can do to prevent it. For me as an academic, access to data was a major barrier, and that is because it is very difficult if not impossible to interview terrorist actors—especially if they are suicide bombers—to engage them and to gain those valuable insights into their psychologies and their histories. So, in the absence of robust data and research, we tend to fall into the pattern of making assumptions based on myth and conjecture and single-line statements based on crumbs of information that are gleaned from media reports.

There are two things with regard to the particular motion. The first is that, based on past evidence, it is much more likely that the mujahedin, as they call themselves, will follow conflicts to the next theatre of jihad, as have those who fought before in Afghanistan and then in Iraq and Syria. That is, of course, if they survive and manage to escape from Daesh, who are known for executing those who try to desert the organisation. Secondly, the one study that has been done on this has been done by a man named Thomas Hegghammer. According to Thomas Hegghammer's data, which was also very limited, most foreign fighters do not leave the theatre of combat with the intention of returning for domestic attacks. In fact, around one in nine foreign fighters return to perpetrate attacks in the West. Nevertheless, it is prudent to be aware and ready to respond to any threat posed by those who are returning, for today's terrorism is characterised by the ability of small numbers to cause large-scale mass-casualty attacks, as the events in Paris have shown us.

Daesh is but one iteration of a global violent jihadist movement that is likely to continue even after the last operative is gone from Syria and Iraq. This is not the fight of my generation but the fight of generations to come, and we need to keep paying attention to it.

Mr Tim Wilson (Goldstein) (17:17): I would like to follow on from the previous speaker in saying that there is an enormous challenge ahead for not just our generation but future generations in making sure we take on the challenge of Islamic extremism, Daesh and all of its different guises. Today we fully acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the government
and coalition forces in combating the atrocious and hateful crimes of ISIL and the tragedy that is befalling so many people across the world. There simply is no place for the jihadism, misogyny, temporary forced marriage, polygyny or patriarchal coercion that exists in the 21st century, as well as the acts of horrific violence that are committed by people in groups such as ISIL against vulnerable and innocent people who have done no wrong and should not become victims simply because of who they are or how they live their lives.

The atrocities inflicted on minorities, in particular, by ISIL are indefensible. Their actions represent the worst outcome of an extremist interpretation of Islam that is profoundly incompatible with the modern world. The free world does not seek to homogenise belief or conscience; instead it affirms diversity and advocates for tolerance and mutual respect. Those are the sorts of values that are directly under assault when you look at ISIL and its objectives around trying to dehumanise people unless they conform to a particular world view—and in the most aggressive and violent way possible if it suits their ends.

These sorts of values of tolerance and mutual respect are central to our way of life, which is why there is such a polarity between us and them. This is not to seek a dichotomy and simply to say, 'It is us and them, and you are with us or you are against us.' It is simply to highlight that the inconsistency between who we are and what they are seeking to achieve is so great because they envisage a future without the values that we share, the values of liberalism and democracy that we hold so dear and that foster and create a society of tolerance and mutual respect for all.

Our Defence Force has an important role in assisting and advising the Iraqi government to help build capacity and take control of their borders and security. It is equally important and crucial in a contemporary sense that the Iraqi security forces take back Mosul. It forms part of broader objective to undermine the claim of terrorist organisations for a so-called Islamic caliphate. For Iraq to benefit from enduring stability, it must secure its own borders and be able to resist any resurgent terrorist activity once ISIL is defeated. That is a long-term objective of the 400 Australian Defence Force personnel currently involved at the invitation of the Iraqi government. We acknowledge today the heroic efforts of those who serve in uniform for our great country for their contribution today not only in seeking to aspire to the values of our country but in promoting peace and security in that region as well as in protecting so many people who would otherwise be victims of the insane political ideology that seeks to use violence as a means of expanding its influence.

There are also other security concerns beyond the Middle East as foreign terrorist fighters start to return home, whether that is in Europe, South-East Asia or, indeed, Australia, where sometimes there are threats. That is where the tragedy of last week's footage of Melbourne's landmarks was featured in the terror group's hateful propaganda videos. These messages call for lone wolf attacks on the streets of Brunswick and Broadmeadows and at the MCG, while showing recordings of violent acts, including beheadings and bomb blasts.

A government's first priority is to protect the safety of its residents by both securing its borders and holding those people who wish to commit crimes, violent crimes against its citizens, to account. That is why the political objective of this government has been so important not just around border security but following it through to making sure it delivers security for people within our country. As such, the coalition has increased the funding and
legislative powers of our law enforcement and security agencies, giving them the resources
needed to protect us from hardened terrorists who seek to destroy our way of life.

Getting the balance between how we have those security agencies keep us safe and free is
always difficult, and that is why I will never shy away from being engaged in those important
conversations as part of getting the framework right to preserve the freedom that we hold so
dear so that we do not end up selling short ourselves or the traditions and values that we
inherit to give to future generations. Behind the ideological conflict for Islamic
fundamentalism, the stories of human misery are the real tragedy. We fight this conflict for
the sake of our children and those who have suffered so much already but also those who
tragically may suffer into the future. We must gift upon this world a nation as well as a world
where we seek mutual respect and harmony to the advancement of all. (Time expired)

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (17:22): Labor are
proud of our record on national security. In government, between 2007 and 2013, Labor
increased funding for national security and public safety by hundreds of millions of dollars in
real terms. Regrettably, the government's claim expressed in this motion that they have given
greater funding to law enforcement does not bear close scrutiny. The Australian Federal
Police, in particular, have been forced to cope with budget cuts while having to provide
increased counterterrorism and security activities. In response to Labor's senators questions on
notice on police resources from earlier this year, the Australian Federal Police responded
that they 'did not receive any portion of the $1.2 billion national security funding announced in the
2015-16 budget'. Further, the Australian Federal Police responded that their 'capacity to
respond to increased volumes of activities and threat means that resources are stretched'. Yes,
the government has increased the legislative powers of law enforcement and security
agencies, with Labor's bipartisan support, but there remains resourcing issues that must be
acknowledged.

Labor will support measures to increase national security to ensure that our community is
safe. We have at all times since September 2013 aimed to work with the government in a
bipartisan manner on important issues of security and defence. However, that does not mean
that Labor will write a blank cheque for the government on this or any other matter. As a
responsible opposition, Labor will continue to work with the government to strike the right
balance between improving community safety and protecting human rights, privacy and the
freedoms of all Australians. Throughout the term of the Abbott-Turnbull government, Labor
have worked in a constructive manner, particularly through the Parliamentary Joint
Committee on Intelligence and Security, to ensure all proposed national security legislation is
fit for purpose. We have helped to enact over 100 substantive amendments to the national
security bills that have been put forward over the past three years. Labor worked with the
government to not only pass but improve the citizenship bill, the data retention bill and the
foreign fighters bill. Labor members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence
and Security pushed for a number of amendments to the recently enacted Counter-Terrorism
Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2016. We have most recently sought and agreed with
government members of the intelligence committee on recommendations to improve the
Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016 and to ensure that
appropriate safeguards are in place.
Labor believes that these bills require expert consideration and advice to ensure that they strike an appropriate balance between keeping a community safe and protecting people's rights. The report on the Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016, which was tabled on 4 November this year, recommends that the government obtain legal advice from the Solicitor-General on the constitutional validity of the final version of the high risk terrorist offenders bill before it is further debated in parliament. We understand that terrorist groups like ISIL threaten liberal democratic values and seek to harm our friends and allies around the world. People are particularly concerned about Australian citizens fighting with overseas terrorist and insurgent groups and different forms of homegrown terrorism. Around 110 Australians are reportedly fighting or engaged in some way with terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria.

Despite the increased economic ties between nations that globalisation has delivered, there are still a significant number of conflicts and tensions in the world right now. There is, of course, a wide diversity in the challenges set by different conflicts around the world: wars in Syria and Iraq continue; there are on-and-off conflicts in parts of Turkey; Libya and Yemen still simmer; and countries including Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon face a developing threat from Boko Haram—all of which create their own global and regional issues and challenges. Labor is ready and willing to meet these challenges, whether they be challenges caused by threats to the sovereignty and stability of democratically elected governments or challenges caused by changes in migratory patterns or territorial groups. I repeat: Labor stands ready to adopt a bipartisan position with the government on necessary changes to our national security legislation framework. This does not mean that we will agree with the government on every single bill or every single aspect of every bill that the government presents, but does mean a very constructive attitude, which we have demonstrated at all times. (Time expired)

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (17:27): Our nation's identity is defined by an overriding commitment to our democratic values that rise above race, religion or ethnic background. As a society, we are united around shared values of freedom, common decency, mutual respect and the rule of law. As one of the oldest and most successful continuous democracies, Australia has consistently rejected those who seek to impose their world view on others through intimidation and violence, and I am happy to say that I am part of a government that stands firm on its commitment to maintaining a harmonious society as a necessary precondition to keeping Australia safe. Our primary focus is to prevent harm to our families and communities, and to do this we are working closely with our state and territorial counterparts to ensure our police and security agencies have the powers they need to fight terrorism. However, as we know, terrorism is a global challenge and we must also work closely with our international partners in the region and beyond.

Given Australia's staunch defence of our democratic values at home and abroad, it would come as no surprise that Australia faces national security challenges that continue to evolve. To combat this situation, we keep our legislation and capabilities under constant review to meet these emerging needs and threats. Australia is one of more than 60 coalition members committed to tackling ISIL on all fronts. Australia plays a major role in the coalition as a leading contributor of troops training Iraqi forces, as a participant in airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, and as a significant humanitarian donor.
Beyond the direct military campaign in Iraq and Syria, we are tackling ISIL’s financing and economic infrastructure, preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders, supporting stabilisation and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from ISIL, and working hard to undermine and expose ISIL’s deluded propaganda. As result of this sustained effort, ISIL are under increasing pressure. They are losing territory, finances, fighters and battles. Since Iraqi security forces started their push to liberate Mosul, ISIL has lost control of more than 100 villages. In fact, they have not gained any new territory since 2015. In the past 12 months, ISIL propaganda has been reduced by more than 60 per cent, and Australian forces in Iraq are training more local soldiers than ever before.

Terrorism poses a grave threat to Australia and its people. It is important to manage terrorist offenders, who may continue to pose an unacceptable risk to the community following the expiry of their custodial sentences. To address the threat of terrorism, the Australian government has taken five tranches of legislation through parliament since August 2014, including the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2016 and the Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016. Since the national terrorism threat level was raised on 12 September 2014, 55 people have been charged as a result of 24 counterterrorism operations around Australia. Since the national terrorism threat level was raised on 12 September 2014 there have been four attacks and 11 major counterterrorism disruption operations in response to potential attack planning in Australia. In addition, close cooperation between intelligence and law enforcement agencies has led to a series of targeted disruption and other activities to contain those threats.

There are currently 40 people before the courts for terrorism-related offences, seven of whom are juveniles. Around 200 people in Australia are being investigated for providing support to individuals and groups in the Syria-Iraq conflict, including through funding and facilitation, or through seeking to travel there. The overwhelming majority of these are young men and women. Around 190 Australian passports have been cancelled or refused in relation to the Syria-Iraq conflict, and four Australians have been listed for counterterrorism-targeted financial sanctions. Australia is part of an unprecedented international effort to combat and defeat ISIL and terrorism. Our commitment is steadfast and our resolve is absolute. (Time expired)

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (17:32): The member for Canning is to be congratulated for moving this motion. One of the primary duties of members of this House is to protect the right to life of all Australian citizens. Only last Thursday we saw Daesh call on jihadis to target my city of Melbourne. The pictures of Tullamarine Airport, Qantas aircraft and St Paul's Cathedral were among the graphic images of bomb blasts and beheadings that Daesh put in with their propaganda videos. This, of course, primarily affects the people of the Middle East, particularly the minorities, who have been brutalised by this terrible political movement that misuses one of the world's great monotheisms and speaks in its name without its authority and without any spirituality. It has devastated that part of the world. In Syria we have seen nearly half a million people die—not solely as a result of the Islamists but also as a result of the Russians and Assad. They are facing increasing casualties as Western troops, the Syrian defence forces and the Iraqi army, in particular, and local people move to fight back against them in that part of the world. US Director of National Intelligence Clapper, in
testimony to the US Congress, said there were 36,000 Daesh fighters in eastern Syria and western Iraq.

Amongst those, at least 61 Australians—possibly up to 68—have been killed in the conflict as a result of their involvement through their support of Daesh. ASIO assesses that 110 Australians are still fighting or engaged with those groups there. And some of these individual Australian characters have been involved in the despicable slavery of women and minorities and et cetera. Some of them have taken their children to this conflict and, of course, we now face the very difficult task of dealing with people who are coming back from there. Of course, Australians are very afraid, quite naturally, that some of these people will bring their so-called skills back to this country.

Apart from the 190 Australian jihadis who are actively supporting these extremist groups, 40 have allegedly returned from the conflict zone. There are up to 70 children of Australians who have been exposed to extremist groups there. We saw the terrible sight that we all remember of two Australian children holding up the heads of citizens of Syria who had been killed by members of Daesh, including the father of the two children.

In the four years since 2012, about 200 Australians have travelled to Syria and Iraq and joined in the conflict. About 110 are currently fighting. We also now have the problem of people languishing in prisons who are unrepentant jihadists. What do we do with them? Can we let people like Mr Benbrika, who promised to blow up the MCG and injure and kill people in Australia on behalf of his jihadist beliefs, out of prison once he has finished his sentence? Australians respect the rule of law; we believe that people, when they finish their sentences, should be allowed to be newly judged. But, at the same time, the Labor Party supports the government in saying that we cannot let Australian citizens be at risk from people who have these unrepentant demands for a war against Australia which we have done nothing to deserve.

We support the toughening of the laws for 14- to 18-year-olds too as, very unfortunately, in Endeavour Hills a 17-year-old was involved and in Parramatta a 15-year-old was involved. Who can believe that some wicked ideology would influence young people to commit crimes against a man such as Mr Curtis Cheng, who was the innocent accountant for the police in Parramatta. We must be vigilant about these kinds of things. We must maintain our civil liberties at the same time, and we must also not lose sight of the fact that these people want to damage Australia.

I am very pleased that Senator Xenophon is claiming credit for the data breach legislation, which I first mentioned at the intelligence committee, to match the privacy considerations of the metadata legislation which deals with the terrorist— (Time expired)

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.

Income Inequality

Mr GILES (Scullin) (17:38): I move:
That this House:
(1) notes with deep concern that:
(a) income inequality in Australia is growing such that currently the top 20 per cent of households receive half of Australia’s income while the bottom 20 per cent receive just four per cent; and
(b) in 2013 the top 1 per cent of Australian earners received 9 per cent of Australia’s income, and the top 0.1 per cent received 2.5 per cent, in both cases representing the highest proportion since the 1950s, and a proportion which continues to increase;

(2) notes rapidly increasing executive and, in particular, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) remuneration, for example between 1971 and 2008, real CEO pay grew by nearly five times, while the real average weekly earnings grew just over one and a half times despite:
(a) research showing that executive pay increases are not closely related to company performance;
(b) the belief that large disparities between executive pay and average earnings might actually demotivate a company’s employees and adversely affect priorities, as reported in the 2009 Productivity Commission inquiry into executive remuneration in Australia; and
(c) the belief that poor remuneration arrangements can promote inappropriate, risky short term decision making, carrying wider economic ramifications including a negative impact on productivity growth;

(3) notes the positive effect of past legislative efforts on ensuring corporate executive remuneration is transparent, particularly the 'two strikes' legislation which came into effect in 2011, acknowledging that mandatory disclosure of CEO pay ratios, as required in the United Kingdom and more recently in the United States, would:
(a) provide:
   (i) important information to shareholders voting on executive remuneration; and
   (ii) a more accurate measure of an important aspect of income inequality in Australia; and
(b) improve the health of our democracy by making important information more accessible to the public; and

(4) calls on the Government to consider following the lead of the United States in its Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act in mandating that public companies disclose the ratio of a CEO’s annual total remuneration to the average annual total of all company employees.

How much is enough? As Australia becomes increasingly unequal, that is a pressing question for members of this place to consider.

Income inequality is at a post-Depression high in Australia, mirroring a disturbing trend around the developed world. We have seen some particularly troubling evidence of this, which this motion is intended to respond to directly, as the annual reporting season of public companies is underway. Members will have noted commentary in particular about the remuneration package of the former head of the ANZ, Mike Smith, as well as other proposed remuneration packages of public company CEOs which have attracted first and sometimes second strikes under legislation Labor introduced when they were in government.

This is a very significant issue—the gap between the have and the have nots in Australia. It is a particularly important question when we consider what is happening with levels of executive remuneration. And so this motion is intended to draw the attention of the House and the wider Australian community to the steps that have been enacted to deal with these issues and also to call for further action on the part of the Turnbull government.

It is critical, when we think about what is happening in executive remuneration in Australia, that we look to the wider context. We have in Australia inequality at such heights that we have not seen since the Great Depression and a government which seems determined
through its policy settings to exacerbate this inequality, not ameliorate it. At the same time as we are seeing these excessive wage and other remuneration packages for CEOs of our public companies, we found out last week about record low wages growth. We are seeing a twin track approach to remuneration in Australia, where ordinary Australian workers are not keeping up and a small number of people, the one per cent and the 0.1 per cent are doing very well indeed.

We also come to this debate with an increased understanding that this level of inequality is not simply bad in and of itself. It is not just a moral failing, going to the question of how much is enough for anyone; it also carries very significant instrumental consequences. We know now that inequality is a brake on growth. We also come to this debate understanding that one of the key problems facing Australia's efforts to boost productivity goes to our managerial performance. The conceit which has underpinned high remuneration packages for our CEOs and other executives at major companies has been the proposition that these levels of remuneration are necessary to attract great talent. The evidence suggests that that talent is not producing in accordance with its level of remuneration.

Labor when last in government saw this as a very significant economic issue and also as a significant issue of moral and political concern, and asked the Productivity Commission to have a detailed look at executive remuneration in Australia. The commission did so, and produced 17 recommendations. Those which called for direct government action were legislated through the Corporations Amendment (Improving Accountability on Director and Executive Remuneration) Act 2011. The critical aspect of this for present purposes was to institute a two-strikes provision to give shareholders—shareholder activists—and indeed the wider Australian community a better sense of control over how executives were being remunerated. This legislation since its enactment has demonstrated that there is a gap between executive sense of entitlement and community standards and company performance. It has also demonstrated there is a need for more.

In this motion we refer to recent legislative efforts in the UK and the US which will call for the mandatory disclosure of CEO pay, relative to the median wage of employees at that enterprise or business. Other jurisdictions have been showing the way. In the UK and in the US there has been a first-principles approach to this question of executive remuneration which recognises that the social licence that has been granted there is being eroded, that public faith and public trust have been undermined by these types of behaviour. But also, given the complex nature of many of these remuneration packages, it has proved very difficult for there to be informed debate about what precisely is contained within them.

In moving this motion I draw the attention of the House—and I am very pleased that the member for Lilley, who has done more than anyone else in Australia to put these issues on the proper framework, in government and since then through his work in opposition—to call on further action to make our CEOs and other executives accountable to the Australian public through shareholders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr Falinski (Mackellar) (17:43): Inequality, or lack thereof, is an important measure, though not the only one, of how successful your society is. It is an indicator that all have
access to equality of opportunity and the choice of how they want to live their lives, respectful of the choices of others. The awful truth is that after nearly seven decades of government funded poverty programs we have hardly moved the needle. Many social programs during this time have done nothing more than entrench poverty from generation to generation.

Those opposite typically provide two solutions to alleviating inequality. The first is increase spending on social welfare programs; the second, a more distributive tax system. It is simply a fact that if you are solely reliant on the welfare system in today's Australia, it is highly likely that your health and education outcomes will be substantially lower than the rest of our community. You will have a shorter lifespan and higher rates of crime—both violent and non-violent—while at the same time lowering the probability that you will ever form a family. And, just for good measure, the likelihood of the system passing these outcomes to your children is incredibly high. This system costs currently $154 billion a year. But this is not about money; this is about saving lives. When we on this side talk about reforming welfare we are not talking about saving money; we are talking about saving people's lives.

Then we have the tax system, usually encapsulated in the slogan 'the rich are not paying their fair share'. But let's look at the facts. According to Ken Henry's review of Australia's tax system, we have the most progressive tax system in the world. It is 19 times more distributive than the OECD average, and its transfer payment system is 12 times higher than that of France's. The 2012 ABS figures tell us that the top 20 per cent of income earners in Australia are the only ones making a net positive contribution to the states' tax system. For every dollar they paid in, they got 30 cents back, compared to the $324 the lowest 20 per cent of income earners received in services—a thousand times greater.

Despite dedicating hundreds of billions of dollars to decreasing inequality, those opposite say things have gotten worse, and yet their only answer is to keep doing more of the same—not even worried by the fact that according to their very own motion here today it has not improved the problem that they claim to be worried about. Those opposite can talk ad nauseam about inequality, because they need people to feel that they are victims—supplicants to the state. Under no circumstances will they talk about the inequality of opportunity that their policies have created.

On this side of the House, we believe in standing up for hardworking Australians who aspire to a better future for their friends, their families and this great country: a modern and dynamic society that believes in helping people up, not dragging them down. Labor says they are worried about inequality. However, in the last month we have seen Labor propose a tax rate for backpackers that would make foreign workers more attractive to employers than Australians. We have a bill before this parliament to make office bearers of both employer groups and unions more accountable to their members, yet Labor currently supports laws that give millionaire shareholders greater rights to how their companies are run than workers such as hospital cleaners have on unions, and they have the temerity to come in here and lecture us on inequality.

Let's talk about that before talking about CEO remuneration that is already subject to disclosure laws, that even Warren Buffett believes has done little other than drive up CEO salaries. We would welcome your support for improving the quality and transparency of governance of billions of dollars of funds that belong to some of the lowest-paid people in
equity. Within equality, as with so much else, if you want real solutions you need to look at the facts.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (17:48): I thank the member for Scullin for moving this important motion, because inequality of wealth and income is the central challenge of our generation. There is no doubt it is casting a very dark shadow over the global economy and over national economies and societies. We see now that capitalist countries are increasingly dominated by a plutocratic family model of inherited privilege which is usually backed up by an overpowered and overpaid financial and corporate elite, which is why it was not surprising last week to see our Prime Minister out there doing a Napoleon. Not the emperor—no, the pig; the pig from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, because our Prime Minister is as blind to the consequences of growing inequality as are his business backers in the Business Council of Australia. Both suffer from what I call a 'blindness of affluence'.

In a speech to the Business Council last Thursday he said:

… policy changes must be seen to be fair …

Wrong, Prime Minister! Policy changes must be fair. This Prime Minister has been so concerned about income inequality that in the past seven years, since he became Leader of the Opposition in 2008, a government minister and now Prime Minister, he has mentioned inequality just five times. That is five times in the last six months.

Last Thursday our multimillionaire Prime Minister told the annual BCA dinner that Australians will have to accept policies that create short-term winners and losers. This is the Prime Minister who went to the last election with a $50 billion handout to multinational companies and radical proposals to undermine the voice of working people—to attack their wages, their unions and their working conditions. He has done this in the full knowledge of IMF warnings about the unequal distributional impact of these policies and the peril they bring to global economies. The IMF says that a growing economy cannot be built on a shrinking share going to working people. Ignoring this advice, there he was at the BCA dinner last week—like Napoleon, the pig from *Animal Farm*—spruiking the benefits of his trickle-down policies and preaching to those outside the room that the winners in the room did not even really like the milk and apples, they just took them for the good of society. In the room they must have grunted with enthusiasm when the Prime Minister told them over their abundance of milk and apple that inequality is something that must be viewed over a lifetime. Of course he left by getting up on his two legs and hopping on his VIP jet, and off he went to Peru.

For those who are familiar with *Animal Farm*, over the long term the seven commandments they operated by were reduced to one single law:

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

That is the basis of trickle-down economics. This is not just about income and wealth, it is about political power exercised to entrench disproportionate influence over government.

Australia, over the years, has done a better job than most other countries in sharing the benefits of growth—especially better than the United States. But in recent years we have started to go backwards. The annual wages growth in September of 1.9 per cent was a new record low. The private sector has now seen wages grow by less than 0.5 per cent in seven consecutive quarters, and still the Prime Minister and his government seek to attack penalty
rates and the minimum wage. The Prime Minister has frozen the wages of Medicare workers at $62,000 a year for over three years. Meanwhile, 85 per cent of the Australian Public Service have had their salaries frozen for around three years. In Australia over the last 30 years the proportion of the total income of the top 10 per cent has gone from 24 per cent to 30 per cent. In the United States it has gone from 31 per cent to an obscene 46 per cent. This change has been driven by obscene levels of executive pay.

Ordinary workers sit by and watch obscene executive pay increases. Only last week in Queensland we had the spectre of the former Minister Macfarlane, in breach of the Prime Minister's ministerial code of conduct, take up a position with the Queensland Resources Council, along with a board appointment to Woodside, in total bringing in a near seven-figure sum. How on earth does the mining industry think that its peak representative body will be taken seriously as an honest broker? Last week in LA the three Murdochs pulled in $84 million a year between them. Executive packages like these tell working people that the wealthy have captured policy-making—(Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (17:54): I am very pleased to speak on this motion, because it is highly misguided. Professor Steven Kates has talked about discussions on what he called the inequality business as a last refuge of the socialists, since everything else they have said has proven to be nonsense.

Where the mistake comes from is the misunderstanding that inequality is about one person taking wealth from someone else. The economic wealth pie is not something that is fixed in science. Wealth creation does not happen haphazardly. It does not happen by accident. We have a wealthy society as the result of individuals adding value to the economy by providing productive services. It is as simple as that. Take the example of the late Steve Jobs, someone who made millions, if not billions, from his innovations. The extra millions that he got did not take money away from the average citizen. They did not take food off the table of the so-called underprivileged. He made the pie bigger for all. Yes, he may have got a bigger slice of that pie, but everyone benefited from his innovations.

There is a fantastic painting just down the corridor. It is Tom Roberts's painting called the Big Picture, and it is a painting of the proclamation of the opening of the first parliament of this country on 9 May 1901 in the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne. At the time that was painted, Australia was the richest country in the world, Melbourne was the richest city in the richest country in the world, and the people in that painting were the richest people in the richest city in the richest country in the world. And yet the average citizen today enjoys wealth that is inconceivable to the people in that painting. Despite their wealth, none of them had a car, a computer, a radio or a TV. No-one flew on holidays to Bali. They never had antibiotics or painkillers. The enjoyment of the arts was nothing like what we enjoy today. The thing is that the wealth creation machine that we have—free market capitalism, which I know is a nasty word to you lot, and the reward for entrepreneurship—has been the greatest tool that we have that has alleviated poverty. It has lifted incomes and lifted our society's wealth to beyond what those in that painting could imagine.

But one of the inevitable by-products of that is inequality. But there has always been inequality in all societies. Where we go wrong is concentrating on trying to 'fix' the problem of inequality rather than concentrate on the alleviation of poverty and the growth of real wealth in this economy. Thank goodness those people in that painting back at the Federation
of this country understood that. They were other economies, other people and other countries who believed that they should go out. Rather than growing the economy, they wanted to tackle inequality, and we know what happened to those countries. We saw the mistaken policies of the Soviet era, when they were all about inequality. The former Treasurer talks about *Animal Farm*. *Animal Farm* was all about, 'We have to lower and reduce inequality.' And always, whenever you try and set out to reduce inequality, all you do is destroy the wealth creation machine that we have. You will lower real living standards. And what do you do? Every society that has gone down that track has made the problem of inequality worse.

The other thing that is mistaken about this motion is that income is not the only thing that matters when considering inequality. You have to consider access to health, education, housing and community safety. Never before in the history of the world has there been so little difference between the lifestyles of the richest billionaires and the poorest people. Sure, people like Bill Gates may have a private plane and they may be able to fly to a tropical island, but the average Australian still has the wealth to do those things.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (17:59): I am pleased to support this motion and I thank the member for Scullin for moving it, because it highlights a very important issue that is getting worse in an Australian society: the issue of income inequality. When I worked for Unions NSW, it was my role every year to prepare the state wage case. This was a case before the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission by which basic award rates—the minimum wage—were adjusted in New South Wales each year. Each year we would submit to the commission evidence from low-paid workers.

Over the years, I determined that there were certain characteristics of low-paid workers in Australia. Unfortunately, they are predominantly women. They predominantly work in part-time and casual occupations. These are people that can never afford to have a holiday. They very rarely go out to the movies or have a night out for a meal with their families. When the car breaks down, they often cannot afford to fix it and do all that they can just to keep it roadworthy and registered. Their children never have the luxury of visiting a dentist or anything like that and often miss out on going to school excursions, because the family simply cannot afford it. These are the working poor, the people that rely on a strong award system to be able to participate in society.

Each year when we made an application to adjust the minimum wage so that these people could afford a living wage, it was opposed by the employer associations. You could write their submission every year. It was the same one every year: that by increasing the minimum wage we would harm employment prospects and reduce growth in our economy. This argument was always shot down by the Industrial Relations Commission for one simple reason: the employer associations could never present any credible economic evidence to back that assertion. The commission would always ask: 'Where is your evidence? Get us an expert economist that is willing to go on the record here at the commission and give evidence.' They could never do that.

Australia is becoming, unfortunately, more unequal in income distribution. The top 20 per cent now receive half of Australia's income; the bottom 20 per cent receive just four per cent. Life is getting harder for those people that are in the bottom 20 per cent. It has been made harder and more difficult by the Turnbull government through cuts to family payments, cuts to pensions, attacking Medicare, cutting paid parental leave, cutting funding for schools,
deregulating universities and putting university beyond the reach of working-class kids, and cutting company taxes. All of these policies have increased the gap between the haves and the have-nots in Australia and made income inequality greater.

Labor in government attempted to arrest and attempted to reduce the growing income inequality in this country, and we were quite successful because we put in place the proper economic and social policies that did so. They included, firstly, a strong social safety net. Access to universal health care is fundamental to a strong safety net, and Medicare is something that Labor will always defend. They included a fair pension and fair levels of family payments; a fair industrial relations system with a livable minimum wage, with work value cases so that people—predominantly women, unfortunately—who have traditionally worked in low-income occupations like nursing and child care have the opportunity to demonstrate to an independent umpire the value of their work and have that work revalued in the marketplace as a minimum; and access to a fair unfair-dismissal regime and collective bargaining. These are all the fundamentals of reducing income inequality in our society. Access to education and education funding based on needs is principally important for reducing inequality. A higher education system promotes skill development so people who may come from disadvantaged backgrounds have an opportunity to get an education, to improve their skills and to improve their employability and their worth in the marketplace. A progressive taxation system encourages the poor to save for their retirement and encourages fair distribution of income.

We also took a number of measures to reduce outlandish executive remuneration. I have to say that they have worked. One of those was greater accountability on executive and director remuneration, requiring boards to stand for re-election where they do not adequately respond to shareholder concerns regarding remuneration. We also introduced tax transparency so that private companies were forced to report their earnings and the tax that they were paying. All of these were solid Labor measures that were aimed at reducing income inequality in our country.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): There being no further speakers, the debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Battle of Long Tan**

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa) (18:04): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) on 8 November at Government House the Governor-General awarded ten soldiers with military awards for actions at the Battle of Long Tan; and

(b) these soldiers received these awards 50 years after the Battle of Long Tan:

(i) which was the most costly single battle fought by Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War, involving 105 Australians and three New Zealanders from D Company 6RAR and more than 2,000 enemy troops; and

(ii) where a total of 17 Australians were killed in action and 25 were wounded, one of whom later died from his wounds; and

(2) acknowledges:
(a) the ten soldiers who received an award, some posthumously, including Lieutenant Adrian Roberts, Sergeant Frank Alcorta, Lance Corporal Barry Magnusson (deceased), Second Lieutenant Gordon Sharp (deceased), Privates Neil Bextrim, Ron Brett (deceased), Ian Campbell, William Roche, Geoffrey Peters and Noel Grimes;

(b) the service and sacrifice of all those who served their country in Vietnam; and

(c) all of Australia’s service men and women who display courage, bravery and mateship above and beyond the call of duty.

More than 60,000 Australian troops fought in the Vietnam War from 1962 to 1975. In that time, 521 of our service men and women paid the ultimate sacrifice with the loss of their lives and more than 3,000 were wounded. Perhaps the most renowned battle within this 13-year conflict took place on 18 August 1966 in what became known as the Battle of Long Tan. One hundred and eight Anzacs in D Company 6RAR made their way into the Long Tan rubber plantation under heavy machine gun fire and mortar attacks to face a battle against the Vietcong, the North Vietnamese enemy force of more than 2,000 soldiers. Despite having the odds stacked against them at more than 20 to one, fighting in the pouring rain and having limited ammunition to sustain them, our Anzacs fought in one of the few recorded battles in history to be won against the most impossible odds.

D Company were assisted by an ammunition resupply by RAAF helicopters, close fire support from New Zealand's 161 Field Battery, together with additional artillery support from the Australian task force at Nui Dat, and the arrival of reinforcements in APCs as night fell. In hindsight we know that the courageous and brave actions of our 108 troops saved the base at Nui Dat from the risk of a far greater ambush by the 2,000 enemy troops on a night when Little Pattie and Col Joye had been brought in to entertain our troops.

Sadly, like all conflicts and battles, this battle did come at a cost. The Battle of Long Tan resulted in the loss of 18 Australian soldiers' lives and the wounding of more than 21 of our soldiers. To this day, many veterans continue to suffer from what was perhaps the most brave and distinguished battle of our Australian military history. The torment that many of these brave Australians have endured is a tragedy and only now are some prepared to publically speak of their service to this nation. The Battle of Long Tan is a testament to our Australian soldiers—of their sheer strength, courage and bravery that such odds were overcome in the most extreme case of adversity. It is unimaginable that any Anzac would have left that rubber plantation alive if not for the bravery of not only those directly in the battle but also those who supported them with mortars or by supplying ammunition.

This year 18 August marked the 50th year anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan—a day that is also commemorated as Vietnam Veterans Day. In fact, during a Long Tan commemorative service I attended at the Warwick cenotaph this year I was fortunate to meet Private Tony Stepney, a veteran of the Vietnam War who fought in the Battle of Long Tan. Tony was called up for duty in 1965 and served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967. Tony regards the battle as a chance encounter, as he and his comrades were sent into the plantation to relieve other comrades, who had run out of rations after being in the field for a prolonged period.

As Tony spoke about the battle at this service, I felt incredible pride and respect for the actions of these brave men like Tony, in circumstances far beyond my comprehension and what most Australians would know of. That day was the first day that Tony had publicly
spoken of his experience in that battle. The bravery of a man tortured by this day to stand proudly, in a humble and dignified manner, expressing his gratitude to those who helped him survive rather than his own brave actions, is testament to this great Australian.

This year on 8 November at Government House the Australian Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, awarded 10 of our extremely deserving soldiers with valour awards for their actions at the Battle of Long Tan, bringing the total military awards for Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith's men for their actions at the Battle of Long Tan to 15. I would like to acknowledge each of our service men and women for their valiant service in the Vietnam War, particularly in the Battle of Long Tan, as well as those who received medals of valour on 8 November, after more than 50 years.

I would also like to especially acknowledge the former member for Hinkler, Mr Paul Neville, for his efforts in ensuring that the heroic actions of our Vietnam veterans for their role in the Battle of Long Tan were recognised after more than 50 years. As my friend Paul Neville would say eyeball to eyeball, man to man, in the most difficult of circumstances the Australians took on a battle in which they were outnumbered by at least 20 to one—to think it has taken 50 years for Harry Smith's valour recommendations to be awarded is outrageous.

Paul remembers when Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith's star was upgraded to the Star of Gallantry. Paul tells me that Harry was offered a ceremony at Government House but there was not an inclination to fly Harry's former comrades in for the occasion, so in a form of gentle defiance Harry asked Paul whether he would present it to him at the military museum in Maryborough in the company of most of his comrades and the Victoria Cross awardees. So Paul did and, in Paul's words, this was one of the most moving moments in his time as the member for Hinkler.

Paul was also there at the Enoggera Barracks in 2008 when Harry's Second Lieutenant Dave Sabben in 12 Platoon and Second Lieutenant Geoff Kendall in 10 Platoon were awarded the Medal of Gallantry award that Harry tenaciously pursued for more than four decades. In Paul's words, 'Harry's ceremonial request and his determination to see his comrades recognised, like so many of Harry's actions over 50 years, is a mark of Harry's leadership and tenacity where for more than 50 years he has not stepped away from his comrades.'

The weight of these awards and how Australians feel about our Vietnam veterans was obvious to Paul when this year he attended a Long Tan commemoration ceremony at the cenotaph in Hervey Bay. Harry and a number of his comrades in the battle laid their wreaths simultaneously, walking side by side, causing those attending the ceremony to erupt in loud and spontaneous applause. Paul said it was one of those magic moments where Australia told Harry and his comrades that they regarded them as the bravest of the brave.

When Paul retired at the election in 2013 his commitment to the plight of Harry and his comrades resulted in him being asked to stay on by the Vietnam veterans as the patron for the Bundaberg sub-branch of the Vietnam veterans. I think this indicates how appreciative our Vietnam veterans are of Paul for his efforts and his unwavering representation. I thank Paul. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith and his comrades.

In closing, our Australian service men and women have been involved in 10 conflicts and countless peacekeeping assignments over the course of our history. Some 102,000 Australians...
have lost their lives and many more have been wounded and continue to suffer the consequences of war. I pay tribute and say thank you to each and every service man and woman, both then and today, for their bravery, courage and commitment to this country of which I and each and every one of us in this place should be incredibly proud to support.

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

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

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (18:13): I rise today to speak on this important motion on the Battle of Long Tan. I thank the member for Maranoa for bringing this motion to the House. It is important because this motion recognises the 10 soldiers from the Battle of Long Tan who recently received their gallantry awards. The motion speaks of the courage, bravery and comraderie of the men who fought in the Battle of Long Tan, one of the most significant engagements for Australian forces in the Vietnam War. This brutal battle saw Australians outnumbered roughly 20 to one and the highest number of Australian casualties in any single engagement during the Vietnam War.

On 8 November, I was fortunate enough to attend the investiture of the awards at Government House and meet the awardees, nominees and their families. This was an inspiring but also a very humble group, who really conveyed to me that they thought they were just doing their job. We thought they did much more than that. The ceremony acknowledged the 10 soldiers from the Battle of Long Tan, with three men being awarded the Medal for Gallantry and seven men being awarded the Commendation for Gallantry. Both of these awards recognise acts of gallantry in action, with the Medal for Gallantry specifically acknowledging gallantry in hazardous circumstances.

The ceremony was a moving and unique experience. We heard the stories of the men's bravery and compassion. We heard of the young men sacrificing their safety, overcoming their fear and racing into the unknown to help their mates. We heard of Private William Roche, who took up command of his section and displayed great bravery and resolution when the platoon was under pressure. We heard of Sergeant Alcorta and the late Private Brett, who disregarded their own safety to engage the enemy for a significant period of time, until they were joined by other members of 2 Platoon from the APC. Their actions surprised and destabilised the enemy and assisted in preventing potentially serious attacks on the relief force. We heard of Colonel Francis Roberts OAM, who displayed courage, sound judgement and decisive leadership in engaging his troops against the enemy. Each recipient had a story of bravery and resilience in the face of the unknown. It was truly a remarkable experience and one that I was honoured to be able to attend.

For the awardees and their nominees, this was the end of a long road seeking recognition for their courageous actions, and it was in no small part due to the efforts of one man that they received it. It was due to the determination and commitment of retired Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith that these men received the awards. Immediately following the battle, Colonel Smith recommended 20 of his men for gallantry awards. These recommendations were unsuccessful, with a number rejected, downgraded or refused, but he was determined that his men be recognised for their efforts and, as such, took the fight to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeal Tribunal. As he said to the ABC last year:

I didn't withdraw at Long Tan and I won't withdraw from the fight to have my men properly recognised.
In August this year, he was finally successful, with 10 soldiers being approved for these awards. I did ask Harry on the day at Government House what he was going to do now that his long battle had finally been won. He said that he was going to go out on his boat.

It was an immense honour to see these men recognised. At the ceremony, I was to be able speak to several of these men about what the awards meant to them and their families who nominated them. As I said, many of them were very humbled. They said that they were just doing their job. But, indeed, what we heard was that they were incredibly courageous and did our country very proud and, importantly, did not let their mates down. It was an honour to meet these men and witness this important ceremony. It was recognition that was absolutely overdue but finally recognition well deserved. I commend this motion to the House.

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (18:18): I thank the member for Maranoa for putting this motion on the agenda today. I also recognise the 10 soldiers, some posthumously, who were recently presented with military awards by the Governor-General for their actions at the Battle of Long Tan. Today I acknowledge the bravery of those who fought in all the conflicts of Vietnam, and I also acknowledge that this year we mark the 50th anniversary of Long Tan. Earlier this year, it was my privilege and, indeed, an honour to be invited to Cockscomb veterans retreat at Cawarral, near Yeppoon, to mark this anniversary.

In 1987, the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke declared Long Tan Day on 18 August as Vietnam Veterans Day. However, he did not have that date gazetted as a military historic day. Fifty years on from the Battle of Long Tan, it is now time that the Commonwealth government got on with the job of officially gazetting a day to mark Vietnam veterans day. I have approached the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and have been making contact with various Vietnam veterans groups to gain their input to help determine which would be the most appropriate day to gazette to recognise an annual Vietnam veterans day. I will continue to stay in touch with the minister to provide him with the views of those who I speak with. Indeed, it will be a privilege to welcome the Minister for Veterans' Affairs soon on his trip to Capricornia, including the Cockscomb retreat, the Emu Park RSL war memorial and the Yeppoon RSL Club, next month.

Meanwhile, as we reflect today on those events, to those who specifically served their country in the controversial Vietnam War: your country owes you a thankyou. Thank you for doing your job as armed service men and women. Thank you for risking your lives. Thank you for looking out for your mates on the battlefield, and thank you for being here with us today.

Vietnam was the longest war Australia has participated in, from 1962 to 1973, and the Battle of Long Tan was one of the historic battles that epitomise the courage and grit that Aussie diggers are made of. Fifty years ago, in the Long Tan rubber plantation, about 105 Aussies and a few New Zealanders began to engage with the enemy, which outnumbered them by somewhere between 1,500 and 2,500 Vietcong soldiers. They battled it out until they were finally joined by reinforcements. Fifty years on, we salute and commemorate their bravery.

All wars carry great trauma, but the soldiers who served in Vietnam under Australian government policy of the 1960s and 1970s arguably had one of the greatest traumas inflicted upon them on their return home. History well shows that the Vietnam vets were mistreated,
abused and even spat upon when they arrived home in Australia. Again I say to our Vietnam vets: it was not your fault that your government of the day ordered you to Vietnam. It was not your fault that the Australian policy of the day was to align with the United States presence in Vietnam. And it was not your fault that you experienced atrocities that would haunt you for the rest of your lives. The way that you were mistreated on your return home should go down as one of the most disgraceful acts by Australian citizens against fellow citizens in our modern history, and I am sorry that you experienced that adversity and hurt.

Finally, on the 50th anniversary year to mark Long Tan, let us reflect on those who did not make it back or have since passed away. May they rest in peace. Lest we forget.

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro) (18:22): I congratulate the member for Maranoa on this motion and other members for their contributions. This is an opportunity for us to give thanks for finally resolving these issues, which have been outstanding for so long, across effectively three governments. It has taken that long. It began with the initial appointment of the independent panel by the Howard government in October 2007 and stretched through the terms of reference and processes under the Rudd-Gillard governments and through to this final resolution.

We have heard the comments that have been made about the way our veterans were treated when they returned, and it was appalling. We have a very famous Vietnam veteran in Bega, in my electorate, who was the Frankie from the song *I Was Only 19*. It was a privilege to launch the book by Steve Strevens about that song in Bega with Frankie there. Frankie had severe injuries, of course, from that incident. One of the things described in the book is the circumstance where he and other veterans from Heidelberg hospital were going out to a movie in town, and a group of demonstrators saw them being disembarked from the bus with their wheelchairs. One of the young lady demonstrators came up and rubbed a pie into the head of Frankie. One can only speculate on what was going through her head, but, Frankie being Frankie, he responded, 'You forgot the sauce,' which is a tribute to his resilience as an individual. But it is an illustration of how poorly we treated those veterans.

So it was wonderful to see this happen. I really am glad from a personal point of view, as I was the parliamentary secretary for honours and awards and was involved in the establishment of the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal so that we could resolve these long, historic issues. It was pleasing for me to see in the first wave of resolutions that we achieved in getting Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith his Star of Gallantry and that the two very able surviving platoon commanders, Lieutenant Dave Sabben and Lieutenant Geoff Kendall, were able to get their Medal for Gallantry awards. It was a great privilege and pleasure to be with Dave Sabben just recently, when he was down at the Merimbula RSL at our traditional Light Horse dining-in night. He spent quite some time making sure the history of the battle was communicated to these next generations coming through, and he did a wonderful job of that. It just showed the professionalism at that tactical level that was demonstrated in that perilous situation, where their tactical skills enabled what were the survivors of Delta Company to survive that crucial engagement.

That engagement and the whole experience of the task force in Phuoc Tuy province left to us a great legacy, which was to serve us well in the multiple deployments that we have served in since then that shared the nature of that type of operation—being in the stabilisation of counterinsurgency situations. I studied it very deeply as we moved in with the 1st Battalion to
Bay province in Somalia. Of course we took that experience forward again to the Bobonaro district in East Timor, to Al Muthanna province in Iraq, and finally, most recently, into Oruzgan province in Afghanistan. All of these lessons that were hard fought and hard won in Vietnam have served us very well ever since then.

It was really wonderful to see Adrian Roberts properly recognised too. Adrian lives in this region and has also been a keen participant in our dining-in nights down in Merimbula. His role in the battle was not well appreciated—in fact, the whole significance of the battle was not well appreciated until recent times. I do congratulate the tribunal and the government for finally bringing these matters to their complete resolution, after the various phases it has been through. Harry Smith is a man of great honour and great courage and has great personal commitment to his soldiers. It is wonderful to see some sort of resolution and closure being brought for him through these experiences. I say to those proud veterans, and to all of our veterans: wear your decorations with pride. I ask all Australians, whenever they see these veterans in the street or at services, to go up, shake their hands and thank them for the service they have rendered to this nation and for the proud traditions that they maintained.

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (18:27): It is a great pleasure to be here finally speaking about this matter. The Battle of Long Tan took place on 18 August 1966, before I was born—well before I was born. It was the most costly single battle fought by Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War. It involved 105 Australians and three New Zealanders from D-Company 6RAR and more than 2,000 enemy troops. A total of 17 Australians were killed in action; 25 were wounded, one of whom later died from his wounds.

I, like many others in this place, have met many veterans, and many of them from the Vietnam War. In fact, Delta Company actually had a reunion couple of years ago at the small Toogoom RSL sub-branch in my electorate. It was very well attended, well turned out. They are still a very tight group of individuals. This has taken far too long, and many of their number have actually passed on due to natural causes. I would like to mention at this stage the enigmatic Buddy Lea, a very well-known veteran who we lost a couple of years ago. He was one of my constituents, whom I got on incredibly well with. He was a force of nature, Buddy Lea; an absolute force of nature.

Delta Company were greatly assisted by an ammunition resupply by RAAF helicopters, close fire support from New Zealand’s 161 field battery, together with additional artillery support from the Australian Task Force Base at Nui Dat, and the arrival of reinforcements in APCs as night fell. There is no more entertaining discussion than talking to the gentleman from Delta Company and the APCs about who was the best on the day, who arrived and who did what. It is certainly something I am sure they argue about and discuss for long hours into the night.

I took up the fight for former constituent and retired Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith when I was elected in 2013. It is a fight that has taken 50 years to resolve. The previous member for Hinkler, Mr Paul Neville, had presented Harry with the Star of Gallantry on 9 March 2011, which had been upgraded from the Military Cross after many years of campaigning for better recognition of Long Tan veterans. In my maiden speech I gave Harry this commitment:

We will find a way to recognise his soldiers. As a nation, we are indebted to Harry and to his team. We live our lives in this wonderful country because of their sacrifice.
On 1 September 2014 I moved a PMB calling for justice, recognition and acknowledgment for the soldiers who fought in the Battle of Long Tan, and it was well supported by those opposite. I said in that speech:

Fifty years is ample time to do what is right. We are the government of the day, and, in my opinion, an injustice has been done that must be addressed.

Finally, on 10 August 2016, just before the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Dan Tehan, announced that he would recommend that 10 soldiers be awarded a military honour or have their existing honour upgraded after 50 years.

At the service last week at Government House, Medals of Gallantry were awarded to Lieutenant Adrian Roberts, Sergeant Frank Alcorta—now a constituent of mine in Hinkler and a well-known Northern Territorian—and Lance Corporal Barry Magnusen, deceased. Commendations for Gallantry were awarded to Second Lieutenant Gordon Sharp, deceased, and privates Neil Bextum, Ron Brett, deceased, Ian Campbell, William Roche, Geoffrey Peters and Noel Grimes. I was privileged to have some small part in assisting Harry, by bringing his plight to the attention of the federal government—although he did a pretty damn good job of that himself, I have to say—its ministers and members of parliament. And, at long last, justice, recognition and acknowledgement have finally been delivered.

On a personal note, I would say about Harry Smith—who I got to know very well over recent years—that, if you look up 'resilience' in the dictionary, you will see a picture of this man. He is dogmatic. He is determined. He is tough. He is irrepressible. In fact, he is just downright bloody-minded. He is one of the most determined individuals I have ever come across. To maintain the rage for this long and to get an outcome, is, I think, an absolute credit to him. It is his determination that allowed this to happen, just as it did at Long Tan, to get the best outcome he possibly could for his soldiers and the people who relied on him. I think this is a great reflection on Harry and the rest of his troops.

The enduring photo that I will recall is not the one from Long Tan or the photo in the rubber plantation that is so famous to most Australians; it is actually a picture of Lieutenant Colonel retired Harry Smith on the front page of the local phone book, standing on the beach at Hervey Bay in absolute joy. I certainly commend this motion to the House.

Mr Gosling (Solomon) (18:32): I am also very proud to be able to speak in support of this motion. I have previously spoken about this long overdue recognition of the soldiers and officers of Delta Company 6RAR who fought at the Battle of Long Tan. But I also want to acknowledge the other supporting units, like Alpha Company 6RAR and the artillery and the helicopters—everyone who was part of that battle in supporting the men of D Company 6RAR, who were in the fight of their lives.

As we just heard from the member for Hinkler, Frank Alcorta is now not living in the Territory, but he is a well-known Territorian of many, many years and we are very proud of him—our Long Tan veteran, Frank. It was fantastic to meet with him during the last sittings when he was in town to receive that recognition that was a long time coming. It was during that battle in 1966, when Frank was part of Alpha Company travelling in armoured personnel carriers, dispatched to assist Delta Company, that they suddenly found themselves in the midst of hundreds of Vietcong. Frank was actually sitting on top of one of the armoured personnel carriers. He rolled off the top of the carrier and, in an amazing feat of bravery,
started charging towards the enemy firing away. He was mentioned in dispatches for his
courage.

Recognition of Frank's bravery was a long time coming. Frank was happy, I think, but also
reflecting on the years and the men he served with, his comrades, and on the fact that of so
many others who were so brave during that battle not all were recognised. I know Frank was
thinking about them. It was very humbling to be amongst Harry Smith, Frank Alcorta and Jeff
Kendall during the last sitting, having a quiet beer. They are very humble men but massive
heroes, certainly to generations of us who came after them to join the forces, knowing about
their acts of bravery.

There were others, including Jeff Kendall, whom we caught up with a couple of weeks ago,
and I want to recognise all of those who performed acts of bravery that were maybe never
seen. They did not blow their own trumpets to their mates about what they did but their mates
knew that they acted bravely, putting their lives at risk. So I also want to recognise those
unsung heroes and acknowledge their bravery in fighting for our country.

When I was talking to Frank he said that after his service, and particularly about 13 years
ago when his wife passed away, he was a bit lost. It was actually on a Remembrance Day that
a couple of Frank's old mates, led by a great mate of his, Ross Smith OAM, helped Frank
through the sadness and depression after losing his wife. As Frank said, 'These former
comrades-in-arms helped me. They restored a little sanity in my otherwise befuddled brain
and heart.' So these guys did not just protect each other and fight for each other on the
battlefield; they continued that for the rest of their lives. And to this day, to see them still
having a joke together reflecting on where their mates and friends are now is quite humbling.

One of Frank's soldiers in Alpha Company on the day when they came to support Delta
Company was a guy by the name of Glenn Wilman. Glenn was one of my bosses when I was
at the Army School of Infantry. He is a great man. I can remember him recounting the story of
Frank, Glenn and the others moving off into the jungle to support their Delta Company mates.
I want to acknowledge Glenn. He was a great leader and he was great to work with in the
Army.

I acknowledge all those who have made the supreme sacrifice for us, including those at the
Battle of Long Tan.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): 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.

White Ribbon Day

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (18:38): I move:
That this House:
(1) acknowledges that White Ribbon:
   (a) is a male led campaign to end male violence against women;
   (b) is now active in over 60 countries around the world; and
   (c) has ambassadors around Australia who are working to engage men and encourage them to take a
       leadership role in ending violence against women;
(2) notes that:
(a) in 2016 in Australia, each week approximately one woman is murdered by a partner or former partner;
(b) one in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner;
(c) men’s violence against women is a symptom of gender inequality in our society; and
(d) social policy initiatives and law reform addressing gender inequality are central to reducing attitudes that support violence against women;

(3) recognises that:
   (a) 25 November is White Ribbon Day; and
   (b) the white ribbon is the symbol of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; and

(4) supports White Ribbon and other organisations to eliminate violence against women.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Dr Freelander: I second the motion.

Mr WATTS: I rise today to discuss the important work done by the White Ribbon organisation. This Friday is White Ribbon Day. White Ribbon Australia is part of an international movement that engages men to provide strong leadership to stop violence against women. White Ribbon recognises that as men are the predominant perpetrators of violence against women it is men who should take a strong lead in preventing this violence.

Whilst it is true that only some men are violent, men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence in the home. Australian police deal on average with one domestic violence matter every two minutes. That is 5,000 a week—a huge number by any standard. These are not just meaningless statistics. These statistics reflect real people. It could be your neighbour, your colleague or your friend. In 2016 approximately one women has been murdered each week by a current or previous partner and one in four women in Australia has experienced physical or sexual abuse from an intimate partner.

There are many factors that contribute to violence within the home and many obstacles to overcome in order to effect permanent change. There is no doubt that violence against women is deeply rooted in power imbalances that are reinforced by gender norms, gendered roles and stereotypes of how men and women should behave. This is why it is important that men show leadership in this space; that we have difficult conversations with our sons, with our brothers, with our fathers and with our friends; that we have difficult conversations about respect and about equality; and that we call out inappropriate comments, behaviours and attitudes. Men speaking to other men about violence against women is a powerful catalyst for change. These conversations are important, as are actions—actions by men in leadership positions advocating social policy change.

That being said, it is always important to remember that, as violence against women is fundamentally an issue created by men, a male-led group responding to this problem is in a delicate situation. It is reasonable to ask whether a problem that is caused by men is best solved by more men. I have some sympathy for this view and always try to scrutinise my own engagement with this issue through this lens. However, the sad reality is that many of the men who need to hear White Ribbon's message simply will not listen to it if a woman is the messenger. That is part of the problem.
So I do think that White Ribbon will always play an important part in this space, even if it is a role that does require continuous self-reflection. Given that men can be both part of the problem and part of the solution here, they carry special obligations when engaging in this debate. The first is to listen to the women around them about their experiences of gender inequality—experiences that we can, by definition, not understand firsthand. The second is to take responsibility for attitudes and actions that perpetuate gender inequality and, as a result, men's violence against women.

Family violence has progressed an enormous deal in the time that I have been a member of this parliament—just the last three years—through high-profile cases and the tireless work of advocates and community groups such as White Ribbon, but there is so much more to be done. Organisations like White Ribbon fight for the elimination of violence against women in our communities, and I am proud that many of the community institutions in my electorate are active White Ribbon ambassadors and activists. Two that come readily to mind are the Western Bulldogs football team, who played in a White Ribbon-branded game this year, this year being their first premiership year in some time, and also the DONS, the Dads of Newport & Surrounds, a fathers group supporting each other as new fathers in Newport, a suburb in my electorate, and supporting their partners becoming new mothers. They got together an enormous fundraiser last year and raised many thousands of dollars for White Ribbon off their own initiative. We had a gala ball at the substation at Newport. It was a very encouraging thing to see.

It is encouraging because these are organic initiatives in our community. They are not top-down driven; they are men taking responsibility and taking action within their community, and that is what White Ribbon is really for. Through education, awareness raising, creative partnerships and preventative programs, White Ribbon provides the tools for men to stop violence against women in their community and beyond.

As a member of parliament, I have drawn heavily on the hard-won experience and expertise of activists like White Ribbon. As the convener of the federal Parliamentarians Against Family Violence Friendship Group, I have tried to provide a platform for voices to be heard in the corridors of power. I am pleased to stand with them and fight for them.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (18:43): I thank the member for Gellibrand for bringing forward this essential debate. This coming Friday is White Ribbon Day, the international day for the elimination of violence against women. I am honoured to be an ambassador for this cause. Each year, ambassadors restate their oath, and I will say it again here: I pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. It is not a long pledge; it is not a complex statement; and it is not a demanding request. To be honest, it should be so banal, such obvious common sense, that it should not need to be said at all, and yet, sadly, it is a pledge we must repeat annually to remind ourselves of the terrible spectre of domestic violence in our country.

As if the concept of domestic violence were not repulsive enough, the figures underline just how prevalent it is in our society today. A woman dies at the hands of a current or former partner nearly every week. One woman in three has experienced physical violence since the age of 15. One woman in five has experienced sexual violence. One woman in four has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner. More than half of the women
who have experienced violence had children in their care when the violence occurred. Many millions of women in this country have been touched by domestic violence. This must stop.

The sad fact of domestic violence in Australia is that, rather than being perpetrated by strangers on the street, women who are at risk of violence are more likely to experience it in their own homes by men they know. I firmly believe that men are not naturally violent. Violent and abusive behaviours are learnt. Sadly, for some violence, it is a way of expressing masculinity, or sometimes it simply comes from a complete lack of respect for women. All men must develop respectful relationships with women, and we must be an example to other men. We must treat women with respect and as equals. Words can damage, and we must consider our language as well as our actions and how they can be interpreted.

White Ribbon campaign is one of the world's largest movements to raise awareness and funds for the prevention of violence perpetrated against women. Critically, it is a male-led movement. It engages and empowers men and boys to be leaders in a change of attitudes and behaviours. Violence, most obviously, damages the victim but it also carries a profound impact on the wider community, and individuals carry physical and psychological scars for years, if not decades, to come. I am very happy to say that domestic violence has been at the forefront of the coalition's agenda since we came to office in 2013, and we have built momentum around the issue.

The first act of the Turnbull government was to announce a $100 million Women's Safety Package, which focused on practical, immediate action to keep women and children safe, as well as improving training for frontline workers. Just last month, the government co-hosted the COAG national summit on reducing violence against women and their children. This summit brought together first ministers, women's safety ministers, academics and experts in domestic and family violence, and leaders in the business and not-for-profit sectors to review progress and highlight best practices in efforts to reduce violence.

At the summit, COAG launched the Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. This includes $100 million committed for the preventative strategies and cultural change, for frontline services like housing and financial support, to prevent forms of sexual violence and to address family violence in Indigenous communities and $30 million for frontline family violence legal services. These funds and initiatives represent a big commitment from the government to ending the scourge of domestic violence. I, with everyone involved in the implementation, hope that together we can make a difference.

I would like to end with the same words that I said for the speech for White Ribbon Day last year. I fear I may need to say it for many more years to come, but the words bear repeating.

Attitudes must change: violence against a partner is never excusable. No matter how intense relationships may get, violence is never the answer, and victims of abuse must know that it is never their fault. I say to all men: the most masculine, the most manly thing you can do is always to respect your partner.

(Time expired)

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (18:48): I too rise to strongly support this motion. I have been a proud White Ribbon ambassador for many years now, as have been many others in this place. This is an organisation that raises awareness about the role that men must absolutely
play in stopping domestic violence, and, indeed, all forms of violence against women. I cannot stress enough how important it is for men to take a much more active role in this national campaign, and, in doing so, fight this scourge on a daily basis.

The statistics tell us a very grim story. We heard some of the stats earlier. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by someone they know. One in five women have experienced harassment within the workplace. Over a 12-month period, on average, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. These are unacceptable figures. These women are someone's mother, daughter or sister. This is how the statistics are generally reported. It is very unfortunate, dreadful and terrible, and we should do all we can to turn those statistics around so they give us a figure of zero. That should be our aim.

But, if we express these statistics differently, we see that this is very much a problem that is caused by men. It is men perpetrating these horrendous acts. One in three men have perpetrated physical and/or sexual violence against a woman they know. One in five men have harassed a woman within the workplace. Over 12 months, on average, every week a man kills his current or former partner. These men, again, are someone's father, brother or son. This is an unacceptable situation.

We all have an obligation to act and speak out, especially us blokes. It is absolutely important that, when we see language being used that is derogatory towards women or when we see an unacceptable situation, we call it for what it is and not just bow our heads and basically act as if nothing is happening. It is unacceptable, and it is us blokes that can tell other blokes that this sort of behaviour is not on.

This is why I was so pleased recently that the National Retail Association has supported a push to include an entitlement of 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave as part of the modern award structure. In doing so, the National Retail Association has demonstrated courage and leadership. It has broken ranks with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group and the Australian Retailers Association, who are all opposing the claim for paid domestic violence leave. The association's stand has gained international attention, being reported all around the world as a positive thing, and I join those sincerely commending the National Retail Association's strong and proactive stand on this issue.

The retail industry is the largest employer of young people in the country and one of the largest employers of women in the country. Women comprise 56 per cent of the retail trade workforce, and, as such, the highest proportion of victims—women aged between 18 and 24—are likely to be working in those retail industries. That is why this move by the National Retail Association is so important. In fact, Family violence and the Australian retail industry, a report prepared for the National Retail Association, revealed that 45,000 women, or almost seven per cent of the retail workforce, experienced some form of domestic violence during the 2014-15 period. That is a huge number.

Of course, paid domestic violence leave is not going to solve this huge social problem overnight. However, it is an important step and an important part of the solution. As ACTU president Ged Kearney was quoted in the media as saying:

As we come to grips with the enormity of this issue we now realise employment is the biggest defining factor in whether a person stays, leaves or returns to a violent relationship …
Thank you.

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (18:53): In 1991 a group of men from Toronto, Canada, initiated the male-led movement White Ribbon in response to the massacre of 14 female students at the University of Montreal. This movement has grown to encompass over 60 countries around the world and stands as a shining example of men standing up for women. It is an important movement, as the fight to end domestic violence cannot be fought by women alone.

I am proud to support this motion both as a woman in the Liberal Party and as a member of the Turnbull coalition government, which has taken many steps to address this most serious of issues. The coalition has a strong record of men leading the charge against domestic violence, as prime ministers Howard, Abbott and Turnbull all developed and launched programs to combat domestic violence. Since being elected to government by the Australian people in 2013 and re-elected this year, the coalition government has made respect for women—and for every other Australian—a priority. There is never any excuse for domestic violence and I applaud the government for taking strong action to eliminate all disrespect and violence against women. The sad fact is that too many women are victims of domestic violence each and every week. According to a 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey, one in three women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence from the age of 15 by someone known to them. This same survey found that one in four women have been emotionally abused by a partner. But the most distressing figure comes from the 2015 Australian Institute of Criminology report, which found that one woman dies almost every week at the hands of a current or former partner.

Addressing the awful problem of domestic violence has been at the forefront of the Turnbull government's agenda. The first act of the Turnbull government was to announce a $100 million Women's Safety Package on 24 September 2015. At the time of the announcement, a staggering 63 women had been killed by a current or former partner for the year. The Women's Safety Package is part of the Turnbull government's approach to take real, practical and immediate action to keep women and children safe. The $100 million package focuses on improved training for frontline workers, enhancing service delivery and providing the best educational resources to change attitudes in our community. The states and territories, in partnership with the coalition government, have also launched a $30 million national campaign to change young people's attitudes to women and to violence. The campaign website has received almost 400,000 views and there have been more than 32 million online views of the TV commercials.

Domestic violence has been at the forefront of the coalition's agenda since we came to office in 2013 and we have built momentum around the issue. The 2016-17 budget committed $100 million for initiatives under the Third Action Plan. We announced during the campaign that this would include $20 million for preventative strategies and cultural change, $15 million for frontline services like housing and financial support, $10 million to support victims of revenge porn, $25 million to address family violence in Indigenous communities and $30 million for frontline family violence legal services. We also committed almost $10 million to develop a comprehensive national Domestic Violence Order information-sharing system.

Crucially, under the $25 million program a number of specific actions are targeted at assisting Indigenous women, who are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of...
family violence. The government announced up to $15 million to enable police in Queensland to better respond to domestic violence in remote communities and for measures that reduce reoffending by Indigenous perpetrators. We announced $1.4 million to extend the community engagement police officers in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, up to $1.1 million to help remote Indigenous communities prevent and better respond to the incidence of domestic violence through targeted support and $3.6 million for the cross-border domestic violence intelligence desk to share information on victims and perpetrators who move around the cross-border region of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Finally, I would like to commend one of my local schools, Scotch College, who are strong supporters of White Ribbon Day. These young people are leading by example and I commend their dedication to raising awareness and addressing this most serious of issues.

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (18:58): I thank the member for Gellibrand for moving this motion, which goes to the heart of why I came to this place. In my electorate, and in Perth's south-east more generally, domestic violence is at a crisis point. Domestic violence is far and away the largest offence group of offences against the person. Over 2015-16 there were 3,477 domestic violence offences committed in the South East Metropolitan police district and the sanction rate for these offences was just 22.4 per cent. WA police are identifying domestic violence offences but, for various reasons, insufficient evidence exists for them to proceed against the perpetrator. These figures paint an unacceptable picture of the issues in homes across my community, but it is not until you hear the stories at the heart of the crisis that you truly grasp the extent of the problem.

Through my work as a local lawyer in the south-east, I became involved with Starick Services, which runs two refuges for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. I joined the board of Starick and I went on to become its chairperson, and I also represented the sector on the state advisory committee. Starick is much more than a women's refuge. It pioneered the use of assistance officers in police stations and courthouses. It runs programs in high schools to raise awareness of domestic violence and to break the cycle of violence. In the words of domestic violence survivor, Mary, who was supported by Starick:

I am so very thankful for the women's refuges throughout Perth, the police who see the destruction first hand yet continue to care for me in the wee hours when nobody else can help, the magistrates who watch our declining culture day in and day out but choose to protect us, still, by putting boundaries in place, and all the people who became a voice for those who had lost theirs.

I am glad that they didn't grow despondent and give up and that on their hard days they continued to press on and serve their community and in all honesty, by doing so, save lives. They saved my life and the lives of the seven others that were in my care. For that I am thankful.

Ending the scourge of violence against women will require bipartisan support in this place and in our community. And I am glad to see members opposite rise to support the member for Gellibrand's motion. But, unfortunately, that bipartisanship is not translated into real support in some areas from this government. Since coming to office, the Abbott-Turnbull government has cut a combined $52 million from community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal centres and legal aid services, which help domestic violence victims every day. That has impacted heavily on local services like the Gosnells Community Legal Centre in Burt. While the recent announcement of new funding for these services was welcome, it does
not make up for the previous cuts. It is crucial that we see these funds flow to our front line services in Perth's south-east.

Overall, last month's COAG summit on reducing violence against women and their children was a missed opportunity to deal with the scourge of family violence. More than a third of people accessing homelessness services are family violence victims, yet we have seen no real action to boost funding to these services. We also need to protect domestic violence victims by guaranteeing personal leave when they access help, yet this remains off limits under the Liberal government—a truly shameful situation. We need firmer commitments, better funding and real reform to support family violence victims from this government. Anything less is failing those in our society who need our help most.

As with so many areas of inequality and discrimination, achieving great change involves not just the courage of victims but a push for real change by those responsible. In this way, White Ribbon, as an organisation targeting at engaging men, is working to change the culture of the group in our society most likely to inflict violence on others—men. The existence and work of White Ribbon does not detract from the fact that some perpetrators of domestic violence are indeed women. And I have worked as a lawyer for men who were victims of domestic violence. Let us not be distracted. We must, as a society, rid ourselves of behaviour that sees around 100 women die each year from domestic violence. So I am proud to stand in support of White Ribbon and join hundreds of thousands of Australian men in saying that I will stand up, speak out and act to prevent men's violence against women. This is my oath.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (19:03): I will begin by restating the oath that I will stand up, speak out and act to prevent men's violence against women. This Friday is White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Eliminating chronic issues of domestic violence speaks to who we are—a community and a country that espouses mutual respect and dignity—and that is why I am proud to support White Ribbon Day by particularly speaking out about these issues.

I first started working with the former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Liz Broderick, during my time as Australia's Human Rights Commissioner, and it was both an honour and a privilege to be able to do so because these are the issues where we must shine a bright light into dark places in our society so that we create a sense of safety for all people. That is the reality of the human experience.

Twenty-seven years ago, the University of Montreal witnessed a tragedy where a male student slaughtered 14 of his fellow female students. In the wake of that event, a group of men in Toronto decided to speak out and establish a male-led movement known as White Ribbon, which now represents an international effort of men, young and old, working together to eliminate violence against women. Their minor but passionate plea for mutual respect is now echoed across the world in almost 60 countries. And of course, as an Australian, I am proud to say that we are part of that global effort.

There are three key statistics concerning violence against women that highlight the unnerving ubiquity of this issue. One in three women has experienced violence at the hands of men; one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by someone known to them; and one in four children is exposed to some form of domestic violence. But this is not just a matter of statistics; it is about human lives that are impacted—the women and families whose aspirations were sabotaged by those who were seemingly
closest to them. Sadly, many Australians know of someone who has endured the tragic consequences of violence against women.

A member of the Goldstein community, Jodie Hickey, saw the tragedy of domestic violence firsthand. In 2000 her best friend, Mary, was killed by her husband, who is now on parole and confined to his home state of Queensland. On the first anniversary of Mary's death, Jodie came together with friends to raise a glass in honour of her memory. Since then, Jodie's efforts to raise awareness of domestic violence have gained momentum. With each year, raffle prizes and stalls have been added, turning the occasion into a far-reaching event in support of White Ribbon Day, and this year she is doing so through a sold-out high tea that will mark the 16th anniversary of Mary's death. With increased numbers and excitement, Jodie is helping to build on last year's efforts to build and honour the continuing memory, but also to turn tragedy into an opportunity for hope and bringing the community together. So far they have raised $6,000 for the White Ribbon cause. Helped by her two elder sons, Jodie's efforts in championing the fight against violence against women are truly inspiring. She is a tireless advocate for a society that respects women, and I look forward to joining Jodie this Sunday for part of her activities, because violence against women is a man's issue.

Through education, raising awareness and political advocacy, we can work together to effect change and to improve attitudes for the good. But it takes men, like those who participate in White Ribbon, to stand up and speak out about these horrific crimes against women and to recognise that we are all part of a solution—both in terms of raising visibility, and in coming together to take collective action to improve the culture within our society so that people can feel safe and secure no matter where they are. That is the task before us—to build a future that is free from violence and abuse.

I am particularly proud of Jodie's efforts in my community, because she is somebody who has demonstrated—again, as one of the wonderful women of Goldstein—that she is able to bring people together to effect positive change. It is through turning these tragedies into moments of opportunity to improve our country and our culture that our community does so much good and represents a model that can be amplified and have resonance and impact across our great country. And so, to Jodie and to all of the people who are supporting and participating in White Ribbon events this Friday as well as the event on Sunday, and to everybody in Goldstein, we say, 'Thank you.'

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:08): I thank the member for Gellibrand for his motion. Like many here, I am an ambassador for White Ribbon Day and I regularly take part in events promoting an end to male violence against women, particularly as we approach 25 November every year. This day has been declared by the United Nations as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This coming Friday I will be taking part in a Cabramatta police and community event—the White Ribbon Walk—which will involve many in the community coming together as one to pledge their support against violence against women.

Last Monday at the Whitlam Library in Cabramatta I attended the launch of the White Ribbon Day campaign and signed on to the pledge never to commit, excuse or remain silent in respect of violence against women. By now we all know the statistics—one in three women will be a victim of physical violence; one in five will be a victim of sexual violence; and currently, and most disturbingly, two women are being murdered by a partner or a former.
partner each week. As a nation we have grieved these deaths. We have heard the stories of the horrendous acts of violence against women, and yet it continues. I know that more than 50 per cent of assaults reported to my local police are domestic violence related. I also know that 60 per cent of boys growing up in an abusive household are likely to become abusers themselves. What is more chilling is that 50 per cent of girls growing up in such an environment are likely to take an abuser for a partner, and the cycle goes on. As a husband, a father of a daughter, and a proud grandfather of four girls, I am petrified at the thought that that statistic may one day apply to one of those women who mean most to me in my life.

The issue of violence against women is very real, and it is happening in all our neighbourhoods. It involves women no matter how successful, strong or resilient they are and whatever their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Most of the victims, through fear of reprisal or harm to their children, do not seek help. The number of unreported cases of violence against women is staggering. If we are to walk towards eradicating domestic violence, we must give women the confidence to come forward, report these crimes and engage with our police. We need more men to stand up and say this is not acceptable. We need more men educating the community about violence against women. In fact, what we need is more men—more real men. It is not okay to hit a woman, it is not okay to be domineering against a person that you love, and it is not okay to force a woman into compliance. It is not right that women live in fear, not knowing when their partner may once again lash out. These women are constantly walking on eggshells and are obviously riddled with anxiety. Today we should remember those women who have lost their lives through domestic violence and also their families who still grieve their loss. It is not enough to give speeches each year as we approach White Ribbon Day. It is imperative that we as a community take responsibility and look out for our families, our friends and our neighbours.

There are a number of organisations in my community working very hard to spread the message that violence against women and children is simply not acceptable. I would like to commend each of those organisations. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the great work of Betty Green, the chair of Bonnie Support Services, who not only look after the direct victims of domestic violence but play a very significant role in looking after their children as well. These are organisations that play a very significant role in our community, trying to bring an end to domestic violence and looking after the victims. Clearly we must change the attitude that women can be controlled or dominated by men. For the health of our community, we must commit to make this change. I would also like to thank our local White Ribbon committee for their work. In particular, I acknowledge the great work of Detective Chief Inspector Darren Newman and his team at the Cabramatta Local Area Command. They are certainly playing a very significant role in drawing attention to violence against women. Committing domestic violence is not the only inexcusable act. Remaining silent is almost as bad.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (19:13): As a White Ribbon ambassador, I am very pleased to speak on this motion today ahead of White Ribbon Day, this Friday, 25 November. This year's theme is 'Stand up, speak out and act'. It is incredibly sad to think that one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual abuse perpetrated by someone known to her and that, on average, one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner. I pledge
today to stand up, speak out and act for women in my life and in my community. I draw your attention to #AMansIssueToo.

White Ribbon Australia's vision is of a nation that respects women and in which every woman lives in safety, free of all forms of abuse. Through education, awareness-raising campaigns, prevention programs and partnerships, White Ribbon Australia highlights the positive role that men play in preventing men's violence against women and supports them to be part of this social change.

This Friday, there will be White Ribbon Day events taking place right across my electorate of Leichhardt. On Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, there will be street activities to raise awareness. In Douglas Shire, a White Ribbon twilight walk takes place from 5.30 till 7.30 pm on Front Street in Mossman. It is a free event followed by guest speakers, information stalls, entertainment and refreshments. In Cairns, TAFE Queensland North is holding a show of hands event at 11.30 am, where invitees can sign the pledge and enjoy a barbecue with staff and students.

Nationally, the Turnbull government is taking important steps to tackle domestic violence and family violence. At the end of October the Prime Minister launched the third action plan for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. This $100 million plan provides the leadership, policies and resources needed to make a real difference in keeping women and children safe. It sets out 36 practical actions under six key areas. These are: preventing and intervening early; improving responses and supports for Indigenous Australians; providing greater support and choice for women and children; sharpening the focus on sexual violence; responding to children living with violence; and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

During the election campaign I welcomed the commitment of $25 million within the action plan for specific measures to address violence against Indigenous women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised and 10 times more likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence than are women in the broader community. Targeted investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is critical to saving lives and to disrupting intergenerational cycles of violence, dysfunction and disadvantage. These funds will help to improve the quality and accessibility of services in Indigenous communities, train a skilled workforce, provide culturally appropriate and community-led perpetrator programs, boost legal services, help kids to access information through technology and to build on the national Stop it at the Start campaign. It continues the work that is already underway through the coalition's $100 million Women's Safety Package, introduced in September 2015.

In my electorate, the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service, led by CEO Amanda Lee-Ross, is very proactive in prevention, early intervention, education and crisis activities. This year, the team started a Tablelands service, which has received a warm welcome from the community. Just last week they launched in the southern Tablelands, with a domestic violence worker now based in Ravenshoe Community Centre.

I encourage women in these communities to come forward and just talk to someone if they are feeling threatened or experiencing violence. The service is also driving the Community Champions Ending Violence Against Women project. This federally-funded leadership program for community members, business and other groups aims to create and nurture a
culture of intolerance towards domestic and family violence and improve their responses as a community. After a two-day course, the champions host an activity in their community, whether it is a morning tea to raise awareness or to develop a workplace policy. Anybody interested in taking part in these programs can contact the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service on (07)40336100.

This Friday, remember that domestic violence hurts us all. It ruins the lives of individuals, destroys families and breaks communities. It simply has to stop.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (19:18): I acknowledge the member for Gellibrand for putting this matter on our agenda, and I thank all those who have spoken on this debate. Like my friend the member for Leichhardt and before him the member for Werriwa, I pledge to stand up and speak out against violence against women and children.

It is really important that every man in this country understands their obligation as men— as men!—to stand up and speak out against violence against women and children. It is not acceptable under any circumstances: we know it and we need to make sure that every man in Australia knows it, understands it and does something about it. We must take responsibility.

I am proud to be a White Ribbon advocate and a major supporter of grassroots campaigns in my electorate. Men speaking to other men about violence against women is a powerful catalyst for change, and it is men I want to talk about here today—men in my own electorate who are making a difference in terms of accepting their responsibility to speak out. But we cannot escape the facts. In the Northern Territory a third of police time is spent dealing with domestic violence, and Aboriginal women are victims in 70 per cent of all cases. As of June 2016, 83 per cent of reported assaults in Katherine were associated with domestic violence. In Tennant Creek it was 67 per cent and in Alice Springs it was 56 per cent. These figures are deplorable. In my electorate of Lingiari, domestic violence is, sadly, an experience too familiar for too many. It is so sad.

In September last year, a renounced White Ribbon ambassador, the then-CLP Attorney-General John Elferink, said in parliament that he was tempted to figuratively slap opposing Labor MP Natasha Fyles. What a thing to be said by a person who is supposed to be an Attorney-General responsible for justice and looking after the community. In my electorate, there will be three White Ribbon marches calling out exactly the behaviour exhibited by Mr Elferink—in Darwin, Katherine and my hometown of Alice Springs, as well as communities across the rest of the Northern Territory. As part of White Ribbon Week on Thursday in Yuendumu there is a community songwriting competition to say no to violence.

I want to refer now to the 'No More' campaign. The 'No More' campaign started in 2006 with the principal advocate being Mr Charlie King, a very great and a very good Australian, a great man for standing up against violence and abuse within families against children. The momentum for this came about because Aboriginal men in the Northern Territory were saying they wanted their voices to be heard in consultations about family issues, including family violence. I want to commend men like Johnny Liddle in Alice Springs at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, who was at the forefront of organising marches in Alice Springs, seminars and camps around issues to do with family violence and violence against women, attracting people from across Australia. I want to commend the people in Katherine. I participated some years ago in marching up the Stuart Highway, blocking the Stuart Highway, talking about violence against women.
These are important initiatives, and it is wrong to think, as some people would have us believe, that all Aboriginal men are violent towards their spouses or partners, or women and children generally. That is not the case. There are many great champions; Charlie King and Johnny Liddle are but two. It is important that we take the message of Charlie King's 'No More' campaign and do link arms together to say that we are fed up; it is not going to happen. We will not accept that it is an appropriate way to deal with women, or differences between men and women and children. It is just not acceptable.

We need to say we support and recognise the things that are being done by AFL teams and rugby league teams across this country, who are saying that, if you have been found guilty of an offence involving family violence, you cannot play our game. That is important: a great disincentive for people to be involved in family violence. It develops advocacy around family violence and teaches young men about their responsibilities towards women and children in their communities, but we also need to understand the importance of addressing the needs of the victims.

I know that men, like me and I am sure like every other man in this parliament, believe we need to make sure services designed to address the needs of the victims of family violence are properly funded. To that end I want to talk about KWILS, the Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service, and CAWLS, the Central Australian Women's Legal Service. These organisations are dealing with the victims of family violence. These organisations need support that they are currently not getting from the federal government. I say to the federal government: use this opportunity of this week to understand that it is our mutual responsibility to support these women and advocate against family violence, particularly violence against women.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (19:23): I would like to thank the other members who have spoken on this motion and to speak today in this place about White Ribbon Day. I am proud to say that, as a White Ribbon ambassador, I support fully the many organisations in my electorate of Forde that do so much terrific work to help women who find themselves in this very difficult situation.

White Ribbon Day is about all Australian men standing up and speaking out to prevent men’s violence against women, because making women safe is an issue for us men as well. As the member for Lingiari has just touched on, this is not to say that all Australian men are guilty of domestic violence. There are many good men in all of our communities who do a tremendous amount of work to help eradicate this scourge. Yet, sadly, still one in six Australian women have experienced violence from a current or former partner.

White Ribbon Day is held annually on 25 November and signals the start of 16 days of local work to stop violence against women. This day is significant in highlighting a major issue in our country. Putting an end to domestic violence is something our communities should be working towards every day. Domestic and family violence is preventable and can be stopped. Victims of violence often live in fear for themselves and their families, even when they have left an abusive relationship.

Over the past 18 months, significant progress has been made in the Australian community in raising awareness of domestic and family violence. As a government, we are addressing what should be a simple goal—that is, that all Australians deserve a life free from violence. Too many times we have witnessed the devastating impact domestic and family violence has
on our community. These tragic deaths of women and children highlight the need for continued action. Domestic, family and sexual violence is unacceptable in any circumstances, and I commend the Prime Minister and the government for pledging a $100 million package to fight against it. The package of measures provides a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence. It also improves frontline support services, looks to using innovative technological solutions to help keep women safe, and provides educational resources to help change community attitudes towards violence and abuse. More than $21 million from the package has been allocated to specific measures to help Indigenous women and communities, who are at even higher risk, as the members for Leichhardt and Lingiari spoke on at length.

Putting a stop to domestic violence remains a national priority, and the government is acting to put an end to violence against women and children. In my electorate of Forde, the Logan police district has established a dedicated domestic violence and management team. Led by Larissa Shaw, herself a victim of domestic violence, this team takes a proactive approach to dealing with high-risk domestic violence matters, and I want to commend them on the work that they have done in this space. I know from talking to them that it is a very difficult job and that it is not pleasant having to walk into many of the situations they have to deal with. This is a tremendously positive step from our hardworking police force, who are committed to making our community safer for everybody. One of the things they have managed to do with this program is to identify those families who are at higher than normal risk due to other activities that go on with those families, in particular drug and alcohol abuse. Through their work they have been able to mitigate a number of circumstances and rescue the women and children from a very dangerous situation. Logan Women’s health, as well, do a tremendous job helping women in very difficult circumstances.

I commend everybody in my community and communities right around Australia for the terrific work they do to help reduce and remove the scourge of domestic violence. On White Ribbon Day I stand with the other men in our community and share my support for ending domestic and family violence in our country.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): 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.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:29
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Infrastructure
(Question No. 3)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Regional Development in writing, on 1 September 2016:

In respect of the Government's election commitment to allocate $3 million to construct an Airport Boulevard at Ballina, will these funds be allocated in the 2016-17 budget; if so, (a) from which funding program will they come, and (b) what additional funding requirements will be imposed upon the funding recipient for them to receive the funding.

Mr Chester: The Minister for Regional Development has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) The Government's election commitment to construct an Airport Boulevard at Ballina will be delivered through the Community Development Grants Programme.

(b) This project is being progress directly with the proponent. The project details are yet to be finalised.

Infrastructure
(Question No. 12)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Regional Development, in writing, on 1 September 2016:

In respect of the Government's election commitment to allocate $125,000 for the installation of a 150 kW rooftop solar panel system at the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery at Murwillumbah, will these funds be allocated in the 2016-17 budget; if so, (a) from which funding program will they come, and (b) what additional funding requirements will be imposed upon the funding recipient for them to receive the funding.

Mr Chester: The Minister for Regional Development has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) The Government's election commitment to install a rooftop solar panel system at the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery at Murwillumbah will be delivered through the Community Development Grants Programme.

(b) This project is being progressed directly with the proponent. The project details are yet to be finalised.

Superannuation
(Question No. 16)

Ms McGowan asked the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services on 12 September 2016:

In respect of the obligation of Australian employers to pay employee superannuation entitlements under the Superannuation Guarantee Charge Act 1992, (a) what steps are in place to ensure employer compliance with superannuation entitlements to employees, particularly small employers, (b) how can employees best report non-payment of their superannuation entitlements, (c) what is an acceptable timeframe for the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to respond to employee concerns about non-payment of their superannuation entitlements, (d) what resources and investigative powers does the ATO have to audit employers (particularly small employers) to ensure that they are complying with their superannuation payment obligations, (e) is the regime for ensuring tax compliance (payments to the state) by small business stronger than the regime for ensuring compliance with superannuation
payments to their employees, and (f) what resources are available to employees whose employer declares bankruptcy or ceases operation to ensure that they are not out of pocket chasing up their relatively small (but significant to the employee affected) superannuation entitlements.

Ms O’Dwyer: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) To ensure that employers comply with their obligations to pay superannuation entitlements to their employees the ATO investigates all reports of unpaid superannuation.

The ATO evaluates this information to identify patterns of behaviour for non-compliant employers that can then be followed up through a range of compliance actions.

(b) In the first instance it is advised that employees should contact their superannuation fund directly to check the contributions received. If they are in doubt that they have received their correct superannuation payments they should discuss the matter with their employer.

The ATO provides a self-assessment calculation tool on ato.gov.au to assist employees to calculate their superannuation guarantee entitlement and allows them to lodge a notification with the ATO of any unpaid entitlements. These issues can also be reported to the ATO by calling 13 10 20.

(c) The ATO recognises the importance of dealing with these matters that are of great concern to the individuals impacted by not being paid their correct superannuation entitlements.

The ATO service standard is to commence 99% of employer investigations within 28 days of receiving an employee notification of unpaid superannuation entitlements, and establish the unpaid amount in 50% of cases within 4 months and 90% of cases in 12 months.

(d) The ATO has responsibility for administering superannuation guarantee under the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 (SGAA). Under this act, employers are required to make quarterly payments of super guarantee to their eligible employees.

If an employer lodges a Superannuation Guarantee Charge statement late, or fails to provide information, the employer is liable for a penalty of up to 200% of the Superannuation Guarantee Charge.

The ATO reviews and investigates every notification of non-compliance received. In 2015-2016, over 170 staff were dedicated to undertaking compliance related activities to enforce the obligations that employers have for payment of superannuation guarantee for their employees.

When the ATO receives an employee notification about potential non-payment, different compliance treatments are applied depending on a number of circumstances. These include the extent and nature of the alleged non-compliance, the employer’s previous compliance history and, circumstances that the employer has no control over, but may impact on the degree of non-compliance, for example natural disasters.

Depending on the circumstances of a particular case, the employer is likely to be contacted by telephone in the first instance to see if the matter can be resolved quickly. Alternatively, action may be taken through the commencement of an audit. Even at the audit stage, the ATO will generally provide employers with the opportunity to self-correct any superannuation guarantee shortfall for their employees.

Where the employer has not self-corrected and the ATO audit identifies a superannuation guarantee shortfall, an assessment is raised for the outstanding superannuation guarantee charge. This includes a nominal interest component, an administration component and the shortfall amount. Penalties may also be applied where the employer has failed to lodge a Superannuation Guarantee Charge statement or otherwise failed to provide information required.

In seeking to secure payment the ATO may use a range of debt collection approaches including the use of Director Penalty Notices, that enforce payment, as well as other debt collections garnishee options.
(e) The ATO considers the employer's superannuation guarantee obligations when undertaking reviews into other taxation issues of the business that arise, particularly through our small business income taxation program.

Where a superannuation guarantee shortfall is identified and a Superannuation Guarantee Charge liability raised, the debt collection activity undertaken is focused on employee entitlements before any other obligations to the ATO.

(f) In the first instances where an employer has failed to make superannuation contributions, the employee should contact the ATO to enable Superannuation Guarantee Charge assessments to be raised regardless of whether the employer is in an insolvency administration. This allows the ATO to crystallise the debt and have a record of the non-compliance.

In the event of the appointment of an external administrator to a company, the ATO will provide the employee with the insolvency practitioner's details to allow them to pursue their claim further and to establish if the outstanding payment can be recouped. This is a matter that the ATO is not able to determine.

There were legislative changes to the Director Penalty Regime that came into effect from 30 June 2012. The changes mean that the directors of a company are held personally liable for any outstanding superannuation debts that accumulate while the company is solvent. The ATO is able to issue director penalty notices to the directors for the outstanding amount of super guarantee. In 2015-2016 there were an estimated 877 director penalty notices issued to company directors relating to over $130 million in company superannuation guarantee charge debt.

Where unpaid quarters remain unreported for more than 3 months, the directors cannot extinguish their liability by placing the company into liquidation or administration. For any quarterly periods due prior June 2013, the ATO is unable to pursue the directors personally.

*The Australian Government provides through its Fair Entitlements Guarantee financial assistance to cover certain unpaid employment entitlements to eligible employees who lose their job due to the liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer. This however does not cover unpaid superannuation guarantee contributions.*

**Relevant legislative provisions:**

*Where the employer is an individual*

Superannuation Guarantee Charge is a priority in bankruptcies pursuant to section 109 (1C) of the *Bankruptcy Act 1966*. It is included in the category of employee entitlements including salary, wages or commission. The maximum amount subject to the priority is adjusted annually and is currently $4,400.

*Where the employer is a company*

There are similar provisions at s556(1) (e) in the *Corporation Act 2001*. These are not limited as in the *Bankruptcy Act 1966*. Further, changes to the *Corporations Act 2001* mean that from 31 December 2007, the SGC must be paid before payments to ordinary unsecured creditors. This means it ranks equally with employees' entitlements for wages and superannuation contributions as long as there are assets available for distribution to priority creditors.

**Superannuation**  
(Question No. 17)

Ms McGowan asked the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services, in writing, on 12 September 2016

1. How many employers went out of business in (a) 2014-15, and (b) 2015-16 with unpaid superannuation entitlements to employees.
2. What was the range of these individual employee figures that went unpaid and what sum was the
total employee superannuation that disappeared with these firms’ operations.

(3) What proportion of unpaid superannuation entitlements was recovered in (a) 2014-15, and
   (b) 2015-16 from employers who ceased operations leaving unpaid superannuation on their books.

(4) Has his department identified how the superannuation compliance regime can be improved; if so, how can it be improved; if not, why not.

(5) How many employers were charged the penalty fee for non-compliance with their superannuation obligations in (a) 2014-15, and (b) 2015-16.

(6) Is the sum of penalty fees charged for non-compliance with superannuation obligations dispersed into general revenue or is it directed towards improving compliance and collection of entitlements.

Ms O'Dwyer: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. How many employers went out of business with unpaid superannuation entitlements to employees in:
   a) 2014-15, and
   b) 2015-16
   (a) 1,877
   (b) 2,278

2. What was the range of these individual employee figures that went unpaid and what sum was the total employee superannuation that disappeared with these firms’ operations.
   (a) $210 million (approximately) total for the 2014-15 financial year
   (b) $113 million (approximately) total for the 2015-16 financial year
   This debt remains able to be collected in the future if the employer is later in a position to pay. The data for individual employees is not available at this time.

3. What proportion of unpaid superannuation entitlements was recovered from employers who ceased operations leaving unpaid superannuation on their books in
   (a) 2014-15, and
   (b) 2015-16
   (a) $372.4 million total for the 2014-15 financial year
   (b) $373.3 million total for the 2015-16 financial year
   The ATO cannot identify the proportion of superannuation that was collected from employers who ceased operations.

4. Has his department identified how the superannuation compliance regime can be improved; if so, how can it be improved; if not, why not.
   The ATO is continually looking for strategies to improve superannuation guarantee compliance. One example of this is developing ways to encourage employers to come forward when they identify an issue with underpaid superannuation guarantee entitlements and support them in a way that is efficient without disadvantaging employees. The primary aim remains ensuring the right amount of super contributions are paid to a super fund for each employee; however this outcome is not always achieved by way of a formal audit of an employer. The ATO is taking a risk-based approach and tailors strategies to address non-compliance based on the employer's history and the level of risk.
   In June 2015 the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) completed a performance audit on the ATO's role in promoting compliance with superannuation guarantee and found that the ATO's administration of superannuation guarantee had been generally effective. The ANAO made...
5. How many employers were charged the penalty fee for non-compliance with their superannuation obligations in
   (a) 2014-15, and
   (b) 2015-16.

   (a) 13,500
   (b) 10,392

6. Is the sum of penalty fees charged for non-compliance with superannuation obligations dispersed into general revenue or is it directed towards improving compliance and collection of entitlements?

   The penalty fee paid to the ATO becomes consolidated revenue.

Pacific Highway
(Question No. 19)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 13 September 2016:

(1) Is he or his department aware of concerns about possible flooding arising from the proposed alignment of the Pacific Highway duplication at Warrell Creek, between the Albert Road and Rosewood Road overpasses, New South Wales.

(2) Has reliable hydraulic modelling of Stony Creek (upstream from the railway embankment) been undertaken as part of planning for this section of the duplication; if so, (a) by whom, (b) when, and (c) what did it show.

(3) How was the capacity of the drainage for the new roadworks on this section determined.

(4) Were concerns that the existing railway drainage in this area is insufficient considered or taken into account when determining the road drainage capacity.

(5) What steps have been taken to mitigate flood risk in this Government funded section of the Pacific Highway.

Mr Chester: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) These matters are the responsibility of the NSW government. Further information is available on the NSW Roads and Maritime Services website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au.

(3) Refer to response given at (2).

(4) Refer to response given at (2).

(5) Refer to response given at (2).

Pacific Highway
(Question No. 20)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 13 September 2016:
(1) Is the Government providing funding towards section 10 of the Pacific Highway Ballina to Woolgoolga upgrade.

(2) What steps is the Government taking to ensure that the current plans for the section 10 upgrade will not adversely affect koalas.

(3) Has his department attended meetings on the section 10 upgrade, where the koala issues have been discussed.

(4) Are koala issues on the agenda at meetings on the section 10 upgrade, that are attended by representatives of the Government.

(5) Have alternative route or construction options to address the koala issues surrounding the section 10 upgrade been considered; if so, (a) what are they, and (b) what was the outcome.

(6) What additional measures have been taken to address concerns about the impact of the section 10 upgrade on koalas.

(7) Is the Government satisfied that all reasonable actions have been taken to safeguard koalas in the planning of the section 10 upgrade.

Mr Chester: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Please refer to the Koala Management Plan and Ballina Koala Plan, approved by the Federal Minister for the Environment. These documents are available on the NSW Roads and Maritime Services website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) Refer to response given at (2).

(6) Refer to response given at (2).

(7) Yes.

WestConnex
(Question No. 21)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 13 September 2016:

(1) What impact will WestConnex have on (a) Blackmore Oval, and (b) 10 Darley Road, in Leichhardt, New South Wales.

(2) What community consultations are taking place in respect of the impact of WestConnex construction related activities in Leichhardt.

(3) Is the Government satisfied that options relating to WestConnex construction activity in Leichhardt are minimising negative impacts on the local community.

(4) What steps has the Government taken to ensure a Traffic Management Plan that adequately addresses local impacts will be in place when construction commences.

Mr Chester: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The question should be put to the NSW Government.

(2) The question should be put to the Sydney Motorway Corporation.

(3) Yes.

(4) Refer to response given at (1).
WestConnex
(Question No. 23)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 15 September 2016:

(1) Has his senior Minister been directly involved in discussions with the (NSW) Government in respect of planning for Stage 3 of the WestConnex project.
(2) Has the NSW Government sought a grant or other support from the Australian Government for Stage 3 of WestConnex.
(3) Is the Australian Government actively considering making a financial contribution to this project.
(4) Is the Australian Government involved in planning discussions for Stage 3 of WestConnex.
(5) Does the Australian Government participate in planning discussions concerning Stage 3 of WestConnex; if so, through which mechanisms.

Mr Chester The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) No.
(2) The Australian Government has provided a $1.5 billion grant through the Infrastructure Investment Programme for the entire WestConnex project.
(3) Refer to response given at (2).
(4) Yes.
(5) Yes. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is represented on the WestConnex Interdepartmental Steering Committee.