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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

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

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

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

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

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<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
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<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;
IND—Independent; KAP—Katter’s Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

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Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
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Thursday, 13 February 2020

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Littleproud.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to present the Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill No. 1 2020.

The Liberal and National government is steadfast in its support of our farmers and their families, now and into the future.

The flagship program to ease severe financial hardship is the farm household allowance (FHA). This is a package of assistance that includes an income support payment for farmers and their partners in financial hardship, regardless of the cause.

Since its introduction in 2014, over $398 million in payments has been made to more than 13,300 individuals. We are investing almost $2 million each week into rural communities through the program. This investment is possible because FHA is demand driven and uncapped—no-one who is eligible will miss out.

We undertook a comprehensive review of FHA in late 2018. The farmer-led panel made a raft of recommendations to refocus the payment and to make is simpler and easier to understand.

The Prime Minister released the government's response on 27 September 2019. He outlined a comprehensive set of changes that represent a radical simplification of key policy settings and the application process.

Our government has simplified and modernised the process, cutting unnecessary red tape. Since 1 February 2020 couples can apply using the same online form—telling their story once. This means more time for our farmers and their partners to manage their farm and improve their circumstances.

In relation to legislative changes, our government swung into action without delay. We separated the key elements and implemented each of them as soon as they could be rolled out. This is why there are three pieces of legislation—we have a process of continuous improvement.

The centrepiece of the first bill was the relief payment for people finishing their first four years of FHA in the 2019-20 financial year. We also made FHA available for four in every 10-year period. Lastly, we made a significant change to the way income affects FHA. For the first time, anyone whose farm business is making a loss will offset their off-farm income to the limit of $100,000 per couple.

The second bill took the income changes further. Anyone who qualifies for payment will automatically receive the maximum amount. This will give farmers and their partners certainty because their payment amounts won't fluctuate.

We simplified how we count assets. We changed from a two-step test to a single amount of $5.5 million—easier, simpler, better for farmers. Finally, in recognition of the benefits of advice and training, we increased the activity supplement to $10,000 per person.

The Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No.1) 2020 completes the agenda outlined by the Prime Minister. The bill removes the provision in the Farm Household Support Act which reconciles the prediction of annual income with the actual amount received. Predicting income is difficult. Farmers have told us that loud and clear. This change brings FHA in line with the treatment of business income for all other social security payments. An estimate of current income will be used to calculate the rate of payment. The estimate can be updated as many times as needed during the year, but crucially it will not be used to look backwards over the year. This means farmers will not worry that a debt will be raised at the end of the year through this business income reconciliation process.

We are keeping a strong eye on public accountability. Regular sampling of records will be undertaken to ensure the right person receives the right payment at the right time. This approach achieves a balance of compliance.
activity while minimising regulatory burden. The bill also removes the 28-day time limit to conduct a Farm Financial Assessment. This assessment is used by the case manager to help a farmer identify a course or courses of action to improve their financial situation. While it is important that the farm business is independently assessed to check its long-term sustainability, we want flexibility for the timing. Therefore the time limit will be managed administratively by the case manager, taking into consideration the complexity of the farm business and the availability of the person conducting the assessment. The government has listened, responded and stepped up to help support our farmers now and into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (09:36): I move:

That government business notice No. 2 be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**Defence Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2020**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Chester.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House, Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (09:37): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I'm pleased to introduce the Defence Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2020. This bill demonstrates the commitment this government makes to put veterans and their families first and to assist veterans transitioning from military to civilian life. As part of the government's election commitments, this bill will amend the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Act 2008 to extend access to the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme from two years to five years after a member leaves the Australian Defence Force.

The bill will also amend the Australian Defence Force Superannuation Act 2015 to clarify that former ADF members can make contributions to their ADF super accounts. These amendments will mean better outcomes for veterans and their families.

Schedule 1 of the bill will amend the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Act 2008. This scheme is designed to assist current and former ADF members and their families who choose to purchase a home of their own to live in by providing a subsidy. It recognises the additional difficulties ADF members and their families have in purchasing a home due to the nature of their service. At present, a veteran generally has access to the scheme within two years of leaving the Australian Defence Force. The amendments in this bill will extend the time after a veteran leaves the ADF when they can apply for a subsidy certificate to five years. The extension of two years to five years will assist veterans transitioning to civilian life by allowing additional time to look for suitable accommodation before applying and accessing the scheme. The current two-year limitation is not always enough time for veterans and their families, and this change seeks to ensure they carefully consider their options after leaving the ADF, without being rushed into purchasing a home for fear of losing their entitlement to the subsidy. This will benefit some 5½ thousand ADF members who leave each year.

Schedule 2 of the bill will amend the Australian Defence Force Superannuation Act 2015 to clarify that former ADF members can make contributions to their ADF super accounts. This scheme is an accumulation fund, and Defence makes contributions, for permanent ADF members and reserve members rendering continuous full-time service who are ADF super members, at 16.4 per cent of their salary.

At present, when a veteran leaves the ADF, they can no longer make contributions to ADF Super. Any superannuation contributions from a subsequent civilian employer, for example, must be made to a different superannuation fund.

The bill will clarify that ADF Super members who have left the ADF, and who provided continuous full-time service for an uninterrupted period of at least 12 months, can continue to make contributions to ADF Super. This
is consistent with similar changes that have been made to the Public Sector Superannuation Accumulation Plan for Australian government employees. This change will be implemented through changes to the ADF Super Trust Deed, to take effect on 1 May 2020.

Minor consequential amendments will be made to the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to require ADF Super to obtain relevant insurance products for ADF Super members who are no longer serving in the ADF.

This bill moves to make some small but significant changes to defence legislation that will benefit veterans and their families.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and Other Measures) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pitt.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) (09:41): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and Other Measures) Bill 2020 gives effect to the commitment made by successive governments to the Australian community to establish a purpose-built National Radioactive Waste Management Facility to permanently dispose of low-level radioactive waste and temporarily store intermediate-level radioactive waste.

Radioactive waste is generated by the Commonwealth and other Australian entities and is predominantly a by-product of nuclear medicine. On average, one in two Australians will need nuclear medicine in their lifetime. This radioactive waste is currently stored in over 100 locations across Australia. This is neither desirable nor sustainable, as those locations are not purpose-built and some have limited storage capacity.

The successful operation of the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility will greatly improve the safety and security of radioactive waste management in Australia. The facility will support the nuclear science and technology industry and bring Australia into line with some of our key international partners.

Furthermore, the amendments in this bill will improve Australia's ability to meet our international obligations by ensuring that our radioactive waste is stored and managed in a manner consistent with the principles under the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. This bill comes at the end of a consultation and technical assessment process spanning more than four years, where owners voluntarily nominated their land to be considered for the location of the facility.

In identifying a site, the former Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, Senator the Hon. Matt Canavan, considered a detailed site assessment report covering safety, regulatory approvals, costs and other aspects of site suitability, which was developed from more than three years of technical studies. The minister also considered a community sentiment report drawing on a range of measures, including community ballots, submissions and surveys.

The site of Napandee, located in the district Council of Kimba in South Australia, has been identified as the location for the facility. The former minister was satisfied that a facility at Napandee will be best able to safely and securely manage radioactive waste, and that there is broad support in the community for the project and the economic benefits it will bring.

There is broad support for the location of the facility in Napandee. The local community of Kimba have indicated their support through community ballots, public submissions, business and neighbour surveys as well as their willingness to discuss, debate and learn about the facility and what it means for their community.

One hundred per cent of direct neighbours of Napandee support the facility; 61.6 per cent of voters in Kimba support the facility; 59.3 per cent of local businesses support it; and 59.8 per cent of submissions from Kimba locals supported it.

Establishment of the facility in Napandee will provide for the safe and effective management of Australia's radioactive waste, and support the long-term social and economic sustainability of the Kimba community. A large
number of the submissions received expressed enthusiasm for the jobs and economic opportunities the facility would provide for those living in the area.

While there is undoubtedly broad support for the facility in the Kimba community, it is important to acknowledge that there remain some opposition and concerns about potential agricultural impacts.

Experience around the world is that radioactive waste facilities and farms have succeeded side-by-side for decades without any reputational or market impact on surrounding agriculture, tourism or other community activities.

The common experience of such facilities located in the farming regions of Champagne in France, the Lakes District in the UK, and Elcabria in Spain, for example, is that this industry plays an important role in the life of local communities by creating a new industry, with a diversity of jobs and investment, and strengthening local economic and social development.

In Australian regional communities, this stable and alternative industry would be particularly beneficial in times of drought.

While native title has been extinguished at the site, it is a priority for the government to protect and preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and to engage meaningfully with the Barngarla community to maximise economic opportunities and outcomes for local Aboriginal communities near the future facility. The Commonwealth will continue that engagement as the facility moves into its establishment phase.

The bill also repeals the existing site nomination and selection framework under the National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012 and inserts new provisions which specify the site of the facility.

This revises the approach from making a ministerial declaration to acquiring the site through legislation. Specifying the site of the facility in legislation will provide the parliament with the opportunity to have a say in the decision to progress this vital national infrastructure.

This also provides certainty to the Australian public and impacted communities about the site and allows those communities not selected to host the facility to resume their regular activities and look to new opportunities for the future.

The size of the parcel of land specified in the bill for the establishment of the facility is approximately 160 hectares. This is sufficient for the footprint of the facility, the associated security requirements, enabling infrastructure such as power and water, and community agricultural research and development activities. The bill enables a further parcel of land of up to 50 hectares of the original voluntarily nominated land to be acquired to expand the specified site. This additional land may be necessary to allow for the establishment or operation of the facility should further site-specific technical and cultural heritage investigations determine that more land is required.

The bill also provides for acquisition of land for secondary all-weather road access, and for the identification of certain rights and interests in relation to this land that are not required. People with a right or interest in additional land being considered for acquisition will be invited to provide comment in accordance with the procedural fairness provision in the bill.

Most importantly for the host community, the bill provides for the establishment of a $20 million community fund, which will support the government's commitment to the economic and social sustainability of the facility's host community. The facility is an investment in the long-term safe and secure management of radioactive waste and, once established, is expected to be in operation for 100 years.

The community fund will contribute to sustainable health services, agricultural research and development, enhancements to local critical infrastructure and the further development of the local Aboriginal community economy in the host community.

The community fund is one component of the $31 million community development package that the former minister announced in July 2018 to go to the community chosen as the site for the national facility.

This package also includes the Community Skills and Development Program, which will provide $8 million in grants for four years from acquisition of the site, to assist local workers and businesses to maximise opportunities from the construction and operation of the facility.

The package also provides for up to $3 million from the government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy to strengthen Indigenous skills training and cultural heritage promotion in the successful community.

The bill changes the focus of the fund from a state or territory based fund to a community based fund, enabling the host community to make decisions on how the payment is spent to best support the establishment of the facility and its operation in safely and securely managing controlled material.
Finally, the bill also improves the transparency of the National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012 by making a number amendments to provide clear and objective links between the operation of the act and the relevant constitutional heads of power.

In conclusion, this bill signifies the government's commitment to improve the safety associated with radioactive waste storage and management in Australia. The amendments improve the transparency of the site selection and the mechanisms to support the community that will be delivering public services and infrastructure to the facility.

Importantly, the bill brings to a conclusion a prolonged consultation period, providing certainty and clarity to affected communities, and concluding a search for a site that has been ongoing for more than 40 years.

I commend the bill to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Irons.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (09:50): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020.

The Australian vocational and education training (VET) sector is a vital engine that drives the Australian economy. The VET sector supports millions of students each year to obtain skills and expertise for success in future employment and further education.

It provides agile pathways for people to enter the workforce, upskill or reskill.

VET qualifications and training need to be of a high standard to ensure they are trusted by students and employers and benefit the wider Australian community.

Delivering excellence in training lies at the heart of the Australian government's skills agenda. That is why in October 2019, this government announced reforms to the agency responsible for regulating the VET sector—the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

The government has committed $18.1 million towards reforms to enhance ASQA's engagement with the VET sector and ensure its regulatory approach is fair, transparent and effective. The reforms respond to the Braithwaite and Joyce reviews, which both called on ASQA to adopt a greater educative role and improve its regulatory approach.

The first phase of reform is a rapid review of ASQA's governance, culture and processes, which commenced in November 2019. The review is evaluating the effectiveness of ASQA's internal regulatory practices and processes, including how ASQA makes and reviews decisions. The review is due for completion in March this year and will inform a longer-term program of improvements to support ASQA's continued evolution as a modern and effective regulator.

While the review is ongoing, initial work focused on ASQA's governance. The regulatory experts undertaking the review evaluated the alignment of ASQA's current governance arrangements with best practice guidelines and arrangements of comparable bodies across Australia and recommended a revised model for ASQA to support effective, modern, fit-for-purpose governance.

The revised governance model in the bill draws on best practice for Commonwealth regulators. It replaces the existing three commissioner structure with a single agency head, to be known as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ASQA. This will enable the CEO to perform a role more consistent with that of the head of an agency, including leading ASQA's long- and short-term strategy and making top-level managerial decisions that determine the organisation's objectives, resources and policies. This will be supported by a revised organisational structure which will better allocate and clarify operational responsibilities and improve regulatory decision-making.

Further, the bill establishes a statutory expert advisory council to advise the CEO of ASQA. The advisory council fills a gap at the strategic level. Rather than representing particular stakeholder or jurisdictional interests, the council will provide ASQA with access to expert strategic advice to help it to continuously improve as a
regulator while maintaining its independent regulatory decision-making. The council will also create a mechanism for meaningful sector engagement and demonstrate ASQA's commitment to ongoing improvement and learning from the expertise of others.

The members of the advisory council will bring to the table diverse skills, such as expertise in regulation, communications, delivering training, and experience operating a training provider. To ensure the right mix of people and skills, I will seek out the views of the Ministerial Council for Skills before appointing the chair or members to the advisory council.

The advisory council will not be a decision-making body but rather a valuable source of strategic advice, a vehicle for confidential information-sharing and a strong foundation for stakeholder confidence in the regulator.

The revised governance model will enhance ASQA's organisational capability and support best-practice regulation, continuous improvement and effective engagement with the VET sector. The changes will facilitate a shift towards a regulatory approach which focuses on combining educating and engaging with registered providers to foster excellence, and compliance monitoring and enforcement. The revised governance arrangements will hold ASQA in good stead to address future challenges such as changes to its internal practice, enhancements to ASQA's educative role and the significant reform anticipated in the VET sector over the coming years.

To ensure that the minister responsible for VET is able to respond effectively to sector issues, the bill clarifies the nature of directions the minister may issue to ASQA to improve its regulatory processes. The bill provides for the minister to give a broad direction to the national VET regulator in relation to the performance of its functions or powers.

In order to maintain ASQA's independence as a regulator, the amendment specifies that the directions must not be in relation to a particular regulatory decision. This will assist the minister to support and direct ASQA without impinging on the statutory independence of the regulator.

The bill also includes information-sharing arrangements that support use of data collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, or NCVER, under the act.

Improved information sharing will support governments and regulators so that the diverse needs and requirements of all Australians, including groups with different needs, such as people with disability and those where English is not a first language, are considered in policy, funding and regulation.

Promoting quality in the system will ensure that VET is valued as a legitimate and reliable pathway enabling individuals to achieve personal and professional development and industry to access a work-ready skills base with consistent, relevant and nationally recognised knowledge and skills.

Quality regulation is integral to ensuring that the training system is equipped to deliver high-quality student outcomes and to efficiently adapt to changing skill needs, labour market fluctuations and developing technologies. These reforms will benefit not only ASQA but also the providers they regulate, VET students, graduates, employers and the Australian economy at large.

This bill is another critical step in the government's reform process to support ASQA's continued evolution as a transparent and balanced regulator that engages effectively with stakeholders and builds quality in the VET sector.

Debate adjourned.

Superannuation Amendment (PSSAP Membership) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Tudge, for Mr Sukkar.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (09:58): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Superannuation Amendment (PSSAP Membership) Bill 2020 extends membership of the Public Sector Superannuation Accumulation Plan to certain current and former Commonwealth employees who are not otherwise eligible to continue making contributions to a fund run by the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation.

The PSSap, which was established on 1 July 2005, is the current default fund for new Commonwealth employees and employees of prescribed Commonwealth entities. As a fully funded accumulation scheme, the PSSap provides more modern, flexible superannuation arrangements than the older Commonwealth defined-benefit superannuation schemes, all of which are now closed to new members.
This bill ensures that the 'choice of fund' principle extends appropriately to Commonwealth public sector schemes. It allows current and former PSSap members to avoid paying multiple fees to maintain separate funds under different trustees. This bill will support them in saving for their retirement.

In 2017, changes to the PSSap were made to allow former PSSap members to use their existing PSSap account for future contributions if they are no longer in Commonwealth employment and are undertaking employment in which they receive superannuation guarantee contributions.

The bill will further expand the circumstances in which a former PSSap contributory member can use their existing PSSap account in respect of any employment, not just employment that attracts a superannuation guarantee obligation, and to make other contributions, such as non-concessional contributions. PSSap contributory members will also be able to make contributions to their account in respect of any non-Commonwealth employment that they undertake concurrently to their Commonwealth employment.

The bill will also allow certain members of the main Australian government defined benefit civilian superannuation schemes, the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme and the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme who are currently contributing or preserved benefit members to establish a PSSap account where they choose to also have future superannuation contributions held by the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation.

The reforms contained in this bill are consistent with the government's broader superannuation objectives to lower the costs that members incur for the administration and management of their superannuation accounts.

Debate adjourned.

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019-2020

First Reading

Message from the Governor-General transmitting particulars of proposed expenditure and recommending appropriation announced.

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Tudge.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (10:01): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today, the government introduces the additional estimates appropriation bills. These bills are:

- Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019-2020; and
- Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2019-2020.

These bills underpin the government's expenditure decisions.

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019-2020 seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over $3.310 billion. These bills ensure that there is sufficient appropriation to cover estimates variations related to existing programs—for instance, changes in costs for demand-driven programs. These bills also pay for the first-year costs for measures announced in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook and subsequently announced new measures. This year these bills feature several bushfire-related initiatives that were announced after MYEFO.

I now outline the more significant amounts provided for in this bill.

Firstly, the bill will provide the Department of Home Affairs with $948.4 million to continue implementing the government's border protection policies and support people impacted by the recent bushfires.

Secondly, the bill will provide the Department of Social Services a further $592.6 million for higher-than-expected participation in the Disability Employment Services program and additional emergency relief and financial counselling for communities affected by the recent bushfire emergency.

Thirdly, the bill will provide the Department of Defence with additional funding of $488.8 million, including $87.9 million for the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the bushfire response through Operation Bushfire Assist. Additional funding is also being provided foreign exchange supplementation due to movement in exchange rates, under 'no win/no loss' funding arrangements.

The bill also provides $287.5 million to Services Australia to support individuals, families and communities achieve greater self-sufficiency.
Further, the bill proposes an additional $170.6 million for the Department of Health, including $53.2 million to support access to medicines and medical treatments, $68.2 million in departmental funding to support the delivery of government programs and $30.2 million towards mental, Indigenous and preventative health activities.

The bill also provides $287.5 million to Services Australia to support individuals, families and communities achieve greater self-sufficiency.

Further, the bill also proposes an additional $170.6 million for the Department of Health including $53.2 million to support access to medicines and medical treatments, $68.2 million in departmental funding to support the delivery of government programs and $30.2 million towards mental, Indigenous and preventative health activities.

The bill provides an additional $66.2 million for the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, including for wildlife and habitat recovery in response to the recent bushfire emergency, busting congestion in the environmental assessment process, responding to African swine fever and strengthening the Australian Antarctic program.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the schedule to the bill and the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements tabled in the parliament.

I commend this bill to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2019-2020**

*First Reading*

Message from the Governor-General transmitting particulars of proposed expenditure and recommending appropriation announced.

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Tudge.

Bill read a first time.

*Second Reading*

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (10:06): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2019-2020, along with Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019-2020, which was introduced earlier, are the additional estimates appropriation bills for this financial year.

This bill seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of approximately $2.171 billion. These bills also ensure there is sufficient appropriation to cover estimates variations related to existing programs.

I now outline the most significant items provided for in this bill.

Importantly, the bill provides $1.567 billion to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications primarily for drawdowns for the Commonwealth's loan to NBN Co Limited of $1.2 billion; equity injections of $176.9 million for the Australian Rail Track Corporation and the Western Sydney Airport and $166.9 million for the Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan.

The bill also provides $247.9 million to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, including $235.0 million for loans through the Regional Investment Corporation to farmers and small businesses affected by drought conditions.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the Schedule 1 to the bill and the Portfolio Additional Estimate Statements tabled in the parliament.

I commend this bill.

Debate adjourned.

**National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020**

*Second Reading*

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (10:09): I'm rising in continuation. I began my remarks last night. When the adjournment debate interrupted my remarks, I was just drawing attention to the fact that in a recent survey, in September last year, the Australian Industry Group found that three-quarters of employers they surveyed could not
find the skilled and qualified staff they needed for the vacancies that they had. This is a damming indictment on the record of those opposite when it comes to vocational education and training. As I said yesterday, while we don't oppose the particular measures in this bill, they don't go anywhere near restoring the billions of dollars that have been cut from vocational education and training nor the close-to-$1-billion underspend in this area. We have got young people in particular, and workers who are looking at retraining later in life, desperate for an apprenticeship or a training opportunity that would give them the skills that they need to meet the vacancies that employers tell us they have. And yet we somehow can't manage to bring the people who are desperate for a job together with the employers who are desperate to employ them. That is a real mark of the failure of those opposite. It's a skills crisis that is only getting worse, because those opposite don't admit that it's happening, first of all, and have no plan to fix it.

Right across the full range of jobs that we have in our community—plumbers, carpenters, hairdressers, motor mechanics, pastry chefs—there are so many great opportunities and great careers out there, and we're not training people to take them up. Employers wanting to offer good jobs to people with these skills are not able to find skilled workers to take on. This runs the length of our country as well. It is extraordinary that nationally we have fewer Australians doing an apprenticeship or a traineeship today than we did a decade ago. And it's not concentrated in one state or territory; this is right across our country. In every state and territory we see a decline in the number of apprentices and trainees. It's even affecting our defence industry. We've heard today that, despite all the commitments about the local content on the submarine project in South Australia that those opposite originally made, we're really going to struggle to attract some of those jobs to Australia.

On top of this, in December the CEO of Weld Australia told a Senate inquiry into the Australian shipbuilding industry that the nation was not equipped to deliver the next generation of defence vessels. The submission told the Senate that the quality of trades training and the number of maritime engineers are totally inadequate to build new submarines, frigates and patrol boats. How can this be? It's not like it's a surprise that we're going to have these jobs available, that we are investing in these industries in Australia. How can it be that we are not training the Australian workforce to do the work? The Weld Australia submission went on to say that the quality of certificate III apprentices being trained was 'totally unacceptable and not of the required standards for the defence industry' and that 'repeated submissions to consecutive defence industry ministers have been ignored'. This really is as damning as it gets. It's at the heart of Australia's economic and national security interests.

Under those opposite, there are 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or a traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. Businesses can't get the skilled staff they need. More people are dropping out of courses than finishing them. There are almost two million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed—they want more hours of work—and yet the Prime Minister has no plan to fix the skills crisis that he created. He's got no plan to support jobs or lift the wages of those who are employed. As always, the Prime Minister would rather hide from the problems than face them. He thinks he can fix them with a marketing campaign rather than actually investing to train Australians for Australian jobs. The Prime Minister would rather spin, deflect and bring in celebrity ambassadors than really tackle the real issues before us. And he wants to blame young Australians and their parents and pretends that that's simply not the case. There are many people—young people, in particular, and workers mid-career who want to retrain—who would love an apprenticeship, if only they could get one.

There's no substitute for proper funding in this sector, and there's no substitute for leadership. Australia's TAFE and training system is sorely lacking in both. Consequently, I move:

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

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

(1) has failed to fix the problems in the vocational training sector; and

(2) instead has:

(a) cut TAFE and training by over $3 billion;
(b) presided over simultaneous crises of youth unemployment and skills shortages;
(c) failed business, which is struggling to fill the skilled roles they have on offer; and
(d) also failed young people desperate for work, who are unable to fill those positions because they have missed out on opportunities for training".

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

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

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (10:16): I am pleased to rise to speak on a matter of education when we have a group of students sitting up in the gallery. From here, they look quite young—probably still in primary school. I'm
sorry if I have just offended you by calling you primary school students. All of you have the options when you leave school to follow vocational education or higher education, to get an apprenticeship or to go out into the workforce. You live in a wonderful country and you’ve got opportunities available to you. So I hope that you realise that you do live in an absolutely wonderful country.

I’m really happy to speaking in support of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019. Australia’s capacity to grow, compete and thrive in an increasingly global economy is dependent on employers and all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, being able to access and use the right skills at the right time. A strong VET sector, sitting hand in hand and alongside a strong higher education sector, is critical to our economy and to helping prepare Australians for the workforce opportunities of today and the future. Equally important—I would actually say more important—is having the opportunity to acquire useful skills and to be able to pursue employment and work opportunities using those skills. That is vitally important for individual and societal wellbeing. Australia and Australians cannot afford to be left behind in this time of rapid change, a time of escalating digital transformation and disruption. We need to be adaptable and we need an accessible high-quality VET sector that is innovative, robust and responsive to industry needs and ever-emerging gaps.

The size and significance of the VET sector was highlighted in the Braithwaite report of 2016. There are 4,500 RTOs delivering 1,400 qualifications to around 4.2 million students. Private RTOs deliver VET to approximately 58 per cent of students, TAFEs deliver to about 18 per cent and community education providers deliver to nine per cent. VET is also provided by universities, schools, enterprise providers and combinations of providers. In response to the Braithwaite report of 2016, the government fully acknowledged the importance of the VET sector in Australia and for Australia. And, in a suite of actions since then, the government has undertaken the steps of implementing the recommendations from the Braithwaite report and the later Joyce report. A number of those recommendations were in relation to the VET regulator, ASQA.

This bill picks up on the recommendations regarding amending the legislative framework to ensure that the regulator works with the RTOs to lift quality in the sector, while placing only a proportionate regulatory burden on them. Of course, this is all to ensure that our RTOs are of the highest quality and are able to deliver desirable student outcomes. The changes proposed in this bill are part of the government’s $18.1 million commitment to supporting reform of the national VET regulator, including its engagement with the sector, and to ensure that its regulatory approach is fair, transparent and effective.

The bill includes a number of provisions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regulation, including strengthening registration requirements by requiring organisations to demonstrate a commitment to and capability of delivering quality training. Obviously this is key to the sector. It also clarifies that the standards in relation to VET accredited courses are ongoing standards that must be met the entire way throughout the registration period—not just at the beginning, not just at the end, not just at the time that you are audited. The bill also facilitates electronic sharing of data with prescribed bodies and streamlines sharing of data between ASQA, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and tuition assurance scheme operators. It also—and this is a critical element—enables the Secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to release information to the public about training by registered training organisations and the outcomes and experiences of students attending RTOs and employers of those students. This is an initiative that has been introduced successfully into the higher education system and is actually a vital element of transparency and a very important tool to enable students, before they make a choice as to where they go, to ascertain what other people are saying about that particular course and that particular provider. The bill also increases transparency in other ways by making public the release of audits by the regulator, so the regulator can make audit reports available.

The minister and assistant minister have been meeting with state governments and VET providers across the country and have undertaken an extensive consultation process to listen to the issues that are of most importance to providers, to industry and to students. In fact the assistant minister recently joined me in my electorate of Curtin for a roundtable dialogue with a number of VET providers who are located in Curtin. He had the opportunity to discuss their views and listen to their feedback. The government has responded to concerns raised throughout this consultation process, and this bill has responded to and addressed some of the concerns which have been raised.

One such concern raised by some stakeholders was the potential that, if ASQA released audit reports, this would have a negative impact on the sector. They queried whether the audit reports are suitable for the public domain. Because of earlier consultations with states and territories on this, care has been taken in the bill to ensure that ASQA is not required to immediately publish audit reports once the amendments in the bill commence. The government is going to continue to work with stakeholders on identifying appropriate information to include in published reports. Audit reports will be published only after this consultation phase has occurred.
Another concern stakeholders raised, which was actually based on a misunderstanding, was that a provider's registration would be able to be cancelled with immediate effect. This is not correct. The amendments in the bill do not change the natural justice requirements in the act that ensure providers are notified of ASQA's intention to cancel and that provide time for RTOs to respond to the notice. The amendments provide ASQA with flexibility and discretion in determining when cancellation would take effect, so as to minimise the impact on students, because it must be student-centric and student-focused in this regard.

The coalition government, as I said earlier, is committed to ensuring that Australians have the right skills for the workforce of today and tomorrow. We are committed to ensuring that we are equipping Australians with the skills they need for good, secure jobs. In 2019-20 we are investing over $3 billion in VET, which includes $1.5 billion given to the states and territories every year through the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development; $1.1 billion to fund the government's own skills program, including employer incentives and support for apprentices; and $0.175 billion to the states and territories via the Skilling Australians Fund to support increased apprenticeship and traineeship numbers.

The government's skills package is contributing to an increase in Commonwealth funding to VET over the budget forward estimates. Funding under the NASWD is going to grow to an expected $1.6 billion in 2022-23. Funding for the Commonwealth's own programs is expected to be about $1.3 billion by 2022-23, and funding for income-contingent VET loans is going to be about $0.6 billion in 2022-23.

I am extremely passionate about VET pathways for our students and ensuring that we have a strong and responsive VET sector. In my electorate of Curtin we have over 16,000 people undertaking VET qualifications. This is likely to continue as people look to upskill, to reskill and to adapt to changing times and needs. We need to make sure that we provide them with the pathways they need to succeed, and this bill forms part of the considered, comprehensive and vital changes being implemented by this government. We are committed to and excited about the future of VET in this country.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (10:26): Labor will not oppose the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019. The bill reforms the operations of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the VET regulator. Labor has always and will always support a strong, transparent and properly resourced regulatory framework for ASQA. The bill will strengthen the powers of the regulator to enhance student protections. It improves transparency in ASQA's audit process and will assist in moving ASQA towards a more informative and educative approach to compliance.

Key amendments will impose a new condition of registration that requires RTOs to demonstrate a commitment and the capability to deliver quality vocational education and training. They will strengthen and clarify existing ASQA powers, with stronger civil penalties and powers to make directions. They will require publication of audit reports and enable public sharing of information on RTO performance to improve transparency. They will expand ASQA's scope to adopt a more educative approach to compliance.

As the member for Sydney noted, we do have concerns about the shift to a cost-recovery model. It was not recommended in the Joyce review, and it may mean that some providers will have to pass the cost of ASQA's services on to students who can least afford it. This is just about the last thing that VET students need. Stakeholders in the sector noted their frustrations with the lack of consultation on the legislation, and there remains some uncertainty as to how many of the changes will work in practice. There is concern about making significant changes while an internal review into ASQA's operations is yet to be finalised. It is incumbent on the government to get this right. The VET sector needs to know how it will work.

I want to put on record why Labor will always support ASQA's strong regulatory framework. It's because we have seen, sadly, the sector almost ruined by scandals and rorts: students who were not even aware they had been signed up to do courses; students enticed into courses that provided scant education and no job prospects but offered enticements like free iPads. RTOs have collapsed, taking with them student dollars and leaving the students saddled with debts. I've heard story after story of young apprentices and trainees being left in the lurch by dodgy RTOs, left with no qualifications and no job, and out of pocket for thousands of dollars. It breaks their hearts and it breaks their parents' hearts.

At a time when we as a nation are screaming out for skilled workers, it's a travesty that this government has neglected the VET sector and our youth. But it is not only our youth. There are many other workers needing reskilling to get a job after they lose theirs or have been made redundant. Think of the workers in the automotive sector. They had good, solid jobs. They were highly skilled workers with decent pay and conditions. Those jobs have gone, on the whim of a Treasurer and his government. Thousands of skilled workers employed directly by the car companies themselves lost their jobs, as did many more thousands in the supply chain or services...
companies that serviced the automotive sector. Research shows that, when an industry collapses or is shut down, one-third of workers manage to get a similar job, one-third end up in casualised, less skilled, low-paying jobs and one-third never work again.

Planning for full employment, in particular in the face of sectoral change, is complicated but necessary and can be done. Reskilling and retraining are the most important parts of that puzzle for getting those workers back to work. The VET sector, TAFEs, RTOs, community colleges and group-training organisations all have a role in ensuring that we have maximum employment through skilling, reskilling and lifelong learning. In a world where people no longer have a job for life, where workers are more likely to move through the workforce and where technology changes at a rate faster than we can keep up, we must have an agile, comprehensive and valued VET sector.

I come from the Labor Party. That means that I have a vision for VET. Imagine a sector where courses are reworked to reflect new and traditional skills, where teachers are offered secure jobs with good pay, where the best of the best can be attracted to teach, where students are proud to have secured a place at a prestigious TAFE, where they have delivered qualifications that have set them up for life, where students have state-of-the-art equipment and world-class amenities, where qualifications are equally valued with the university sector, where dual qualifications may be possible across the university and TAFE sectors, where businesses compete for collaboration and opportunity, where they open their doors of expertise for people to be trained and where business does their bit for ensuring a future with a productive, skilled workforce. Imagine Australia as a world leader in vocational education and professional standards and growth.

Sadly, we do not have that. It is still just a vision. But we need a framework to set this up. We need a regulator that has a compliance role, for sure, but also a role in education, enabling, transforming and evolving the training organisations. We have a vision for TAFEs and the VET sector, one where they are vital, robust and valued. This government does not. It gives a lot of lip-service, but it doesn't really do anything useful. Yes, we support this bill, but it is just a tinkering in a sector that is crying out for significant reform.

For almost seven years the government has shown a palpable lack of leadership. We're now finally seeing some piecemeal reforms in response to a flurry of quite disconnected reviews, but it's too many wasted years with still no clear vision. The Productivity Commission says the VET system is a mess, the BCA are calling for fundamental reform, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called the government's commitment to VET 'lukewarm at best'. The Chief Scientist doubts the system is equal to the challenges posed by a rapidly-changing technological future. Business concerns in relation to skills shortages cannot be addressed with a 'business as usual' approach to skill acquisition, vocational education and TAFE.

Consider this: TAFE and vocational education funding and the number of supported students are lower now than they were over a decade ago. This is despite an increased number of jobs requiring vocational skills. There has been $3 billion in federal funds slashed from the vocational training system, and we learned last year from the federal education department's own data that the Liberal government have failed to spend $919 million of their own TAFE and training budget over the past five years. The Liberal government's $1 billion underspend included incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, support to help people finish their apprenticeships and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need. These programs are crucial for young people getting their first start in life.

The result? The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago, and we have more people dropping out of apprenticeships today than completing them. There has been an almost 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skills shortages—all that, while we have 1.9 million Australians looking for work or looking for more hours of work, and we've got three-quarters of Australian businesses saying they can't find the trained and skilled staff they need.

In my electorate of Cooper, there's an engineering firm that makes intricate metal parts for machinery, and they cannot get apprentices. The ones they have trained have gone on to great higher paid jobs as they have matured with their skills. The owner has no problem with that. He understands he is passing on knowledge and skills to the economy broadly. In fact, he is very proud of his legacy and he knows where many of his apprentices have gone. He would be happy to take on new apprentices but he can't get them. We have a textile manufacturer exporting high-end denim wear to the US and the UK who cannot get machinists and quality cutters—no-one trains them anymore.

I am a nurse. In fact, I did a Bachelor of Education as well as my nursing qualification so I could play a role in the education of future nurses, of enrolled nurses and of carers. I've had experience in both receiving and delivering quality vocational education, and it starts with a commitment to the end goal of skilled workers through collaboration with industry, trainers and government. That connection between industry training organisations and
government has broken down. In fact, in many ways, the VET sector has divided and moved away from industry. It is no longer supplying the skills that industry demand, nor is it providing the quality of skills required. In fact, the VET sector is a perfect example of market failure—where the marketisation of the sector created the provision of cheap courses that served neither the workers' interests, nor industry's interest nor the economy's interest. Everyone from the BCA through to the Australian Council of Trade Unions is calling for intervention to restart the process.

Of course, there are many wonderful registered training organisations out there that work very hard day in, day out, but unfortunately the system is failing them and they are finding it harder and harder to do their jobs. The government's response has been pathetic. It is not listening; it is tinkering. It just doesn't care.

Ms McBride (Dobell) (10:36): I rise to speak in support of the amendment moved by the member for Sydney. Labor does not oppose this bill, the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019, which seeks to reform the operation of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, the national VET regulator, to strengthen its powers, enhance protections for students and improve transparency to assist RTO compliance.

The proposed reforms largely implement recommendations of independent reviews that’ve been supported by the sector. The amendments will impose a new condition of registration that requires RTOs to demonstrate a commitment and the capability to deliver quality VET; strengthen and clarify existing ASQA powers, with stronger civil penalties and powers to make directions; require publication of audit reports and enable public sharing of information on RTO performance to improve transparency; expand ASQA’s scope to adopt a more educative approach to lifting quality in VET; and shift ASQA to a full-cost recovery model.

Stakeholders in the sector support the intention of the bill but express their frustrations with the lack of consultation on the legislation. Consequently, there is some uncertainty as to how many of the changes will work in practice. One proposal which is of particular concern to Labor is for ASQA to move to a full minister-directed cost-recovery model. This may result in some providers passing the cost of ASQA services on to students. This change contradicts the recommendations of the Joyce review which stated:

It is important that ASQA be adequately resourced to perform the guidance and educative role and to perform its role more generally. In many jurisdictions there is an understood difference between parts of the regulator's activity that should be directly funded by the regulated through cost recovery arrangements versus what are broader activities for the 'public good', and should therefore be government funded.

The Joyce review specifically noted that the 'Australian Skills Quality Authority should be specifically resourced to provide broad education and guidance to the VET sector.' We will monitor the adequacy of funding of ASQA to make sure it can perform its regulatory and educative tasks.

Labor has always backed a comprehensive regulatory compliance and education framework for ASQA. Following the large-scale rorting of VET FEE-HELP, ASQA’s work is crucial in ridding the sector of dodgy providers. Labor supports a fair and considered approach to reforms. We support changes that improve ASQA’s responsiveness to students, communities and employers but reject changes that attempt to weaken ASQA’s regulatory framework.

Such a framework is necessary to give students like Heather from Berkeley Vale in my electorate the help they need to deal with dodgy providers. Heather contacted my office because she had enrolled with an online vocational college to complete a certificate III in individual support. Heather had decided to pursue a career in aged care because she understood there were good job prospects on the coast in aged care. She paid $3,000 upfront for her course, and everything was going well until she started looking for a work placement. Her online vocational education provider had promoted itself as providing excellent work placement opportunities. Heather said that, each time she contacted an aged-care employer, they were enthusiastic about giving her a work placement, and then they’d find out which college she was enrolled with and suddenly withdraw their offer. She then started asking them directly why and eventually was told they don’t provide placements for students from that college. The college had also promised support finding a work placement but that wasn't the case. Heather said, 'I was basically told it was my responsibility to find an internship and the internship was necessary for me to complete the course.'

She decided to make an informal complaint to the VET provider with the support of my office to prompt the college to deliver on its promises and what she had paid for. She said she found the whole experience stressful and wished she had enrolled with TAFE, which was supported by the employers she wanted to complete an internship with. She was considering taking her complaint to ASQA or simply cutting her losses and moving to TAFE. She told me that she felt ripped off and that she had been misled by the college about its ability to deliver work experience, which was necessary to complete the certificate III. This is just one of the many examples of why ASQA needs stronger powers to support students like Heather to get a fair go and get what they paid for.
The unfortunate thing about this bill is that it is just another tweak from a third-term government in its seventh year not prepared to deliver genuine reform to overhaul the vocational education and training sector. It does nothing to address the damage to vocational education that has occurred under this government. They've slashed funding to TAFE and training, and we've seen a fall in apprentice numbers resulting in a shortage of tradies, apprentices and trainees. The impacts of these cuts are being felt particularly in regional and remote Australia, in places like my electorate of Dobell. I recently surveyed local small business owners and operators, and you won't be surprised that they named skills shortages as one of their major concerns for business growth. At the same time, the Central Coast youth unemployment rate, which has ranged from 9.2 per cent up to as high as 19 per cent since the late nineties, remains stubbornly high. Central Coast business owners need skilled staff. Local young people want the skills for a steady job and a secure future. The missing part of this picture is affordable, high-quality, local vocational education and training.

The Morrison government's cuts to TAFE are making it even harder for young people—and people at any stage in their working life on the coast—to get the skills they need and that local employers want. And this is a problem nationwide. While the Australian Industry Group says 75 per cent of businesses surveyed are struggling to find qualified workers they need, there are about 1.9 million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed. We are experiencing an underemployment and unemployment crisis at the same time as we are experiencing a crisis in skills. Does this government just not get it or do they just not care? Do they care about young people from the coast? Three billion dollars: that is the amount this government has cut from TAFE and training. Young people in the regions, like the Central Coast, are bearing the brunt of these cuts.

As I've said, we have a major shortage of Australian tradies, and this is happening at a time when tradies will be needed for emergency recovery from bushfires, floods and storms. Under the Liberals, there are now 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees across Australia and 37,000 fewer in New South Wales, and there is a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry and motor mechanics. The number of Australians taking up an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. There are more people dropping out of apprenticeships and traineeships than there are finishing them and gaining their qualifications. There is a nearly 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skill shortages. The Liberal government either doesn't really care about people looking for work, the unemployed, the underemployed and those seeking skills, particularly in regional remote Australia, or doesn't have the capacity to do the work that needs to be done to build better post-school education. Fiddling at the edges of the system won't address the problems that undermine vocational education and training in Australia today.

Unlike Labor, the government does not understand the critical role of TAFE as a public provider, the value in skills and apprenticeships, or the value of the hardworking and dedicated TAFE teachers. My dad was a TAFE teacher. He was a builder and engineer. He spent many years teaching at TAFE in Ultimo in Sydney and in Newcastle. He got a real sense of satisfaction and pride from teaching engineering at TAFE, the quality of the courses that were provided and the calibre of students who graduated.

In my electorate of Dobell we have two TAFE campuses: Wyong, which offers courses in plumbing, which my brother Eddie did; and electrical and automotive trades at Ourimbah, which offers courses in building and construction. Local students and young people tell me that local TAFEs are now no longer offering the range of courses they need, forcing them to commute. Higher fees and travel costs mean that many can't afford to finish their training. Face-to-face hours have also been slashed. Where courses are available locally, the facilities are aged and outdated and funding isn't being made available by the federal or New South Wales governments to provide local students with the learning environments they need for the skills of today and tomorrow. It could cost as little as $1 million to upgrade a building at Wyong TAFE so that students have the facilities which are taken for granted on other campuses in bigger cities. I committed to this in the May election, and I call on the government to match this commitment. It's urgent. The effect of competition policy and privatisation in the VET sector, coupled with chronic underfunding, has had devastating effects in communities like mine. Too often we have seen dodgy providers overload with students for a quick profit then go belly up, leaving students out of pocket and without the qualifications they need. What will it take for this government to act? It needs to act now.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (10:46): I stand to support the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019 and the amendment moved by the shadow assistant minister. Labor is not opposing the bill. We support it. There are some sensible changes in this bill. Itlargely implements the recommendations from the independent Joyce and Braithwaite reviews into the sector. It does address some of the frustrations felt by the RTOs with the existing system, and it adds to an information and education approach to compliance. There are sensible changes, and we support them.

But we have some concerns, as usual, with this government. The devil is in the detail. Firstly, the bill moves to a full cost recovery model for auditing. This goes directly against the recommendations of those independent
reviews. They have had independent reviews and taken them on board, but when it comes to costs, no, they won't follow that; instead they'll pass those costs on to the training organisations, against the recommendations of the independent reviews. Of course, what will the training organisations do? How will they recover those costs? They'll pass them on to students and families. Labor is very concerned that this full cost recovery model will push providers into passing costs on to students and that will increase the price of training. Just as we want more students, more young Australians getting into training and taking on these courses, this government is going to make it even harder by making it more expensive to get training.

The government, if it's going to say that that won't happen, needs to make sure that it doesn't happen. It needs to monitor the situation and ensure that these organisations don't do it. But given the track record of this government, I doubt that that monitoring will happen. I think what we will see is that full cost recovery will occur, training organisations will pass those costs on to students, and that will be the end of the matter. I do hope that we don't see students dropping off the perch as a result when it comes to taking on training, but I fear that could be a consequence.

We need to ensure that the reforms to the skills quality assurance system don't allow any drop in quality. In the past, we've seen this government being very slow to act on quality issues when it comes to training. That has done serious reputational damage to the sector. Over the last few years we've seen what a mess has been made of the training sector. Labor has a longstanding commitment to make national TAFE the central pillar of training in this country. TAFE has the runs on the board when it comes to providing proper training and qualifications for students. Of course it has to be funded properly, and I'll come to that. But we see what a mess has been made of training in recent years, with a number of basically sham contractors and sham organisations going belly up and leaving students in the lurch. We need to make sure that quality is looked after. We will not oppose measures that enhance student protections or address provider concerns.

At it's heart—and this is why I do support the assistant shadow minister's amendment—this bill does not come even close to fixing the real mess that this government has made of Australia's TAFE and training system. That is at the heart of this. As useful as these reforms which are before us today in this bill are, they don't really go to the heart of Australia's training system. At the heart of the training system in Australia is the lack of funding under this government.

Our country sits on the doorstep of a continent to our north that is going through one of history's greatest economic transformations. South-East Asia, Asia and India are going through massive economic transformation and we are in the box seat in this country, to take advantage. Our young people can take advantage of those opportunities that are on our doorstep not just overseas but also here in Australia. They are perfectly placed to benefit from the extraordinary growth that's going on around us, and yet under this government we have seen 150,000 fewer apprentices go through the books than previously. What an absolutely wasted opportunity under this government to provide proper training and proper apprenticeships for young people. At a time of extraordinary growth and opportunity, this government has been asleep at the wheel.

We need to be training young Australians in the skills and the qualifications that are required to meet the opportunities to our north, such as in the engineering, construction and maritime industries. There are almost too many to mention, but, unfortunately, this government has just not grasped those opportunities. It has spent the last seven years not just neglecting but destroying our TAFE and training system. If it was just a case of wilfully letting it go, that would be one thing, but it has actually have cut funding over seven years to TAFE and training in this country. The numbers involved are absolutely shocking.

As we learnt last year from the federal government's own data, the Liberals have failed to spend $919 million of their own TAFE and training budget over the past five years. That means the government budgeted nearly $1 billion for TAFE and training and they didn't spend it. They had it in the bucket to invest in TAFE and training, but thought, 'No, we don't need to spend that.' They claim it's because there has not been enough demand from students and families to take up those places. What absolute rubbish! I can tell you that in my electorate there are heaps of kids who want to take up TAFE and training opportunities, but, for all sorts of reasons, whether it's cost, availability or accessibility, they've been unable to take up those opportunities. Instead of assisting kids into these training opportunities, which will put them on the pathway of a better life, this government pocketed that money to go towards its budget numbers. It's all sitting there. It's all sitting in the government's bank account, supposedly earmarked for TAFE and training, doing nothing. And that's on top of the $3 billion that has already been ripped out of the system. We have TAFE campuses falling apart across the country because of rampant capital underinvestment by this government. We've got state governments closing campuses and ending courses all while this nearly $1 billion—$919 million—remains unspent, because there has been 'less demand than forecast'. What an absolute joke. What an absolute abrogation of the responsibility of a national government. This is neglect, pure and simple.
It's not just the decaying infrastructure or the shrinking course options. What this government has caused is a loss of faith in Australia's TAFE and training systems. I remember maybe 40 years ago, when I was a young fella, that TAFE and training was something to aspire to. People had faith in TAFE. They had faith in the technical colleges. They knew that, if you didn't want to go on the pathway to university, you got on the pathway to an apprenticeship or a trade, and TAFE was the way to get there. You could be sure that the qualifications you got would help you get a good job. You would be provided with the skills you needed to get a good job. This government, through its wilful neglect of the sector, has absolutely destroyed that reputation. We have, by the defence industry—just as the defence budget is increasing—a submission from Australian shipbuilding to say the quality of certificate III apprentices currently being produced was 'totally unacceptable and not of the required standards for the defence industry'. What an absolute indictment of the current training standards under this government that the defence and shipbuilding industry feels that the current levels of training are not up to standard to work on Australian manufacturing. That is an absolute disgrace.

This hasn't happened by accident. This government's $1 billion underspend has been on incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, support to help finish their apprenticeships and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need. That's what they've underspent on. They've underspent on programs that are meant to help get kids in these schemes. They've underspent the money. I don't understand their methodology at all.

I come to my own state. All signs show that the TAFE and training system in Tasmania is not working. As I've said, on a national level we have 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees. In Tasmania between 2013 and 2018—that's a period covered entirely by Liberal governments, both here in Canberra and in Tasmania—we had a decrease of 12.52 per cent in apprentices. There have been 12.52 per cent fewer apprentices over those five years than previously. That is 1,200 fewer apprentices being trained in the skills that our state needs to continue to grow.

What happens when you don't train young people in plumbing, carpentry, electrical engineering and all the skills you need for construction and road building and to keep the economy moving? What happens when you don't have the skills being trained locally? You bring the labour in from overseas. If employers can't get young people trained in these jobs, they put their hand up and say to the government, 'We need temporary visas to bring people in from overseas.' And that's an absolute indictment when we have the current levels of youth unemployment. We see workers coming in from overseas on temporary visas taking up jobs that young Australians should be getting qualifications in. It's an absolute failure of policy.

We have a mass shortage of critical trades—carpenters, plumbers and mechanics—and unacceptable unemployment and underemployment rates in my state. In September last year Tasmania's jobless rate was 6.7 per cent and our underemployment rate—as we know, they are people who may be employed for one, two or five hours a week and desperately want more work—was 10.6 per cent. That is the worst in Australia. I remind you that this is the worst in Australia at a time when the Liberal government in Tasmania is telling Tasmanians that we're in a golden age. We're in a golden age in Tasmania, yet underemployment in my state is 10.6 per cent!

Our workforce participation rate is 60.3 per cent. That means that a lot of people are looking for work and more work. It's worse if you're a woman. In the 12 months before September 2019 more than 5,000 full-time jobs were lost in my state. At a time when we have a $919 million underspend in TAFE and training, 150,000 fewer apprentices and a record number of people coming in on temporary work visas, we have seen 5,000 full-time jobs lost in my state. It doesn't take a genius to work out that if we train more local young people in the skills for local jobs then we won't need to bring as many people in from overseas.

We have seen interstate and overseas plasterers, plumbers and electricians brought in to work on the Royal Hobart Hospital upgrades. We have seen the Cattle Hill Wind Farm in my electorate and a lot of other major projects bring in workers from interstate and overseas because they can't source locally skilled labour. That locally skilled labour should be provided by local TAFEs and training organisations. What a wasted opportunity by both the state and federal Liberal governments.

Because of our failing TAFE system and the poor quality of our VET courses too many people are unable to explore the pathways that will provide them with the foundation on which they can build their skills and find new jobs in an economy that is changing and resulting in the disappearance of low-skilled jobs. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has noticed the local supermarket's push to get people to use the self-serve check-outs. You might think it is a small thing, but for every person who goes through a self-serve check-out that's a person not being served by someone with a job. If you don't go to a cashier and you do it yourself, that's one less job. I'm not the only one—I make a point of never using a self-serve check-out. No matter how inconvenient it is, I make sure I stand at a check-out with a cashier. And when the supervisors come up to me and say, 'Sir, would you like to use our self-serve check-out?' I say: 'No, thanks. I'm protecting jobs. I'll stay here.' Hopefully, if more people do that, that will force those supermarkets to put on more cashiers and stop this rampant use of auto check-outs, because I know what's happened on the mainland. In Sydney, where my brother lives, they used to have self-serve check-
outs and they'd have enough people to manage it. Of course, what they have done now is cut all the staff. All the staff have gone. All the cashiers on the check-outs have gone. Now they've got long queues on the self-serve check-outs, so it's no quicker than it used to be. People have been trained to use a self-serve check-out; meanwhile the supermarkets are saving millions of dollars in lost jobs.

The point here is that these low-skilled jobs that employed people—good jobs for people with low skills—are going. They're being automated out. Automation is taking over, and they're going. So, in conclusion, I would just like to say we support this bill before the House, but I do support the assistant shadow minister. It's a very good amendment. This government needs to be held to account for its dismal failure towards Australia's TAFE and training system.

Dr ALY (Cowan) (11:01): I've been a TAFE teacher, a university lecturer and a university professor and I've managed some registered training organisations in the past. Let me say, I'm very proud of Australia's world-class training and education system. I think that that's particularly reflected in the case of a constituent of Cowan, Mr Anthony Di Cristofaro, who lives not very far from me. Last year he was awarded the Apprentice of the Year at the WA Training Awards. Anthony took the time to write to me at length about his story and to tell me about his struggles to get an apprenticeship, what he went through and the incredible resilience that he showed in sticking with his apprenticeship. Just two weeks before he started his apprenticeship, his mother was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Anthony has three children, so he became a primary carer for his mother as well as looking after his three children while also trying to complete this apprenticeship. He is now a very successful carpenter. Anthony's story reminds us of the importance of a world-class training system and the importance of ensuring that we have a well-regulated training system so that people like Anthony who want to retrain, who want to become skilled, can do that.

I also want to speak to this as a mother. As a mother, let me say this: there is absolutely nothing more disheartening than watching your child's dreams disintegrate and feeling powerless to do anything about it. I see that when I have fathers coming to my office who have sons or daughters who want to take up apprenticeships and they want nothing more than to see their child succeed in acquiring those skills. But I hear these stories of how these young people have had to give up their dreams because they can't access the apprenticeships and the traineeships that they want to access because of cuts to our public training system.

This bill goes some way to achieving some form of regulation in the training system. It imposes a new condition of registration that requires registered training organisations to demonstrate a capability and commitment to deliver quality vocational education and training, which we on this side know is very important. Labor, of course, supports a strong, robust and effective vocational education and training system.

The bill strengthens and clarifies existing ASQA powers, with stronger civil penalties and powers to make directions. Importantly, the reforms follow some widespread frustration among registered training organisations about the way in which ASQA currently conducts some of its audits. These include concerns about an audit culture that focuses on minor issues that don't necessarily impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and concerns about the variability of treatment of providers by different auditors. I have another example from my electorate of Cowan. In this case an RTO in the construction industry failed compliance with ASQA on some minor admin and website errors. As a consequence, they were deregistered. The impact of that was that, in this particular case, 140 students who completed their training were left without a qualification.

I certainly welcome a more robust approach to RTOs and to quality in our vocational education system. Labor's position on this is that we will always continue to back a strong and comprehensive regulatory compliance and education framework for ASQA, particularly following the widespread roiling of the VET FEE-HELP program. We recognise ASQA's vital work in attempting to rid the sector of low-quality and unscrupulous providers, but, there needs to be some form of standardisation in the way in which ASQA approaches its duties to ensure that providers that are providing quality vocational education and training aren't punished for minor errors and that compliance is based on the quality of education and training that's being provided.

While we support a fair and considered approach to the ASQA reforms and we support changes that improve ASQA's capacity to ensure a responsiveness to students, communities and employers, we will not support any changes that attempt to weaken their regulatory framework. We'd like to monitor the implementation of these and other forthcoming amendments to the regulatory arrangements. The shadow minister has spoken about that at length as well.

In talking about the importance of vocational education and training to Australia's education system and its contribution to education, skills and employment, it would be remiss of me not to mention this government's failure to adequately fund and support our public vocational education and training system. Members before me have spoken about the decrease in the number of apprenticeships and traineeships. In my electorate of Cowan the
The largest number of people employed are in the trades. That has fallen quite dramatically since this government has taken power. I know that is not due to natural attrition. I know that because, as I said in my opening remarks, I have parents and young people coming into my office seeking out apprenticeships and traineeships, seeking out vocational education and training courses that are no longer available at their local TAFE. As a university professor I used to get prospective students come to me. The first thing I would say to them is, 'Why do you want to do a university degree?' I held, and I still stand by this, that not everybody needs to go to university, not everybody wants to go to university and not everybody should go to university. We need a strong vocational education and training sector to train a whole range of skills that aren't provided by the university sector. I gave the example earlier of Anthony, who was the WA Apprentice of the Year. He started out studying for a degree in psychology, I believe, and then changed to commerce. Then he decided that university just wasn't for him. That's not an unusual story. I see a lot of young people and older people who start a university degree and decide that it isn't for them. They want to do a trade. They want to acquire a skill. They rely on our vocational education and training sector to be able to acquire what they need to enter the workforce and be productive and participate in our economic life. It is vitally important that we continue to provide that service for people who are looking for jobs, for people who want to acquire a skill and for people who want to enter a trade, particularly in the construction areas. This is what we need. This is what it means to have a comprehensive education system that affords an opportunity for every Australian to participate fully in the social and economic aspects of our society. It shouldn't just be about universities. It should also be about vocational education and training.

A strong economy requires a skilled workforce. It requires a workforce that is able to meet the demands of industry, and our VET sector is best placed to do that. It is best placed to be really responsive to the demands of industry as those demands change. We need to support our VET sector, particularly public vocational education and training, to ensure that students walk away with a high-quality education that gives them the best opportunity for meaningful employment. I've said this before in this House and continue to hold by this: vocational education and training is an important pillar of our community. It's not just part of our education system; it's part of something that Australia can be proud of. We export education, we export VET, and we should continue to do so.

But I want to make mention of this government's failure to ensure that we have a strong public vocational education and training sector. As somebody who worked at TAFE, I continue to keep up with people that I worked with at TAFE: teachers and managers at the different TAFE campuses where I worked before I entered the university sector. What I'm hearing from them is that many TAFEs have had to reduce the number of course offerings they have. This has meant that they have had to lay off some of the teachers or casualise a lot of their workforce. This is a direct result of this government's track record on training, which, quite frankly, has been appalling—quite appalling.

To me, it appears very clear that the government don't respect vocational education and training, at least not in the public sense. They don't know how to support our VET sector, and it shows. It shows. They have a strong record of cuts to the VET sector, to our public TAFEs. They have a strong record of failing to ensure a robust VET sector. While the bill, which we are supporting here today, goes some way, in terms of the regulation of private RTOs, it does nothing to restore the public vocational education and training sector, which, at one point, was a real sense of pride for Australia.

I remember travelling—about eight years ago, now—to the Gulf States on a business mission and talking to people there who were keen to tap into our expertise on vocational education and training, particularly Australia's TAFE model, the VET sector model, of being responsive to industry needs, and the construction of our training programs. I'm afraid that that's gone. I'm afraid that we've lost the capital that we had to export education, to be a world leader in vocational education and training. And I'm afraid that it's as a direct result of this government's failure to adequately fund the TAFE sector and their ignorance of the TAFE system.

We have fewer apprenticeships and traineeships available today. As I said, while we support these reforms, because they contribute to a more robust regulatory system for RTOs, Australia still has a long way to go to regain the reputation we had as a world leader in the VET sector. I implore this government to turn their attention to the public TAFE system, to recognise the importance of VET in our education system for our employment sector, and, particularly, to give hope to those young people who want to take up a trade, who want to learn a skill and who want to contribute to our economy.

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (11:15): I rise to sum up the debate on the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019. I'd like to thank all colleagues who have contributed to the debate on this bill, which will ensure that the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, is positioned to safeguard and enhance the reputation and integrity of Australia's vocational education and training, or VET, sector. I'd also like to thank the
Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills for its consideration and scrutiny comments on the bill, contained in Scrutiny digest 1 of 2020.

Last year this government committed $18.1 million to support the reform of ASQA. These reforms will ensure that regulation of the VET sector is transparent and effective and is aligned with modern best-practice models of governance and engagement. This bill is the first tranche of changes to ASQA, which respond to the recommendations from the 2018 Braithwaite review of the regulator's primary legislation and the 2019 Joyce review of VET, to ensure the legislation is fit for purpose.

This bill supports ASQA's move towards transparency, ensuring it is a balanced regulator that builds quality and capacity in the VET sector. These measures ensure the regulator has the necessary powers to scrutinise registered training organisations, RTOs, and ensure that only those RTOs genuinely committed and adequately resourced to deliver quality training to students will be allowed to operate. Where ASQA must cancel an RTO's registration for noncompliance with the VET quality framework, the amendments provide ASQA with flexibility and discretion in determining when cancellation or refusal of registration takes effect so as to minimise the impact on students. In practice the amendments will allow providers in some circumstances to continue operating for a period while students complete their training or arrange to transfer to another provider.

It is critical for ASQA to follow standard regulatory procedures so RTOs are afforded the principles of natural justice and decisions are supported by sound evidence. There are existing natural justice requirements in the NVETR Act that ensure providers are notified of ASQA's intention to cancel and provide time for RTOs to respond to the notice. These remain unchanged by these amendments, and the RTOs will continue to have access to appeal processes.

Improved transparency of regulatory actions will occur with the public release of RTO audit reports once an appropriate format for these reports has been consulted on and agreed. This important measure will improve VET sector confidence in the ability of the regulator to make appropriate, consistent and proportionate regulatory decisions. Expanding information entered on the publicly available national register and enabling ASQA to share information electronically with those responsible for administering laws to the VET sector will assist students to make informed enrolment decisions and provide employers with better information about training quality. Further technical amendments in the bill support ASQA to be a more responsive and efficient regulator and facilitate improved engagement with the sector.

I understand the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash, has written to the chair of the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills, Senator Helen Polley, to thank the committee for its scrutiny comments, made in Scrutiny digest 1 of 2020. The minister has responded to the committee's request for advice in relation to several issues in the bill. Having considered the observations and comments made on the bill, no amendments were considered appropriate.

This bill is the first step in a suite of measures the government is bringing forward to enhance ASQA's regulatory approach and ensure Australia's ongoing capacity to deliver quality VET training to meet the needs of a growing, skilled economy. Once again, I thank all the members for their engagement, feedback and scrutiny of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [11:23]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
AYES

Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakoumis, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Cook, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Third Reading

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (11:27): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

COMMITTEES

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee

Report

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (11:27): In accordance with standing order 216, on behalf of the Privileges and Members' Interests Committee I present the report concerning the registration and declaration of members' interests during 2019.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum

The SPEAKER (11:28): For the information of honourable members, from 13 to 16 January this year, our parliament hosted the 28th annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, known as the APPF, here at Parliament House. The APPF includes parliamentarians from countries in the Asia-Pacific region with which Australia has strong economic, social and strategic ties. It provides a platform to promote a stronger regional identity and cooperation focusing on peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity. The countries attended include Australia's major trade and strategic partners in Asia and those bordering the Pacific Ocean, on both the western and eastern sides. Over 340 delegates and participants from 19 APPF member countries and 10 observer nations attended the meeting. It was particularly pleasing that parliamentarians from a number of smaller Pacific island countries were able to attend, some with the financial assistance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Australian Parliament was very well represented by a delegation of 27 members and senators: the members for Dawson, Newcastle, Lyne, Moore, Perth, Solomon, Curtin, Page, Cooper, Groom, McEwen, Hinkler, Lalor, Bean, Calwell, North Sydney and Menzies, as well as Senators Askew, Bilyk, Ciccone, Fawcett, Hughes, Rennick, Dean Smith, Stoker and Van.

The delegation was led by the member for Menzies, the Father of the House, the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP. The delegation and the forum more broadly benefited from the member for Menzies's extensive experience as a parliamentarian, and he fulfilled an incredibly important role chairing the drafting committee of the conference. The President of the Senate was represented by the Deputy President, Senator Sue Lines. I am particularly grateful to her for her work, and I'm grateful to all my parliamentary colleagues for giving up their time during mid-January to come and participate at the important conference.

Under the theme 'Parliamentary partnerships for 2020 and beyond', delegates discussed gender equality, political and security matters, economic and trade matters and enhancing regional cooperation. For the information of the House, I'm going to table the meeting outcomes, which are the joint communique, the report of the meeting of women parliamentarians and the 19 resolutions agreed by the meeting.

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The meeting also expressed its condolences to Japan over the recent death of APPF Honorary President, the Hon. Yasuhiro Nakasone. I'm honoured to have been appointed as President of the APPF until the next meeting, to be held in South Korea in January next year and, in this role, I've been tasked with reviewing certain aspects of the APPF rules and organisation. Many visiting delegations expressed their sympathy over the awful bushfire situation but felt that the conference had been a great success despite Canberra and Parliament House being surrounded by smoke on many of the days.

I want to again thank the members and senators for their contributions. Without their help, the conference would not have been the great success it was. I table the required documents.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (11:32): on indulgence—I congratulate you and all the officials and office-bearers of the parliament for the wonderful APPF conference which was held here in Canberra in January. This was a very significant event for countries that border the Pacific. Now in its 28th year, this conference brings together members of parliament from all of those Pacific rim nations. Importantly, this year it brought together—as you
said, Sir—delegations of observers from many of our Pacific island partner countries. It shows an opportunity for this parliament and, through this parliament, the people of Australia to reach out not just to the nations that are well formed and have been part of this organisation for such a long period of time but also to our Pacific neighbours. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on the chairing of this conference here in Canberra, with some 300 delegates from some 19 member countries and 10 observer countries. I also congratulate the other members of the Australian delegation—including Senator Lines and Senator Dean Smith, who co-chaired the drafting committee with me—for the work that was undertaken during the conference.

I make this broad observation, Mr Speaker: in the world in which we are at the present time and the one which we are increasingly moving into, the role of the Australian parliament and the role of individual parliamentarians in playing a part in the national and international diplomacy which is required of this country is going to become more and more critical into the future. Conferences, seminars, meetings such as the APPF and other occasions in which Australian parliamentarians join with others, such as the ASEAN meetings and visits to other countries, I believe have perhaps been undervalued by the parliament broadly in terms of the contribution we can make to our national prosperity and national security. And I think we, as a group—if I can say that, Mr Speaker—need to rethink, on a bipartisan basis, our role in terms of parliamentarians in our outreach, particularly to those countries and nations within our own area. For example, there's currently a renewed emphasis on the countries of the Pacific and Australia's role in relation to those countries. And there's a real place for members of this parliament, on perhaps a more-organised basis than we have used in the past, to look at our role as, in effect, diplomats for Australia and how we can advance the interests of this country, the national interests of Australia, in terms of our relationship with those within our immediate area.

We know that the world in which we live has become much more uncertain than it was even five or 10 years ago. That's unlikely to change. Those trends are there, and it's likely that they will continue into the future. So we, individually as members of parliament and also in the context of this particular discussion—as members of delegations that go to these countries and these events—can play a much greater role. I think there's a role there for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to be more engaged in an interface with us as members of parliament in that regard, and I thank the department for the advice they gave, particularly to me as chair of the drafting committee, during that process.

I will cease there. I was once told by a judge, when I was at the bar, 'Your argument is not enhanced by its repetition!' So I won't repeat it, except to say that this is very important. I congratulate you, Sir, on becoming the president, following the tragic death of Mr Nakasone, the former Prime Minister of Japan, who was the powerhouse in starting this organisation almost three decades ago. He was the honorary president for many, many years. But, with his death, some changes to the constitution and the rules have meant that you, Sir, are now the president at least for the next year, and of course there'll be another conference in South Korea probably in the early part of 2021. I hope there will be a well-attended Australian delegation to work on this important relationship that we have with all the countries of the Pacific. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Menzies and, again, on behalf of the House I want to thank the member for Menzies for his contribution, which really did help make the conference a great success. As I said, as Father of the House, your extensive experience not only was of benefit to the Australian delegation but, importantly, was something that those visiting parliamentarians valued as well, particularly during the drafting committee. I want to also grant indulgence to the member for Lalor and thank her, in advance of her speech, for everything she did, and I give her indulgence to address the floor.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:37): on indulgence—It's a little bit like a self-congratulatory club! But thank you, member for Menzies, for the work you did in leading the delegation. It was an absolute honour to be part of a delegation hosting the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in its 28th year. I want to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on taking on the role and on your election as president. And, while the 28th APPF covered a raft of topics, as you’ve both mentioned, I want to raise the important work the forum did for women in our region. For the second time, the APPF hosted a meeting of women parliamentarians. This meeting had many speeches, including from the first female Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives. The central meeting was chaired by our own Deputy President, Senator Sue Lines, who did a superb job across the conference reaching out to other women and reaching out to other countries to ensure that we were building relationships outside of the conference room through the working parties.

Among the other important things that happened there was that the delegates noted that, while member countries were making progress in this space for women, there is still more work to be done—in economic participation, in education and health, in political empowerment in particular and of course in eradicating violence against women. The APPF passed three resolutions particular to women: promoting gender equality for a sustainable development and shared prosperity; realising the 2030 agenda for sustainable development; improving
access for women and girls to education, innovation and technology—and I know my colleagues here today are interested in that space—and also promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in decision-making at all levels in our countries.

These resolutions were drafted by the working group of the women parliamentarian meeting that was chaired proudly by the member for Calwell, a long-serving female parliamentarian here. This also calls on the APPF to consider its own rules to ensure gender equity in the executive committee. This was a pivotal moment in the history of the APPF, and the women's meeting, which has only been running for two years, worked collaboratively to have that agenda item progressed. I look forward, Mr Speaker, as do my colleagues, to working with you as president to progress this agenda at the 29th APPF in the republic of Korea in Seoul. I will also mention the importance of having our Pacific neighbours there with observer status at this conference. We also on this side look forward to working with you, Mr Speaker, as president to ensure that their participation is enhanced and that they're supported.

The wonderful achievements can be attributed to the fact that this APPF had over 40 women parliamentarian delegates, including an all-female delegation from Mexico that was an absolute delight. As someone who has been to previous conferences, particularly one conference where sadly I was the only female in the Australian delegation, it was an absolute pleasure to work with so many of our colleagues across the chamber at this conference. I was pleased to see the respect that the Australian female parliamentarians were given in our briefings and the support we were given by the member for Menzies and from you, Mr Speaker, in pushing our agenda forward. I look forward to perhaps participating in the next APPF conference. I'd join with both of you in thanking all of the staff from this parliament and all of the public servants in the department of foreign affairs who worked so hard to make what could have been a compromised conference so successful.

The SPEAKER (11:41): I thank both the members for Lalor and Menzies. A final point I'll make now, which the member for Lalor and the member for Menzies aptly made, is that it couldn't have been possible without the delegation but also critically without the work of members of the Department of the House of Representatives, Department of Parliamentary Services and Department of the Senate. It might interest honourable members—and of course we want to thank them, and I want to thank them, and we've done that privately—that quite a number of members volunteered their time to be part of the conference through January, and they deserve a very big congratulations and recognition for that wonderful contribution. I thank the House.

**BILLS**

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019

Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019

Second Reading

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:43): I rise to speak on the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019. I move:

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

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

(1) notes that:

(a) evidence provided to the Senate indicates that NBN Co reduced regional investment by $200 million between 2018 and 2022 relative to the 2019 Corporate Plan;

(b) this decrease in regional investment was concealed in the 2020 NBN Co Corporate Plan; and

(c) NBN Co has given three contradictory and unsatisfactory explanations as to why investment in regional networks was reduced;

(2) further notes significant concerns that the Government is introducing a broadband tax in the name of regional funding, while reducing regional investment in broadband networks in the NBN 2020 Corporate Plan; and

(3) calls on the Government to restore the funding allocation for investment in regional NBN networks".

Labor supports the establishment of a statutory infrastructure provider regime outlined in this bill. The proposed framework will provide additional certainty that, as we move beyond the initial rollout of the National Broadband Network, every Australian premise can continue to access a high-speed broadband connection. This is a natural extension of the arrangements Labor put in place nearly 10 years ago through a statement of expectations.
issued to the NBN board. The statement of expectations required NBN Co to make high-speed broadband available to all Australians regardless of where they live or work. This will continue to happen and this bill provides that certainty.

It is not lost on anybody that after more than a decade in power through the 1990s and 2000s the Liberal-National Party had left Australia in a broadband backwater. It was Labor who carved out the principle that all Australians should have access to modern communications infrastructure. It was Labor who stood up for the regions not with rhetoric but with a considered policy to deliver universal access to high-speed broadband, universal pricing and investment to make that a reality. The Liberals and Nationals tried to prevent it. They did nothing to promote competition. They did nothing to promote investment. They privatised Telstra as a vertically integrated monopoly. The only thing promoted by the Liberals over that sorry period was stagnation and higher prices in our regions. Labor, in government, put an end to that mediocrity.

One of the things that galls me is that the government is today seeking to progress a broadband tax—supposedly, in the name of regional funding. Yet we recently learned that in the 2020 corporate plan, regional investment in the NBN was actually reduced by $200 million. This is despite NBN Co incorporating revenues from this unlegislated levy into their corporate plan. It raises a legitimate question: why is this government progressing a broadband tax in the name of regional funding while cutting regional NBN investment at the same time? Why did the government try to conceal this funding reduction in the NBN corporate plan? The fact is that the information that would've revealed this funding reduction was left out, despite it being regularly published in the previous corporate plans. We only found out because the Senate sought access to the data, which clearly shows a $200 million reduction of capital expenditure in the fixed wireless network.

The legislation we in the House are considering today seeks to introduce a new broadband tax on the telecommunications sector. On 28 November 2019, the Senate referred the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry. But before I go into the bill, it’s important we cover some of the history.

Prior to the 2013 election, Malcolm Turnbull and others were encouraging private companies to compete directly with the government owned entity. They didn't do this out of principle; they did this because they wanted to wreck the NBN. They wanted it to fail because it was a Labor conception. Then, 10 days after the 2013 election, TPG announced it wanted to expand a fibre-to-the-basement network in inner city areas to up to half a million homes. As you would expect, this created alarm, both within NBN Co and subsequently within the government. They understood—as anyone with common sense understood—that if TPG began cherry-picking profitable parts of the fixed-line NBN footprint, then the economics of the project would come unstuck. This was not in the interests of taxpayers, and it was not in the public interest, given that the NBN ship had already sailed. The concept of what was to become the proposed broadband levy was given to the government initiated Vertigan review in 2014, which examined different options to offset NBN’s losses in fixed-wireless and satellite networks.

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts claimed that the government adopted this levy because it was a recommendation of the Vertigan review. He said:

The legislative package to be introduced shortly implements the recommendations of the Vertigan Review which reported in 2014.

That is not entirely accurate. Allow me to quote what the Vertigan review actually said:

By far the best option for funding any ongoing subsidy would be through consolidated revenue. Among other advantages, that would allow Parliament and the public to assess in an ongoing way the benefits of using taxpayer funds for this purpose rather than others. However, should that option not be adopted, the panel recommends that, if an ongoing subsidy is required and its minimum amount can be reliably determined, a single, annual, broad-based industry levy, covering both voice and broadband services, be imposed to fund that subsidy. This would be similar to the current arrangements for the Universal Service Obligation (USO), which are outlined in Appendix 3.

So let’s make two things clear. First, the Vertigan review did not recommend a levy on the industry and consumers as its first preference. Its preference was funding from consolidated revenue. Second, the levy recommended by the review was a broad based levy. The bill before us does not propose a broad based levy. What the government have done is design a levy with a narrow base in order to produce a high charge. They have done this for the purpose of preventing competition. Then the industry has had to put up with the unedifying spectacle of the minister writing an op-ed pretending that this bill is about being pro-competition. This brings me to an important point.

The coalition has built an inferior NBN for $51 billion. It has cost more to build than the original fibre network. It costs more to operate. It offers slower speeds. It’s less reliable. It requires more funding to upgrade. It would not have been necessary under the original plan. It is more exposed to competition. As of a fortnight ago, Australia
had fallen to 68th in the world for broadband speeds and fourth-last in the OECD, according to the Speedtest Global Index.

Even as recently as yesterday, the ACCC took what can only be described as a direct swing at the performance of fibre to the node, following its latest broadband speed monitoring report. I point out that fibre to the node is actually the most prevalent fixed-line technology in regional Australia. The ACCC stated—and it wasn't subtle; it was very direct:

… many high speed fibre to the node (FTTN) connections still don't come close to performing as promised. The results show that about a quarter of those consumers on FTTN connections, who are paying for high-speed 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps plans, still did not receive anywhere near their full plan speeds, at any time.

Mr Sims, the ACCC chairman, went on to say:

This Measuring Broadband Australia data clearly shows that too many consumers with FTTN connections are not receiving the speeds they are paying for.

So the very valid question that Australian consumers should be asking, including those in rural and regional Australia is: why has this government built a $51 billion network that is still not delivering the speeds that Australians are paying for?

I note that at a speech to CEDA last year the minister said:

We are going to need to rely on and boost competition to make sure that our fixed networks continue to upgrade and stay in tune with world developments.

Yet the legislation proposed by the minister directly contradicts that statement. It actually achieves the opposite. It's the sort of doublespeak that the industry is sick and tired of and that consumers are sick and tired of. The industry expects better than this.

The government is asking this sector to believe this legislative package, headlined by a new broadband tax, should be seen as a gift to improve competition. While it might be inconvenient to concede that the primary reason the government instigated the levy was to deter TPG from cherrypicking inner-city basements, given the negative impact this would have on the economics of the NBN, most of industry and Labor support that objective. I've always been upfront about that. I believe it's in the interests of taxpayers and in the long-term interests of the project. Yet, from the outset, the government have been too insecure to acknowledge this as an objective of their policy. Instead, to give the appearance of having a more neutral purpose, the levy was expanded into greenfields networks.

The greenfields networks don't cause revenue leakage to NBN Co. In fact, if it wasn't for operators like OptiComm, peak funding for the NBN build would be higher than it is today because the NBN would have had to fund construction in those areas by itself. How does this supposedly pro-market, pro-investment Liberal Party reward them? With a tax on their operations and on their customers. Furthermore, the levy was also extended to enterprise markets. Not only is there no revenue leakage for NBN Co but we have a situation where NBN Co often causes revenue leakage to the incumbent. This was captured well in a submission by Optus, which noted:

… the provision of services to enterprise and government customers over non-NBN networks does not displace any NBN Co revenue or preclude NBN Co from making sufficient revenue from its metro connections to internally cross-subsidy the fixed wireless and satellite networks.

Labor's focus was on introducing a legislative amendment to help grandfather existing greenfields networks built before 1 July 2019 until the policy could be revisited at a later time. We did not consider the retrospective application of the levy to be fair, as greenfields did not pass the test of causing revenue leakage to NBN Co.

So, as I recently noted, I was surprised to see the minister, in an opinion piece, characterise this exemption as a pro-competitive measure agreed between the government and Labor. It is almost as though the government, which has no credibility on this matter, is trying to cling to Labor and claim that we're on some sort of unity ticket when it comes to competition policy. The fact is this: the greenfield exemption was a Labor amendment that had the backing of crossbench senators. To imply that it was worked up and somehow agreed between the major parties is a disingenuous description of what occurred. The government chose to adopt this amendment because Labor had secured the votes to pass it. Further, if the government considers the ALP amendment to be pro-competitive then what does that say about the original bill?

On that note, I'll run through some of the comments made by the industry itself—firstly, from Vodafone:

Not only will the RBS perpetuate the trend of opaque and anticompetitive telecommunications policy, it will chill investment in both fixed and mobile telecommunications infrastructure …

Senator Urquhart, at the Senate committee's public inquiry on the bill, asked Opticom:

… Will the broadband levy increase or decrease the incentives that you have to invest?—
Opticom—
... It would decrease.

Again, Senator Urquhart, at the hearing, asked of Telstra:
... will the proposed levy increase or decrease the incentives that private sector carriers have to invest in their own fibre infrastructure?—

Telstra—
... I think logically it would decrease those incentives ...

In its submission to the Senate inquiry, Vocus stated:

The likely effect of limiting the RBS charge base exclusively to fixed-line high-speed broadband services will be to further incentivise private-sector investment in mobile and fixed-wireless services (which will increasingly be capable of undercutting NBN prices, as they will not be subject to the RBS levy), and to further disincentivise investment in fixed-line services ...

Internet Australia, in its submission, stated:

In many respects the new RBS is anti-competitive in structure and scope, and designed more to prop-up the NBN funding regime than to enable open and transparent infrastructure competition to improve and advance broadband service availability in regional and remote areas.

I now want to run through Labor's position on the bills.

For starters, Labor supports the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill. By and large, it's sensible, and, for the reasons I outlined earlier, Labor will support it. The broadband levy that is being proposed by this government is highly regrettable. The criticisms levelled at the government's levy design by the ACCC, the Productivity Commission and industry are fair criticisms. It is distortionary. It is anti-competitive. It has been poorly designed. It does present legitimate implementation issues. It is all of those things. That is why Labor pursued an amendment—which has been incorporated into the bill—to reduce the impact of the levy on greenfield consumers. But I want to put on the record that we do have outstanding concerns about the levy, as do many others in the sector.

Our first concern is a lack of transparency in relation to the modelling upon which this levy is based. Explanations given by public officials about why the model has not been updated have been unsatisfactory. I genuinely do not understand why the government simply don't do this. There's broad agreement that the modelling on which the levy is based is out of date. They've had two solid years to update it, and at every opportunity that reasonable request has been ignored. The BCR issued its first consultation in May 2015, with the government responding in December 2016. As a result, the legislation we are now debating is based on work performed half a decade ago when NBN's fixed-wireless and satellite network rollouts were still in their infancy. Today, some five years later, the fixed-wireless and satellite networks are largely complete. The real-world costs are better understood, particularly in relation to fixed wireless, which has been more expensive than originally envisaged. The existing costings are out of date, and there is general agreement that they should be updated.

Taking all this into account, Labor will introduce an amendment in the Senate to require an updated RBS model to be produced. We will consider putting this exercise in the hands of the ACCC. The modelling should be independent, transparent and based on the best available data. Stakeholders have a right to expect the highest standard of transparency in relation to a taxation bill. There was broad support for this additional transparency during the public inquiry.

The second concern relates to the grant-making mechanism. Both NBN and non-NBN networks will be subject to a levy that is collected by the ACMA and then paid back to NBN Co through a departmental grant. In accounting terms, we are not talking a trivial amount of money. All up, the levy is $800 million per annum. The question is: what happens when that $800 million flows into NBN? What we do know is that NBN Co does not need $800 million a year to operate and upgrade the fixed-wireless and satellite network going forward. It does not even need close that to that amount. The question is: where does that access money go? The answer is that the surplus, in effect, goes wherever NBN Co wants it to go. The money comes in and likely will be washed through an account with an endless pool of historical non-commercial losses. An NBN accountant, presumably, then takes out a pen, signs a piece of paper and declares the excess revenue offset a historical loss that NBN Co probably never intended to recover anyway. Then the money goes straight back into the core business.

There is no requirement to spend the surplus tax revenue on regional networks, even though that is the impression this bill has created for some stakeholders. If NBN Co wants to direct it towards the HFC cost blowouts, then that's where it will go. If they want to spend it on IT systems, that's where it will go. In practice, this all appears to be permitted.
This is not a criticism of NBN Co itself. Rather, it is an observation that the bill before the House is not a regional funding mechanism. It is an administrative charade. It deters cherrypicking and raises a bit of new revenue. Yet look at how much legislative complexity and red tape has been created to give the illusion that it is a funding mechanism. How did the government manage to develop such a nonsense? This is the same directionless overreach that undid the spectrum review. It's the same mediocrity that plagued the USO review, whose only output was a new acronym. The sector deserves better than this. Consumers deserve better. Regional Australia deserves better.

The final concern I have is about who bears the burden of the enterprise levy. This government is imposing a wholesale tax on telecommunications providers supplying enterprise markets. Enterprises are arguably the only bunch getting a good deal out of the NBN under the multi-technology mix. Prices for enterprises are coming down because of NBN having entered an already crowded market of competitors, yet the best idea this government could come up with was a levy on the incumbent telcos. The competition in the enterprise market means that providers are strongly competing to win customers or to avoid losing them. This makes it difficult for the levy to be passed through to enterprises, which have more of a capacity to pay it. NBN Co stated before the public inquiry that they do not price the levy into their enterprise products because their pricing is dictated by the market. This suggests that the industry will likely bear the brunt of this levy. So we have a situation where consumers will pay higher prices as a result of the government's tax, whereas the telecommunications industry will likely take the brunt on behalf of large enterprises. That simply doesn't seem right. In my view the industry should not have to absorb the government's enterprise tax from their bottom line. We can't see an immediate or effective legislative solution to this, but it's an issue that the government is urged to give consideration to.

In conclusion, as I have noted, for Labor to oppose the levy outright would hurt the long-term economics of the NBN, which is not in the public interest, and this is consistent with our position in the previous term of the parliament. That is why Labor pursued an amendment to reduce the impact of the levy on greenfield consumers, which has been incorporated into the bill, and will continue to reserve the right to pursue other measures, as I've indicated, when this matter comes before the Senate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): Is the amendment seconded?

Ms Catherine King: I second the amendment.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (12:05): I'm pleased to be able to rise in this debate on two separate but related bills, the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019. Labor supports the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill and the establishment of the statutory infrastructure provider regime outlined in it. The regime will provide additional certainty that, as we move beyond the initial NBN rollout, every Australian home and small business will continue to have the right to access a high-speed broadband connection. You'd hardly expect Labor to have an issue with this, given that it flows naturally from the arrangements that we put in place a decade ago through the statement of expectations issued to the NBN Co board. The statement of expectations at that time required NBN Co to make high-speed broadband available to all Australians, regardless of where they live or work, and this bill provides certainty that that will continue.

Labor wants today what it wanted a decade ago when we conceived of the National Broadband Network. We want every home and every small business in this country to have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband. When the Rudd government was elected in 2007, Australian internet speeds and access badly languished. They really languished. The average connection speed was about two megabits per second, which ranked us shamefully low in global speeds. Today the internet is profoundly woven into our lives. It's very hard to overstate its influence. In the 1980s the author and journalist Tom Wolfe coined the phrase 'Masters of the Universe' to describe the potency of a new generation of young, ambitious Wall Street bankers. Today the new 'Masters of the Universe' reside in Silicon Valley.

The Howard government, though, apparently never saw this coming. The internet launched five years before that government was first sworn in, and they proceeded to ignore this increasingly central phenomenon for more than a decade. The Rudd government's sorry inheritance in 2007 was a telecommunications infrastructure in this country that had badly suffered through neglect and indifference, infrastructure that lacked a vision and imagination leading its rollout, infrastructure so inadequate that Australia was handicapped, and not just economically. It was what the Rudd government sought to address through the National Broadband Network. It was Labor that asserted the principle of universal access to modern technology—to fast, reliable internet.

Those opposite were fiercely opposed to this principle. Those opposite called it delusional. We really had to drag them, kicking and screaming, into the future. Labor understood the importance of the internet. We understood that it was world-changing technology, and the fact that we lagged behind much of the world in our
access to it was an imperative to be remedied by the government. Labor understood its influence and acknowledged that its influence would only grow, sometimes in ways that we couldn't yet imagine. It would change the way that we consumed, sold, exported, imported, taught, learnt and communicated. It would change the way we listened to music and watched films. It would change the way we created and received news and would have ramifications for health, finance and even dating. It would have ramifications, really, for every component of our lives. This is how fundamental the underlying infrastructure was.

The Howard government, however, didn't care, didn't know or didn't understand. Labor is proud of the vision the Rudd government offered to Australians in the form of the National Broadband Network—proud, particularly, of its principle of universal access. So the National Broadband Network was born. It was an ambitious, nation-changing project, but one with a simple motto: do it once and do it right. That meant connecting the vast majority of homes in this country with high-quality fibre-to-the-home connections. Fibre is quick and enduring. It lasts and is futureproof. The network was simply too important to be compromised by political expediency or ignorance, but, unfortunately, that's exactly what has happened. In 2020 we have a network that is badly compromised. Having neglected the internet up to 2007, the coalition government has now neglected the National Broadband Network. Those opposite aren't great friends with the future.

In 2013 the degradation of the NBN began when the coalition was elected. This occurred with forewarning to the Australian public. When Tony Abbott gave Malcolm Turnbull the communications portfolio in 2010, he told the Australian public that Malcolm Turnbull would 'demolish the NBN'. Those were his written instructions and, sadly, he got to it when they won the 2013 election. It was one of the few election promises that they really did keep.

When Malcolm Turnbull came into the communications portfolio with the ignorant boast that he could deliver Australia a completed network much faster and much cheaper, he was wrong. He was badly wrong. The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government stopped an at-scale national rollout of the NBN. It stopped an at-scale rollout of a high-quality, futureproof, fibre-to-the-home network in favour of what they called a multitechnology mix—'a dog's breakfast' might be a better description for it—in which a patchwork of legacy networks were sweated throughout the country to cover the nation. They didn't just set out to retain the ageing legacy copper wiring for a fibre-to-the-node network deployment but actively started buying new copper to roll out across the nation, putting Australia on our own as the country investing in the past. It was like a nation greeting the arrival of the automobile age by purchasing new fleets of horses and carriages. They did it anyway and they boasted of saving money, except that they didn't. If your home wasn't utilising the old copper system, it was serviced by a mix of inferior fibres of HFC and the like. This requires future upgrading, unlike in the original plan. And guess what? The multitechnology mix is costing big dollars. NBN Co has calculated the multitechnology mix will cost $200 million more per year to maintain and operate while reducing revenue for NBN Co by $300 million compared to the original fibre-to-the-premises plan—that's an absurd half a billion dollars in the NBN Co's economics.

The legacy of the coalition government in this place is perverse. They promised to offer Australians a network that was completed more quickly than that proposed by the previous Labor government and offered faster speeds and lower cost, but it struck out on all three fronts. The decision to badly compromise the network has actually cost Australians more. We now have a poorer network at a greater cost. We've seen evidence for this this very week. The ACCC's latest broadband speed monitoring report is a scathing indictment of the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government's multitechnology mix. In a statement accompanying the release of the report, the ACCC couldn't have been clearer when it stated:

... many high speed fibre to the node (FTTN) connections still don't come close to performing as promised. The results show that about a quarter of those consumers on FTTN connections, who are paying for high-speed 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps plans, still did not receive anywhere near their full plan speeds, at any time.

The ACCC Chairman, Rod Sims, went on to say:

This Measuring Broadband Australia data clearly shows that too many consumers with FTTN connections are not receiving the speeds they are paying for ...

This is the faster, cheaper NBN that the coalition government has delivered. It's a perverse outcome and a perverse legacy.

In 2013 the coalition was elected on a promise to complete the NBN in three years time at a cost of $29.5 billion. It was fanciful. Fast forward to 2020 and it's still not complete and the price tag is now more than $50 billion. That is $20 billion over budget and four years behind the schedule the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government promised the Australian public. It's a $51 billion network that can't even deliver the broadband speeds that Australians are paying for. Get this: in 2007, when Labor inherited the badly neglected telecommunications infrastructure bequeathed to it by the Howard government, Australia's internet speeds had roughly ranked 50th in
the world. Today we're 68th, according to Ookla's global index. It's really poor company; it's the definition of a perverse outcome.

To add insult to injury, those opposite have neglected our regions. They watched NBN Co build too few regional wireless towers, so existing ones became overburdened, increasing congestion and slowing connections to regional mobile users. They did this to save money when their costs started mushrooming, and they bragged about it. What they didn't brag about, incredibly, was what we discovered in October last year—that NBN Co had cut $200 million from the fixed wireless network for the regions. This information wasn't publicly disclosed; indeed, it was deliberately hidden from where you would expect to find it, in the corporate plan. It wasn't disclosed until we came across this information in answers to a question on notice. This is typical of a government without a plan and a Prime Minister who can't be straight with the Australian public.

What's happening here is that the regions are being neglected so the government can desperate try to bandage their haemorrhaging costs, which brings us to the second bill before the House, the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019. I've worked in the Australian telecommunications sector, in one role or another, for near on a decade. If there's one thing that I've learnt from this space it's that, when you're dealing with the complex technological and regulatory legacies of this sector, when you change something in one spot you generally break something in another. The Australian telco sector, as it stands today, reflects decades of technology and policy trade-offs. These trade-offs interact with each other, so changes in the way that things work in one area have consequences for superficially unrelated areas elsewhere.

A good example of this is the trade-off between costs and pricing for telecommunications services in our cities and our rural and regional areas. When Labor conceived of its plan for a national broadband network, it understood the simple fact that in a country this large, with very low population densities in some parts of it, the costs for delivering services to our regions would be significant. The cost of a regional connection would be high, but we wanted it to remain affordable, so we rolled the NBN out based on a cross-subsidy model—that is, that metropolitan areas would pay a little more than their service costs so that the regions could acquire a service at a cost that was affordable. This cross-subsidy model generated $700 million and reflected the historic way that we've managed the higher costs in the bush against those in the cities in the Australian telco sector. It's an egalitarian settlement—perhaps not the most optimal form, from a purist's perspective, but the most workable in an Australian context.

There are those opposite, however, who have always wanted to play the purist in this space and unwind this egalitarian settlement. It was disappointing that, prior to the 2013 election, the Liberals encouraged other companies to deploy networks and compete directly against the NBN, in full knowledge that this would undercut the NBN Co business model—the city-regional cross-subsidy that has formed the basis of the Australian settlement on telecommunications policy for decades. But the ideologues in the Liberal Party have always chafed at this settlement, and they periodically break out from this settlement and start pushing positions that would break it and force the bush to wear the higher costs of telecommunications services on their own. Indeed, before the last election the minister repeatedly flirted with the desirability of infrastructure competition with NBN Co in the cities. What the National Party thought about this flirtation by the Liberal Party with breaking this NBN cross-subsidy, to the detriment of rural and regional Australia, remains unknown. Presumably they were too busy fighting each other to notice it at the time. But the minister played footsy with a development that would sabotage the NBN Co business model, and now they are introducing this new broadband tax to protect themselves from the consequences of their own flirtation. Now the minister wants to impose a new broadband tax on Australians who are on those competing networks that he wants encouraged. Like his leader, the minister can't be straight about this. But Labor will be upfront about what this bill actually does.

The bill will apply a new broadband tax of $7.10 per month on households and businesses connected to a non-NBN Co broadband network. It will add at least $84 to the annual bill for up to 500,000 residential and business services. This coalition tax on broadband is a new thing. It wasn't originally part of anyone's plan for the NBN. As I said earlier, the previous Labor government didn't contemplate having a broadband tax on top of an internal cross-subsidy. It was one or the other, not both. Yet now the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government wants both.

You might ask what has changed to prompt this. Well, you can observe what hasn't changed. The cost of a fixed wireless and satellite network had not changed at the time this new broadband tax was proposed. The cost is effectively what was forecast. What has changed is the damage that the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government's multitechnology model has done to the financials of the NBN Co. According to NBN Co's own analysis, this inferior multitechnology mix will cost $200 million more per annum to maintain and operate and will generate $300 million less per annum.

The effect of this new broadband tax will primarily be to add a price signal that deters duplication of NBN Co infrastructure in the cheaper city areas, enabling the cherry-picking of NBN Co revenues that can be applied to

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ensure universal access to broadband in rural and regional areas. I can understand the rationale for this. It is fair enough and it is why we're letting this bill go through the chamber unopposed. The shadow minister raised issues with this that we will address in the Senate. We will confront it at that time. That will be an issue for the Senate at that time.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (12:20): I rise to speak on the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and cognate bill, and the shadow minister's amendment. A reliable broadband network has become critical for the majority of Australians, as the member for Gellibrand has noted. We rely on the internet for work, for banking, for communication, for leisure and for shopping. It has become a vital, intertwined, ingrained part of our connection to our community and to the wider world. Unfortunately, too many people in Australia, especially in regional Australia, do not have the same ability as those in the city to enjoy the benefits of the internet—what we call the digital divide. Unfortunately, under this government the divide has become wider, not narrower, as a result of the lack of telecommunications infrastructure and regional black spots. More needs to be done to ensure that every Australian who wants to access the internet can have it.

I've spoken many times in this place on the government's record on the NBN. The NBN is a national telecommunications infrastructure program, which was instituted by Labor, and which, as the member for Gellibrand has noted, the then opposition leader, Tony Abbott, instructed his shadow communications minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to 'demolish' if they were to come to government. It is one of the few promises they have sought to deliver, because that is indeed what they have done to the NBN. They have demolished the foundations of what should be one of this country's greatest infrastructure builds. They have absolutely smashed it. I will come to the how of that later.

The legislation before the House today does two key things. It legislates certainty that all premises in Australia can continue to access broadband beyond the NBN rollout. It legislates a guarantee similar to the telecommunications guarantee we've legislated, which ensures that every Australian has access to a telephone line. This does the same for broadband. This gives it certainty. Labor supports this. We always have. These bills also, perhaps controversially, introduce a telecommunications levy of $7 per month onto the bills of households and businesses that get their broadband from non-NBN networks. This cost, of course, will go to the wholesalers, but, as we know, they'll pass that cost on to their customers—so, $84 a year in higher internet fees for people who get their internet from non-NBN providers. Labor is supporting that—with some reluctance I must say. We know we need to support this, to be a constructive opposition. The NBN Co business fundamentals demand it because of the changes that this government has wrought on NBN Co. Under Labor, this levy would not have happened—this internet tax would not have happened, because we had baked-in cross-subsidisation internally. We would not have required this. In his speech, the member for Gellibrand, with his deep background in telecommunications, explained, perhaps much more eloquently than I can, the reasons for this. He explained that we would not have done this because we had baked-in cross-subsidisation beforehand. But, under this government, there is internal subsidisation, and now they are going to slug consumers as well.

The truth of the matter is that there needs to be a legislative standard in Australia where we guarantee universal access to broadband, no matter where you live, particularly as we near the point where NBN Co is likely to be privatised. We need to ensure that coverage is not motivated by making money but is instead about ensuring there is a comprehensive network that ensures accessibility, no matter where you live. I represent an electorate that is remote and regional and I get complaints every day, still, about people's lack of access to the NBN, whether it is slow service or the like. I've got a range of what the government calls multi-technology-mix customers in my electorate, with fibre to the node. I've got constituents with fibre to the premises, which was rolled out under Labor. I don't get any complaints from them, let me tell you. I don't get any complaints from people in fibre-to-the-premises areas. I do get complaints from people in fibre-to-the-node areas, because the copper's degraded or they're too far from the exchange, or because of the slow service. I certainly get complaints from people on the fixed-wireless service—the towers—because essentially there are too many people on those towers, and of course internet use has increased so much over even the past five years, with 4K coming in, and HD, and people are streaming services and businesses have higher use of data.

Businesses and homes that are on fixed-wireless towers are just crunching the availability of hardware on those towers, and what we are seeing is the constant need to upgrade fixed wireless, and it just can't keep up with the demand, because this government has underinvested in fixed wireless. The fact that they secretly took $200 million out of the fixed-wireless network is an absolute disgrace—the shortcomings of the fixed-wireless network. If any aspect of the NBN system needs more investment, it's fixed wireless. Yet they took $200 million out of it and didn't want to tell the public about it until it came up in Senate estimates. I think a Tasmanian senator, Senator Anne Urquhart, had a principal role in that, and hats off to her for winking that out of the NBN.
There remains plenty to do with the NBN. Under this government NBN speeds in this country have slipped, to see Australia now 68th in the world. We are behind countries like Kazakhstan and like Cape Verde, in Africa. Just think: Australian tourists go overseas, to developing nations, and get much better service in those countries than they do here in Australia. It is an absolute indictment on this government's lack of regard for telecommunications and particularly the NBN. In what should have been a game changer in terms of accessibility and speed, the NBN promises have been a disappointing disaster—another demonstration of how the Liberals simply have not grasped the opportunities that modern telecommunications can deliver, and not just for households and consumers. Sometimes as politicians we get wrapped up talking about movie streaming and leisure for people in their homes. But there is the cost to the economy, to business, of not having a fully serviced NBN with fibre at the heart of it. It is a terrible shame.

As the member for Gellibrand mentioned, in 2007, when Labor came to power under Kevin Rudd, the average internet speed was two megabits per second. That's unthinkable now. Yet I remember the then opposition leader, Tony Abbott, saying, 'We'll never need more than five or six'—I think he said five or six, or some ridiculously slow speed; that we'd never need more than that. And we've well eclipsed it. On that side of the chamber they regarded Labor's then promise of universal access to be 'delusional'. That's what they called it—delusional. They just didn't get it. So, from 1996 to 2007, when they were in government, they did nothing, as the internet was taking off around the world and the importance of the internet became more clear to people. I was working in the media at that time, and I saw firsthand how the internet became more integral to our newspapers' operations, first for information gathering and then for sending pages via the internet to the printer. That's how quickly it developed. Yet over the period of that government they did absolutely nothing in terms of fixing the internet infrastructure for this nation.

So, in 2007, Kevin Rudd came along, saw what needed to happen and, from a standing start of nothing, the NBN was created. Of course, these things take time to develop. The genesis of the NBN took time. So that got underway. There were a few hiccups along the way, with asbestos being found in the Telstra pits. A lot of regulatory changes were required. Then Tony Abbott came along as the opposition leader and ordered Malcolm Turnbull to demolish Labor's NBN, because he wanted to make a political point. Frankly, Tony Abbott just didn't get it. I can sort of forgive Tony Abbott, to some degree, because he literally did not understand the importance of the internet. But I won't forgive Malcolm Turnbull, because he did understand. He did understand the importance of the internet, but he was more interested in his own political future than the future of the nation. He knew how important fibre was going to be at the heart of the internet. We know that he personally invested in fibre overseas, whereas here at home he was quite happy to foist upon the nation a substandard multitechnology mix that had, at its heart, 19th century copper.

So they didn't get it then. Over the period of this government, what we've seen happen with the NBN is a complete underinvestment—an absolute underinvestment in technology and an underinvestment in political will to give Australians the internet and the broadband that they deserve. In remote and regional Australia the digital divide is just getting worse and worse. Under Labor, regional areas were the first to get fibre to the premises: places like Sorell in Tasmania, my state, and the town of Smithton, places you wouldn't have thought would be the first to get the latest technology available. That's where fibre-to-the-premises internet was rolled out. We did that for this reason: we said that the regions deserve to have the same internet speeds and quality as the cities do.

I think people in this country are used to the idea that, whenever something new and flash comes along, it's always the cities that get it first. It's always Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. They tend to get the best stuff first. That's where most people live, so they get the flash stuff. Labor in 2007 said: 'Hang on. We want to close the digital divide. Let's give it to the regions first. Let's make sure the regions get the best internet, because the cities have got pretty passable ADSL at the moment. They've got pretty good internet. They can get by for a while, but those people in the regions have nothing. So let's put the good internet out there.'

Labor was howled down by those opposite. Those opposite, who claim to represent regional Australia, were the first to howl it down. They said: 'This makes no business sense. This costs so much more.' But what we have found out, of course, is that their claims about Labor's NBN costing so much more than what their system would cost is an absolute lie. They have foisted upon this nation an NBN of different technologies—copper based, cable, you know, all sorts of technologies that they've rolled out—which are substandard, certainly substandard compared to what Labor would have introduced. Labor would have had 93 per cent of the population getting full fibre. Yet their NBN has ended up costing about the same as what Labor's would have cost. The Labor NBN would have come in at around $50 billion. That's exactly where we've landed with this mob, with what is even now a substandard mix. No sooner is the NBN starting to be finished, four years behind schedule and $20 billion over budget, than they're already having to upgrade. They're already having to go back into the pits and renew the copper. They're already having to fix things up. Homes and businesses that are on fibre to the node are finding that
it's not servicing their needs, so they're having to call in the technicians and say, ‘Look, we need better internet.' They're having to pay through the nose to get the better fibre to the premises. The costs of the substandard internet that those opposite have foisted upon this nation will be much greater than if they'd simply continued with Labor's fibre-to-the-premises rollout.

It's one of the greatest infrastructure failures in the history of this nation—how far this government has put this country behind, not just for households but for the economy and the opportunity costs for the regions. Businesses are not able to expand in the regions, because they are dependent on good internet. They have to go to the cities because that's the only place where you can get the fibre to the premises that they need to compete in the world. It's a litany of failures on that side. We support the bill before the House, but we also have the amendment, just to point out some of those failures.

I want to quickly mention this broadband levy. As I said, it is a Liberal government broadband tax. It's a $7-per-month tax on internet services. It will impact consumers. They're levying against the providers, but it will impact consumers and businesses. It will especially impact people in the regions and first home buyers. They say they are doing this to protect regional broadband. If they were really interested in protecting regional broadband then they wouldn't have stripped out $200 million from fixed wireless, which was an absolute disgrace. And they've done nothing, absolutely done nothing, as NBN Co has overloaded the fixed wireless towers in regional areas, leading to slow speeds and congestions.

We support these bills, but this government should not escape the deserved odium for what they have done to what should be one of the greatest infrastructure achievements of this country, which they have just demolished—in their own words—and turned it into an absolute disgrace.

**Dr HAINES** (Indi) (12:35): I rise to speak briefly in support of these bills, with a few stories of reservation. With the NBN rollout at 98 per cent, and due for completion in June this year, the last parts of rural and regional Australia—the so-called hard-to-reach places—are finally being connected. The NBN provides significant economic and social benefits in regional communities. It boosts productivity, employment and innovation. When I visit small businesses and large producers in Indi I am always impressed by how quickly these people pick up on the opportunities of the NBN. I've seen online recruiting agencies for rural practitioners. I've seen jewellery manufacturers. I've seen rural telehealth to support emergency departments in far remote places of my electorate. I've seen people engaging in online learning who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to get a university degree, and I'm really happy about that. But we have to keep an eye on NBN. We have to make sure that the quality of our NBN services is, indeed, what we truly need in rural Australia and is equal to what other Australians receive.

The poor quality of telecommunications in rural and regional Australia is a long story. I won't tell you the whole story, but it is a long story. Historical underinvestment and metro-specific policy over decades means rural and regional communities are still struggling for reliable access and lagging behind in digital literacy. Nowhere has the legacy of this underinvestment, and the subsequent fragility of these services, been more evident than in our recent bushfires. With mobile phone towers and radio transmitters incinerated, whole communities were isolated for weeks.

With the rollout of NBN almost complete, the conversation will shift now from access—the hardware, the line to the premises, the satellite installed on the roof—to quality. Does this service do what I need it to do? Is it affordable? Rural and regional Australians know that being connected is only the first step. Historically we pay a high price for poor-quality services. As the government moves now to deliver these telecommunications reforms, we need to ensure that the product actually meets the needs of the customers outside the capitals and allows regional Australians to fully participate in the digital age.

Today I will address the two parts of these bills which go directly to these issues. Constituents in Indi access the internet via fixed wireless and satellite networks at rates many times the national average. Indeed, my own home, only three kilometres out of Wangaratta, receives internet this way. These methods suit rural areas with low population density, where it's not cost-effective to install a physical line. But, still, these arrangements are expensive, costing an estimated $9.8 billion over the next 30 years. The regional broadband scheme, which this bill introduces, sets up a funding arrangement for these services by requiring carriers to pay $7.10 per month for each premises with superfast broadband. This change is an improvement on the current system, where NBN cross-subsidises the investment through opaque internal accounting.

I'm pleased that advocates for rural and regional telecommunications support this move. These include the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network; the Country Women's Association; the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition, whose members include the National Farmers' Federation and Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia. I am
concerned, however, that the new fee imposed by the scheme will increase the cost of broadband. It's up to the carriers and retailers to decide whether to pass this charge on to the consumers. The government has reassured us that 95 per cent of consumers will not experience a price rise, and for the remaining five per cent, competition will put downward pressure on these prices. I sincerely hope this is in fact the case and that the goal of equitable cost-sharing is not used as an excuse to price-gouge customers, customers like those in my electorate.

Access to the internet is becoming as essential to daily life as access to electricity or water. It's now the government's main channel for interacting with citizens. This includes Centrelink reporting, the ATO and myGov. Yet this access is meaningless if it's unaffordable, particularly for low-income families. Coverage has to be universal not just on paper but in the reality of people's lives.

I welcome the second part of these bills. That's the introduction of the statutory infrastructure provider obligations on NBN Co and other carriers. These obligations will ensure that all Australian premises are able to access superfast broadband services of 25 megabits per second or better. If it's not reasonable to connect premises via fixed line, the provider must provide a fixed-wireless or satellite technology solution. On fixed-wireless services, voice services for consumers must be supported.

All people in Australia currently have guaranteed access to a telephone voice service through the Universal Service Obligation. This change helps build on that and provides consumers with certainty that all people in Australia, no matter where they live, have access to high-speed NBN. This news will be very welcome to constituents of mine who access the NBN via satellite or fixed wireless, but I must say that these services still fall far below what they need, and I'd like to share just a couple of their stories.

A constituent who lives in Indi wrote to me expressing his frustration with the service he receives by satellite, the only NBN service available for his property. He and his partner are both undertaking university study by distance, online, to further their careers. They both actively volunteer with community groups and committees. But the current monthly data caps placed on NBN satellite customers mean they routinely run out of data. This places them at a huge disadvantage with regard to their ongoing education and involvement with the community groups that they serve. They've tried getting a bigger package, but they can't purchase any additional data, due to the NBN Fair Use Policy. As he told my office:

I'll cut to the chase. I truly feel like a second class citizen, I am disadvantaged simply due to my location, as I stated those in very close proximity to us have access to far better technology at a fraction of the cost. Whilst we are left short every month, I feel for those in more remote areas who rely on this technology for their children's education.

Another example is the experience of the Outdoor Education Group, or OEG. They're based in Eildon. OEG provide challenging, hands-on experiences for schoolkids, giving them the opportunity to get outdoors and go beyond their comfort zones through activities such as rafting, bushwalking, camping and high- and low-rope courses. OEG is hugely successful. It has over 200 staff, a revenue of $20 million and camps right across Australia. To date, they've educated and cared for two million students. As you can imagine, when you're operating between locations and coralling hundreds of children, fast and reliable internet is absolutely essential not just for business but for safety. In their location of Eildon, fixed-wireless internet is the service available to them. Yet, in a 10-day period last September, for seven days there was no connection during business hours. The accountholder was not notified, and there was no clear advice on when the disruption would end. Staff were forced to hotspot using their phones, which meant they couldn't access the internal server, severely impacting on their productivity. The outages are completely unacceptable. As OEG told my office:

… This seems unbelievable to me and totally discourages businesses from operating in regional areas, NBN do not answer to anyone and are being very quiet about what is going on and what has been causing the issues I have mentioned, especially moving into summer and being in a bushfire prone area of the state.

I don't believe a reasonable person could expect a business to run efficiently with these vague notifications, particularly an organisation that is regularly conducting interviews and meetings via the internet.

That was a direct quote. The NBN has also recently reduced OEG's upload speeds by 50 per cent. Upload speed is crucial, as most of their work is done between different offices, and they rely on cloud based applications, with data frequently uploaded as work is saved. After a meeting between myself, NBN and OEG, I was pleased that NBN agreed to schedule outages before OEG's busy period, commencing in February this year. OEG is a huge, successful employer which has made rural and regional Australia its home base. We want and we need more of these businesses outside of our capital cities so our regions can prosper. Extensive issues with NBN outages cause headaches and difficulties for regional businesses. How many other potential businesses decide that they simply wouldn't take the risk of moving to regional Australia?

Of course, I can't stand here and talk about NBN without at least mentioning mobile phone black spots too, because they still remain. The famous Oxley Bush Market, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in November 2019 and last month won the Rural City of Wangaratta's Community Event of the Year, struggled with
connectivity issues, which meant using EFTPOS to sell wares was a gamble. How much more commerce could the 175 stallholders conduct if they just had reliable reception? I conclude by saying that I'm a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network and I am absolutely committed to keeping a close eye on the rollout of the NBN to ensure rural and regional Australians not only get NBN but also get the quality NBN they need.

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (12:45): I note with interest that there are no government members who wish to speak on this legislation, the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019. The two most significant national projects the Morrison government was entrusted to deliver for all Australians were the NBN and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Both have been dismal failures of this government. They were national rollouts that the previous Labor government had done the groundwork for. Indeed, all of the difficult work in respect of the preparation was already done. The failure of the Morrison government to roll out both the NDIS and the National Broadband Network on time and on budget, and to meet community expectations, highlights this government's incompetence. This is a government now in its third term. It has had plenty of time to settle in, to carry out whatever reviews it thought it needed at the time it came into office and to deliver on the election promises it made to the Australian people. It has failed to do so.

Under this government, now in its seventh year, the NBN rollout is a mess, with consumers raising concerns and frustrations about NBN connections and services every day. The coalition decided, in their wisdom, to change Labor's National Broadband Network rollout, claiming the coalition rollout would enable the NBN to be delivered faster and cheaper. After seven years they have failed on both counts. Costs have blown out to $51 billion, the rollout is four years behind schedule and the service is failing to meet community standards on so many fronts. I have lost count of the number of people who have contacted my office over the years with NBN difficulties.

The Morrison government's National Broadband Network rollout has been badly designed, which is why this legislation is now before the House. They are trying to fix another problem—the problem of funding. That also goes to the services that are being provided, and it's a funding problem that arises because of the very structure of their rollout. In today's society an internet connection is no longer a luxury. It's not an option; it is a necessity. Nearly all business, including government services, is transacted through the internet. Without the internet you cannot get on with your normal daily life anymore.

The two major entities that have responsibility for enabling National Broadband Network connectivity are Telstra and NBN Co. Both have been the subject of thousands of complaints each year to the telecommunications ombudsman. In 2018-19 there were 132,387 complaints. Some might argue that those complaints have dropped from the previous year. My view is that, if the complaint numbers have dropped, it's simply because people have given up complaining, because they know that it ultimately results in no action. Both Telstra and NBN Co have a monopoly over their service sector and can be very difficult to deal with, particularly for people with limited communication skills or who are not familiar with new technology.

I was recently contacted by a local person who has extensive knowledge in the telecommunication sector, a person who has spent considerable time not only to put together his thoughts on the NBN— and Telstra, for that matter—but also to look at things that could be done to improve the services. He listed for me 12 issues that need to be addressed, and I'm going to go through them, one at a time.

First: poor technical support from overseas call centres, staffed by people who often have limited training and no understanding of the Australian context. Frequently, there are deficiencies in their technical language capabilities. Second: physical cabling failures and limitations within the copper network used for the last section of the fibre-to-the-node technology. Third: high prices for services compared with other countries. Fourth: packaging of services by providers into bundles which cannot be broken down into separately priced items to permit customers to make a fair comparison with their competitors. Fifth: obfuscation of costs and constraints in marketing of products and services and in contracts, which might be discovered by consumers only when a problem arises. Can I say, that seems to be a common problem. When a problem arises and someone then goes back to their contract, they suddenly find out that the problem that they have encountered is not the responsibility of their provider or of NBN or of Telstra, and there is a backwards-and-forwards process in respect to who it is that they need to get on side to fix the problem.

Sixth: providers often phase out bundles as the contracts expire and replace them with much more expensive options. Seventh: selling services such as internet access with speed boost, yet failing to purchase sufficient bandwidth from NBN Co to meet the demand of their customers—again, a common problem. Eighth: providers refusing to provide access to technical data on the modems and equipment they provide to customers, limiting options for consumers to solve problems themselves or to turn to third parties for technical support. On that issue alone, I fail to understand why the technical data relating to modems and other telecommunications equipment is
not made available to all people so that people can either get on with doing their own repairs and maintenance or whatever it is or get a technician of their choice to come in and do it, yet that is not the case. Ninth: failure to disclose the full ramifications when transferring to the NBN, including the potential need to rewire existing home or business telephone networks, with limits on how many handsets can be connected to the modem and limitations with location of phone outlets. Again, I see homes and I speak to people who have connected to the NBN and then suddenly find that they cannot have the same phone system in their home that they had before the NBN connection. Tenth: consumers are also not always aware that in most cases standard landline services will not work during a power outage, and the previous speaker spoke about that in her own community, as a result of the bushfires. It's a serious problem, because many of the people who are now connected are older people who rely on their telephone, and not only to make calls; quite often they might have the emergency alarm systems also connected through the same system and, if it fails, there is no way of anyone knowing if they are in need. Eleventh: some users who only want a basic landline service end up paying more than they need to for bundles with large data allowances. Twelfth: when encountering technical difficulties, consumers often get caught between their internet service provider and NBN Co, with each saying the problem is the other's fault. I referred to that earlier, and it seems to be one of the most common problems we encounter, certainly in my community. The difficulty in navigating through all of the various parties is something that I can only empathise with consumers about. It is sometimes near impossible to get through to them. Indeed, some of the people who have come to my office have done so as a last resort because they have exhausted all of the options they believe they have in getting the problem resolved. And, inevitably, after they come to my office, we're able to get someone from NBN to perhaps coordinate the services required and get the issue resolved. But it's never easy.

Other issues that have also been raised with me, or my office, include that, when switching over to the NBN—which many consumers have needed to do to maintain their phone or internet access—some have had to choose between paying a higher monthly cost or accepting a service that is inferior to what they had. Many consumers who received the NBN by HFC experienced significant delays in the rollout, or technical problems. Consumers sometimes experienced lengthy delays trying to transfer to the NBN and sometimes lost phone or internet services for extended periods during the transfer.

Lastly, often home security systems or personal alarms are not compatible with the NBN and would not function in the event of a power outage. I realise they can get a battery back-up in some cases, but, again, if you're not familiar or conversant with new technology, you might not have done that. Whilst there is an NBN scheme to assist with the costs of replacement, there are some limitations and there will still be some out-of-pocket costs to the consumers. Many of these issues have been caused by or exacerbated as a consequence of the government's multi-technology mix rather than Labor's original plan for fibre-to-the-premises coverage, which would have covered around 93 per cent of the nation.

Other speakers have referred to the internet speeds. *The New Daily* recently reported that Australia's broadband internet ranked fourth slowest in the OECD world—fourth slowest. In global internet speed rankings, Australia has fallen to 68th of 177 countries. These are recent figures; these are not old figures. Whilst the government might dismiss those figures and come back with some excuse as to how they are not correct and the like, I say to the government that the reality is that there have now been too many reports showing that people are not getting the internet speeds or quality of service that they were led to expect.

Reliable, high-speed, world-class internet services are important for the nation and they're important for business productivity and efficiency. They are an essential service. They should no longer be treated as something that consumers have choices about; it is part of the world and the life that we live. If we cannot deliver the services that both residents and businesses need, we as a nation cannot move forward, and nor can we be competitive with the rest of the world. This legislation, I know, tries to address some problems. But, quite frankly, this government stands condemned for the failure to roll out the service that this country needs in 2020 and the failure to deliver on the promises it made to the Australian people.

**Mr Fletcher** (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (12:58): I am pleased to sum up the debate on the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019, and I express my thanks to all parliamentary colleagues who have spoken in this debate.

These bills implement a comprehensive three-part package to improve the regulatory framework for the supply of high-speed broadband, by amending separation rules and creating new supply and funding arrangements. These bills will improve the provision of high-speed broadband in Australia, firstly, by making carrier separation rules for high-speed residential networks more effective but also more flexible and giving carriers greater scope to invest in superfast networks and to compete. Secondly, they improve the provision of high-speed broadband by introducing new statutory infrastructure provider obligations on NBN Co and others to support the ongoing
delivery of high-speed broadband services. Thirdly, these bills establish the Regional Broadband Scheme, which will provide transparent and equitable long-term funding for NBN Co's satellite and fixed-wireless services in regional and remote areas.

Access to the National Broadband Network is estimated to have contributed $1.2 billion to Australia's GDP in 2017, excluding the stimulus effect of the rollout. Once complete, the NBN is projected to boost Australia's GDP by $10.4 billion per annum.

The government's reform package embodied in these bills is designed to allow all Australians to participate and share in the social and economic benefits of one of our country's largest infrastructure projects. Consumers will benefit from the statutory infrastructure provider measures, the purpose of which is that all Australians can access high-speed quality internet services. The rules set out baseline standards for the services: peak download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second and peak upload speeds of at least five megabits per second. The services also need to support voice communication on fixed-line or fixed-wireless networks.

Consumers in regional Australia will benefit from the Regional Broadband Scheme, which establishes a transparent and equitable long-term funding arrangement for NBN Co's fixed-wireless and satellite networks. These networks are improving business, social, educational and health outcomes for regional and remote Australia. The Regional Broadband Scheme will require all carriers to pay $7.10 per month for each premises on their network with a high-speed fixed-line broadband service. This charge is capped at $7.10, indexed to CPI, to provide greater regulatory and investment certainty and to support market competition.

The Regional Broadband Scheme will level the playing field by spreading the cost of Australia's investment in regional and remote broadband services equitably across NBN Co and NBN comparable networks. Importantly, the costs of NBN Co's fixed-wireless and satellite networks are built into NBN Co's existing pricing model over time, so establishing the Regional Broadband Scheme will not produce any one-time price shock for NBN customers. In combination with the statutory infrastructure provider regime, the Regional Broadband Scheme will give confidence to residents of regional and remote Australia that essential affordable broadband services will be available to them and will remain available in the future.

The package of measures set out in these bills strengthens competition, but it recognises that in a competitive market all participants should contribute towards the cost of providing loss-making broadband services in regional and remote Australia. There has been recognition of the potential need for a levy to support the provision of loss-making broadband services in regional and remote Australia since the initial implementation study for the NBN was carried out in 2010. The Labor Party and representatives of that party have been on the record saying that they accept that a levy might need to be introduced. In its 2010 Statement of Expectations to NBN Co the then Labor government said it was considering introduction of a levy to prevent opportunistic cherry-picking.

The package of measures set out in these bills delivers important outcomes for consumers, and that is why these bills are supported by consumer groups and by regional stakeholders, including the National Farmers Federation and the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition. These bills also deliver important outcomes for industry, with more opportunities for competition at both the network and retail levels. These important reforms are a critical step towards all Australians having access to the affordable, high-speed quality internet services they need to fully participate in today's digital society. I commend these bills to the House.

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

The House divided. [13:07]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .....................66
Noes .....................73
Majority.................7

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM

CHAMBER
AYES

Dick, MD  
Elliot, MJ  
Freelander, MR  
Giles, AJ  
Gosling, LJ  
Hayes, CP  
Husic, EN  
Kearney, G  
Khalil, P  
King, MMH  
Marles, RD  
Mitchell, BK  
Mulino, D  
Neumann, SK  
O'Neil, CE  
Payne, AE  
Plibersek, TJ  
Rowland, MA  
Shorten, WR  
Snowdon, WE  
Swanson, MJ  
Thistlethwaite, MJ  
Vamvakonou, M  
Wells, AS  
Wilson, JH

Dreyfus, MA  
Fitzgibbon, JA  
Georganas, S  
Gorman, P  
Haines, H  
Hill, JC  
Jones, SP  
Keogh, MJ  
King, CF  
Leigh, AK  
McBride, EM  
Mitchell, RG  
Murphy, PJ  
O'Connor, BPJ  
Owens, JA  
Perrett, GD  
Rishworth, AL  
Ryan, JC (teller)  
Smith, DPB  
Stanley, AM (teller)  
Thwaites, KL  
Watts, TG  
Wilkie, AD  
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Archer, BK  
Broadbent, RE  
Chester, D  
Conaghan, PJ  
Coulton, M  
Dutton, PC  
Evans, TM  
Fletcher, PW  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hammond, CM  
Hawke, AG  
Howarth, LR  
Irons, SJ  
Laming, A  
Leesaer, J  
Littleproud, D  
Marino, NB  
McCormack, MF  
McVeigh, JJ  
O'Brien, LS  
O'Dowd, KD  
Pearce, GB  
Porter, CC  
Ramsey, RE (teller)  
Sharma, DN  
Steggall, Z  
Sukkar, MS  
Thompson, P  
van Manen, AJ  
Wallace, AB  
Wicks, LE  
Wilson, TR  
Wyatt, KG  
Zimmerman, T

Allen, K  
Andrews, KL  
Bell, AM  
Buchholz, S  
Christensen, GR  
Connelly, V  
Drum, DK (teller)  
Entsch, WG  
Falinski, JG  
Flint, NJ  
Gee, AR  
Goodenough, IR  
Hastie, AW  
Hogan, KJ  
Hunt, GA  
Kelly, C  
Landry, ML  
Ley, SP  
Liu, G  
Martin, FB  
McIntosh, MI  
Morrison, SJ  
O'Brien, T  
Pasin, A  
Pitt, KJ  
Price, ML  
Robert, SR  
Simmonds, J  
Stevens, J  
Taylor, AJ  
Tudge, AE  
Vasta, RX  
Webster, AE  
Wilson, RJ  
Wood, JP  
Young, T

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (13:11): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (13:12): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to,
Bill read a third time.

Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Flexibility Measures) Bill 2020

Second Reading

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

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (13:13): I rise to support the Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Flexibility Measures) Bill 2020 and move the amendment circulated in my name:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes:
(1) the financial difficulties facing Australian parents juggling young children and work;
(2) the Government’s repeated cuts to family assistance and programs designed to support children and parents; and
(3) that women continue to do a disproportional share of work in the home and raising children, as well as facing a significant gender pay gap”.

Australia’s national Paid Parental Leave Scheme is a proud Labor legacy. Its purpose is to allow parents to take time off from work to look after children in their critical early months of development—critical to their health and to the development of both birth mothers and children. Labor implemented this initiative to enable women to continue to participate in the workforce and promote equality between men and women and the balance between work and family life. It provides two payments: parental leave pay; and dad and partner pay.

Through Labor’s Paid Parental Leave scheme we signal to employers and the Australian community that it is business as usual for parents to take time out of the paid workforce to care for a child. Importantly, it enables the participation of child-bearing age women in the workforce. A high workforce participation rate is important in the context of an ageing population and helps to address the gender pay gap—particularly for those women with low and middle incomes, who have less access to employer funded parental leave.

There are around 300,000 births in Australia each year, with parents of about half of those using Labor’s Paid Parental Leave scheme to take leave from their workplace and care for the newborn. Almost 150,000 parents a year benefit from the national Paid Parental Leave scheme. Now, in its eighth year, the government has at last recognised the importance of this scheme and moved to improve its flexibility so that more women will finally have the access they deserve—because parents, both mothers and fathers, shouldn't have to sacrifice their careers
or their career progression simply because they want to look after their children in the most formative and critical years of their development.

Labor has always believed that paid parental leave is critical to closing the gender pay gap. We know that women are usually the primary carers of children, but it shouldn't just be up to them; men should feel supported, empowered and encouraged to play an equal role in that too. Last year I mentioned to this chamber the KPMG report that found that stubborn gender stereotypes continue to harm the careers of women, especially those who opt to care for children and elderly family members. This is why the gender pay gap continues to persist. I don't need to remind the chamber that women in Australia earn an average of 14 per cent less than men.

We're also very conscious that, in our communications in relation to this particular piece of legislation, we're going to specifically mention stillborn babies as well. I know that's implied in 'newborns', but we think it should be specifically mentioned as a sign of respect, and of practicality as well.

I don't need to remind the chamber—except maybe the Treasurer, who on 9 September last year said that the gap had closed—that the gender pay gap has remained stubbornly high over the past two decades, with any minor improvements attributed in large part to the resources boom. Lasting and sustained progress in closing the gender pay gap requires a fundamental culture change, and it requires genuine leadership. Labor has a proud record of fighting for equal pay for all Australians. When we were last in government this included ensuring businesses with more than 100 employees prepare and lodge a report containing information relating to gender equality indicators. Labor also delivered funding to support the equal pay case for social and community service workers, delivering a pay rise to 150,000 workers.

On the other hand, the Morrison government, after six years, still does not have a genuine or substantive reform plan to close the gender pay gap. If the Treasurer and the Prime Minister were genuinely serious about fixing the gender pay gap, they would oppose cuts to penalty rates. The vast majority of workers who had their penalty rates cut were women. The cuts to penalty rates are exacerbating the gender pay gap as well as making it harder for women to pay the rent and cover the bills.

Paid parental leave also allows mothers and fathers to look after their children in their most critical developing years, not only without sacrificing their career progression or ability to work but also by enabling them to do so without eating into their savings. Parents should be able to care for their children as well as make ends meet. Labor knows that families are doing it tough, especially young families. We know that they are struggling to keep their heads above bills and groceries and rent, yet the government has absolutely no plan to help them. The cost of living is going up, and our young people are worrying about how or if they will start or support a family.

Last year, I mentioned the report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which painted a very anxious and uncertain future for younger Australians. It showed—and this shouldn't come as any surprise, except maybe to the government, who seem oblivious to the struggles of everyday Australians—that homeownership is more out of reach for younger Australians than ever before and one million Australians are now living in housing stress. But there is little wonder that young people are struggling to own their own home: housing prices continue to soar; many haven't seen a pay rise in a long time; and wages are stagnant. As a result, many are seeing more and more of their income being sucked up by rent.

Our young people are also finding it harder and harder to get a job. Youth unemployment is more than double the national average. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, new apprenticeships are at their lowest in two decades. Many Australians, especially younger Australians, are finding that when they do find a job they are simply not receiving enough hours at work to get by. Under this government, two million Australians are looking for work or looking for more work—with one million underemployed. Almost one in five, or over 130,000, Newstart recipients have a job but do not receive enough hours or income to get them off the payment.

This bill will change the paid parental leave rules to allow an 18-week block to be taken as paid leave or to be taken over two years. The bill will change the paid parental leave rules by splitting the 18 weeks of public paid parental leave into a 12-week paid parental leave period and a six-week flexible paid parental leave period. The 12-week paid parental leave period in total will be available only as a continuous block but would be accessible by the primary carer at any time during the first 12 months, not only immediately after the birth or adoption of a child. The six-week flexible paid parental leave period will be available at any time during the first two years and does not need to be taken as a block. Labor will be closely watching the government's implementation of this amendment. These changes will apply to parents claiming for paid parental leave for a child who is born on or after 1 July—and, of course, I once again make the point about stillborn babies.

Labor supports the changes in the bill. We hope they will enable more women to consider careers and roles historically dominated by men. The Paid Parental Leave Scheme is a proud Labor legacy. We will always support...
improvements to it that increase support for parents who need it. We will always support improvements that close the gender pay gap and make it easier for young parents to raise and care for their families. But the reality is that young families are doing it tough, and they are right to ask: why doesn't the Prime Minister and the Liberal-National government have a plan? Why doesn't the Prime Minister have an agenda or a vision to make things easier for young families?

The Prime Minister is very obsessed with devising new ways to harass and prod younger Australians who are simply trying to enter the workforce and build a life for their families. This government has plans to cut Newstart by doubling the liquid assets test wait time. It has splurged millions on sports rorts but has cut millions from emergency relief. The Prime Minister and the Liberal-National government and their refusal to stimulate the economy are creating an economic environment that is making it so difficult for young Australians to raise and build a life for their families. Of course Labor supports the bill, but we have every reason to be sceptical about the government's competence and ability—the government who brought us robodebt, MyHealth and the 2016 census. We are right to have serious concerns about this government's ability to properly implement and effect these changes, and we will be monitoring it very, very carefully. And, as I said, I have moved an amendment that will be dealt with at a later point.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): Is the amendment seconded?

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

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:26): I rise to speak in support of the Morrison government's Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Flexibility Measures) Bill 2020, which will provide more flexibility for working mothers and their families to access paid parental leave by amending the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010. These amendments will allow mothers of newborn or adopted children to use an initial 12-week period of paid parental leave before taking up their remaining entitlement of six weeks any time over the two years after birth or adoption. The bill focuses on increasing women's workforce participation, which was one of the outcomes of the women's economic security package released in 2018. The amendments are in addition to the government's changes to the work test in the Paid Parental Leave Act in October last year. Should this bill be approved by the parliament, parents of children born on or after 1 July 2020 will be able to access the flexible option.

Nearly half of all mothers in Australia are accessing paid parental leave each year. Of those 179,000, it's expected that approximately 4,000 parents will choose to take up this new flexible option. I've long been a supporter of the Paid Parental Leave scheme and the changes the coalition government has made to support working mothers and their employees. Back in 2014 I shared with the House the words of hundreds of business owners in my electorate of Robertson who expressed some frustration with the former Labor government's attempt at a paid parental leave scheme. They told me at the time how it was creating an additional workload for their business and their struggles under the weight of red tape and regulation.

So, today I'm pleased to be part of a coalition government that is introducing amendments to support expectant parents who are small-business owners or self-employed. These measures will provide greater flexibility and more choice for primary caregivers in easing their transition back into the workforce—something this House wholeheartedly supports and encourages. Under the current legislation, taking the maximum 18 weeks off with their newborn in one continuous block could result in a significant financial blow to their business. The bill before the House today will change this system and mean that an initial 12 weeks can be taken to look after their child, and the remaining six weeks or 30 days used flexibly until the child turns two. This flexibility will allow more to return to work and transfer their remaining paid parental leave entitlement to their partner, who will take on the role of primary carer. Alternatively, they may choose to use their remaining paid parental leave to support a part-time return to work. This means that a parent can return to work three days per week and have the option to receive paid parental leave on the two days that they're not working.

As a member of the coalition government I firmly believe in more choice and more flexibility for working families, and this bill will allow for the Paid Parental Leave scheme to be tailored to a family's circumstance and to encourage greater uptake of leave by secondary carers, who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to spend quality time with their children. As a mother myself, I am passionate about giving women and families choices when it comes to returning to work after having children. I'm aware from speaking to families within my electorate that everyone's circumstances are different.

Annemarie is a mother of five and the owner of Night Nannies, which has been running as a small business on the Central Coast since 2005. She told me about the immense pressure of keeping her business open after becoming a new mum and how these policy changes would have benefited her. She even recalls taking a work call on her hospital bed a day after having her baby, highlighting the competing pressures of parenthood and running a
small business. Annemarie said that the flexible return-to-work options would help families that use her service in transitioning back to the workforce.

This bill will allow small-business owners to take up their remaining paid parental leave when it suits them and to spend quality time with their child at a different stage of their development. I believe that enabling families, and particularly primary care givers, to have more control over how they use their parental leave will greatly help small businesses, while also helping to relieve pressure on families. I'm proud to be part of a coalition government that is providing more flexibility to ensure that families—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour, and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Women in Sport

Alexander, Ms Lisa

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:30): Women's sport is going from level to level in this country. The women's BBL has just finished, the Matildas have just beaten Thailand 6-0, the fourth AFLW season has just commenced with record crowds and the ICC Women's T20 World Cup is set to begin. With all that in mind, I want to pay tribute today in this parliament to a true leader of Australian sport and one of Australian sport's most successful coaches. Sadly, Netball Australia announced yesterday afternoon they wouldn't be extending the contract of head coach, Lisa Alexander. Lisa is a great friend of mine, a great Victorian and a great friend to a lot of people involved in netball. I want to thank her for her service to our great sport.

Lisa coached Australia for 102 tests with an 81 per cent win rate. Against our fiercest rivals from across the Tasman, that was 49 outings for 35 wins. In the four major tournaments she led Australia in, the Diamonds were world championship gold medallists and runners up on the other two occasions, both times by less than a goal. She also coached seven winning Constellation Cup teams in a row against our Kiwi foes. We've also stayed the No. 1 ranked team in the world while Lisa has been at the helm. It was always entertaining to watch her sticking it to the boys on the Offsiders couch on a Sunday morning. It is an enviable record. I want to thank her for her stewardship of the Diamonds and thank her for her service to our country.

Safer Internet Day

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (13:32): Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation. This week we celebrated Safer Internet Day and the theme this year is ‘together for a better internet’. Navigating the internet can be a daunting place for older Australians so I'm pleased to be hosting a safer internet forum for seniors in my electorate of Bonner next week in Mount Gravatt. The aim of the forum will be to empower seniors to feel confident when logging on and to educate them on how to identify and avoid common online scams. Sadly, not a week goes by that my office isn't contacted by an older constituent who has fallen prey to a dodgy internet scam. That's why I've invited a special guest speaker from the Office of Fair Trading to discuss how to identify and avoid scams online.

We all know the internet is a powerful tool that connects the world around us, but it also can provide many social and economic benefits for older Australians. The safer internet forum will provide training for my constituents so they can engage confidently and safely in the online world.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner has some great resources to help not only seniors but also young people, parents and educators. It's up to all of us to help create a safer internet. The Bonner safer internet forum is open to all my older constituents and will be held on Friday 21 February from 9.30 am at the Mount Gravatt Bowls Club.

Australian Bushfires

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (13:33): The coalition's response to the bushfires has been to focus on fuel reduction as the key cause of the fires. It is important to reduce fuel loads as a precautionary measure, especially around settlements. However, fire experts have dismissed assertions that a lack of fuel reduction is the main cause of the recent fires. Fire chiefs have confirmed that there was little or no difference in the fire intensity between areas subject to fuel reduction and those areas without managed burns. And while we can reduce fuel in limited areas, we can't burn the whole nation. The risk to our health and our environment is just too great, and the window for safe burns is reducing.

Adapting to climate change isn't enough. My constituents have called for stronger action on climate change because that is the root cause of the increased intensity and duration of bushfires. The coalition boasts Australia will meet its emission reduction targets and Paris commitment to keep warming well under two degrees—nothing could be further from the truth. The coalition's emissions target of 26 to 28 per cent by 2030 is totally inadequate. The UN says we need to meet zero emissions by 2050 and a 45 per cent reduction by 2030. Over 70 countries
have committed to those higher targets. We don't lead the world; we are a drag on the world. Business as usual is just not an option.

Smart Eating Week

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (13:35): Like many people, I've started 2020 with a New Year's resolution to exercise more and eat more healthily. I'm working towards my goals with the support of Brandon Campbell, the manager at my terrific local Jets gym at Kawana, and the gym's eight-week challenge. Like most people, I find I need structure and goals to help me to achieve a healthier lifestyle. With a million Australians suffering from some form of eating disorder it is vital that we are careful in the goals we set. Weight loss, dieting or pursuing a particular body shape should never be an end in itself. Attitudes like these only place more pressure and harmful expectations on vulnerable people. Nonetheless, it is a proven fact that eating a varied, nutritious and healthy diet is fundamental to maintaining a healthy mind and a healthy body. That's why I'm pleased to say that this week is Smart Eating Week. This initiative, led by the Dietitians Association of Australia, is seeing workshops, challenges, information stands, talks and other activities popping up all over the country, helping people to understand what a healthy diet looks like and how they can eat smarter. If you want to find out how to improve your diet, why not visit healthyeatingquiz.com.au and take the 10-minute quiz today, or visit daa.asn.au to find a Smart Eating Week event near you.

Solomon Electorate: Community Events

Johnston By-Election

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:36): Kia ora! The Anzac spirit is alive and well in the Far North, with Kiwi Territorians fundraising for those affected by the devastating bushfires. We had a fundraiser at Tracy Village last Saturday night. I want to say a big 'well done' to the Ngati Darwin Waitangi Group and the Darwin Casuarina Lions Club, who organised a fantastic Waitangi fundraising hangi to raise funds for the Lions Foundation's National Bushfire Appeal. The food and entertainment were fantastic. Well done to everyone involved.

I also want to speak about the fact that, on Saturday 29 February, Territorians living in the Darwin suburbs of Moil, Millner and Jingili, and some parts of Alawa, will be heading to the ballot box in the Johnston by-election. Early voting starts from this Monday. You can go to Rapid Creek, Casuarina Square or the NT Electoral Commission office in the city. I know one of the candidates extremely well. Territory Labor has preselected an outstanding candidate in former Richmond AFL champion, superstar player and community leader Joel Bowden. Joel is a proud Territorian, having grown up in Alice Springs and now living in Darwin with his family. He'll be a great local representative. Make sure you have your vote.

Goldstein Electorate: Black Rock Neighbourhood Watch

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (13:38): The Goldstein community is full of incredible people doing industrious things to build the social fabric not just of our community but as part of the success of a great nation. Neighbourhood Watch's Graffiti Busters are a stand-out example of Goldstein residents who take ownership and responsibility for our local built environment, to help build it for the future. The latest work from Neighbourhood Watch's mural champion Bob Lorraine and his team can be seen on Beach Road in Black Rock. Once a graffiti hotspot, the section of wall near the clock tower is now an artistic nod to the Black Rock Life Saving Club, another wonderful community based organisation. The mural was designed and painted by local student and artist Daiana Ingleton, whose work includes the cheerfully technicolour mural that adorns a once unremarkable concrete wall at Black Rock Shopping Village. The Beach Road mural was unveiled last December by the president of the Black Rock Life Saving Club, Rebecca Moncrief. I would like to acknowledge the Black Rock Neighbourhood Watch chair, Phil Lovel, for his ongoing commitment and support for our community and everybody who is involved in Black Rock Neighbourhood Watch. Thank you also to the Graffiti Busters program and their volunteers. It is programs like these that make a practical difference to caring for our local community and environment. They enhance it so that future generations can cherish it just as we have.

Child Developmental Assessments

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (13:39): I rise today to speak on extravagant delays that presently exist in child developmental assessments in our public health system. I've been quoted in the media today as stating that we are witnessing a form of developmental apartheid, and I stand by that statement. Developmental assessments—structured assessments that occur to evaluate a child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development—are a crucial undertaking. They are vital in understanding, diagnosing and assessing the progress of children who have developmental delays. As we all know, early diagnosis is key to managing many complex issues. It is also vital in obtaining NDIS funding. Shockingly, parents and carers in my community and in other communities are experiencing massive delays in obtaining developmental assessments for their children. In my
own local hospital, children are typically waiting an entire year to undertake developmental assessment and in some cases are being made to wait over 600 days. These delays exist in underprivileged areas, whereas people who reside in wealthier suburbs can obtain their assessments within weeks. This is simply unacceptable. The extensive waiting times mean that there is less time for essential interventions to take place and supports to be put in place to help a child in the early years. As a consequence, many of these children are starting school with delays, way behind their peers. These delays are preventing people from accessing essential NDIS supports, and are starting their lives—(Time expired)

Berowra Electorate: Floods

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (13:41): On Sunday savage storms hit Sydney, and thousands of homes and businesses in my electorate have been without power, phone lines or mobile reception for most of the week. Fallen trees have blocked roads, flattened cars and damaged houses. Floodwaters have blocked roads and flooded houses and businesses. The SES in my community has had 861 callouts, and over 180 volunteers from the SES have been there to assist in the clean-up, assisted by many of the local RFS brigades. The was even an SES team that travelled up from Wagga on Tuesday, and a Fire and Rescue strike team that have been involved in the clean-up. Ausgrid, today, are working to repair and restore power to 31,000 homes across Sydney, including in my electorate. Many businesses have had to shut their doors due to phones and power being down, and many had also had substantial damage to their property. Tomorrow I am going to be visiting a number of the communities on the Hawkesbury River who’ve faced the flooding and also a number of the suburban areas of my electorate which have been damaged by falling trees. I’m very pleased to say that yesterday Minister Littleproud and Minister Elliot agreed to joint federal-state disaster assistance for my electorate. That funding will be available for councils, small businesses, primary producers, not-for profits and certain individuals who meet the relevant criteria. At a time when so many in my community helped support the bushfire recovery effort, those same people are being called on to help clean up the storms, and I thank them.

ClubsNSW

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (13:42): I've obtained alarming information from a whistleblower regarding ClubsNSW, the peak body representing 770 clubs and which is, in effect, the peak pro-gambling organisation in Australia. In essence, the clubs are required by law to report to AUSTRAC any suspected money laundering or funding of terrorism under what I call the AML and CTF laws. But, according to this 2019 club’s board paper, provided by the whistleblower, 'Current levels of AML/CTF compliance are at best five to 10 per cent.' Yes, that's right: 90 to 95 per cent of New South Wales clubs are operating illegally when it comes to money laundering and the funding of terrorism, and no-one is doing anything about it. It is yet another example of the complete and utter failure of our federal and state regulatory agencies to do their jobs, and another example of the corrupt political parties and politicians who turn a blind eye to their mates and former colleagues in the gambling industry, a sector that invests millions of dollars in tainted political donations. No wonder the Liberal, Labor and National parties voted down my move last year for an inquiry into the gambling industry. I seek leave to table the document.

Leave is not granted.

Mr WILKIE: Deputy Speaker, they're running a protection racket for the gambling industry—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien): The time has expired. I call the member for Mallee.

Mr Wilkie: This is proof of widespread money laundering in New South Wales—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr Wilkie: But, Deputy Speaker, this is evidence of a crime—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The member is warned under 94(a).

Racism

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (13:44): Last month, I had the immense privilege to address the wonderful people of Beulah. Tucked into the centre of the barley belt and the famous Silo Art Trail, Beulah is home to just over 300 people—small in numbers but absolutely big in heart. Earlier this year, Beulah was put on the map for all the wrong reasons. A flag featuring a swastika was raised on a flagpole by a local couple. This symbol of racial supremacy is a representation of mass atrocities, and it rightly outraged the rest of the town and the state of Victoria. The police were involved, and, thankfully, the offending flag was taken down. The incident shocked local residents and caused outrage around the world. But you know what? The people of Beulah share a courageous community spirit, common to many in my electorate of Mallee, and they rallied together to show solidarity, sending a clear message that such a divisive icon is not representative of their community. An event was held which celebrated the flags of many country around the world, signifying Beulah’s shared values of friendship, diversity and open-heartedness. Beulah is the salt of the earth. Salt preserves and gives flavour. The
residents of Beulah preserve and give flavour to what is truly good. That is why, as the member for Mallee, I am proud to stand with Beulah.

Prime Minister

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:46): Why is the member for Hume still in cabinet? The member for Hume's imbecilic attempt to embarrass the Lord Mayor of Sydney exploded in his face. If the member for Hume continues to refuse to provide a full account of what happened, the Prime Minister must direct him to. If the Prime Minister had any consistency, given that Senator McKenzie was forced to resign for failing to disclose a conflict of interest, the member for Hume should have been forced to resign long ago. But I won't hold my breath, because that would take leadership, and if the months since the last election have taught us anything it's that the current occupant of the Prime Minister's office is no leader.

Unlike the current Prime Minister, real leaders are not pathologically incapable of taking responsibility. Unlike the current Prime Minister, real leaders do not react to crises by asking, 'Who can I blame for this?' or by producing self-serving political ads. Unlike the current Prime Minister, real leaders do not deny the existence of dangers to the nation, hoping not to have to make hard decisions. Unlike the current Prime Minister, real leaders set high standards; they do not run away from them. Unlike the current Prime Minister, real leaders are outraged by a scandal in their government and take action against the perpetrators; this Prime Minister seeks to cover them up.

O'Connor Electorate: Bushfires

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (13:48): We've heard from members here today about the devastating floods on the east coast over the weekend. In my electorate of O'Connor, in the south-east of Western Australia, we had our turn at bushfires. Extremely hot conditions—40 degrees plus—across the southern part of WA led to large uncontrolled fires at Lake King and Hyden and in my home town of Katanning. On Friday, a fire started and burnt around 2,000 hectares of stubble and grassland. It was under control by Friday afternoon, thanks to the efforts of about a hundred local farmers and fire units that turned up at very short notice and in very quick time. On Saturday, in 40 degree heat, with winds gusting up to 65 kilometres an hour, the fire broke containment lines and threatened the town of Katanning, a town of 4,000 people, the town where I grew up. At one stage things were looking very, very serious. Thanks to the enormous effort of over 300 fire units from surrounding shires—most people here wouldn't understand, but every farmer and most small landholders have their own fire units, and they turned out from hundreds of kilometres away to help protect the town of Katanning. Unfortunately, one house was lost. The fire burnt up to the town boundary and burnt through many of the small landholdings. But, due to the great work of the local fireys, properties were saved, although some outbuildings were lost. I want to thank and acknowledge the great work of Liz Guidera, the shire president, who led the community very ably; and the fire control officers, Matt Kerin and Geoff Stade and all of those—(Time expired)

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (13:49): It's Valentine's Day tomorrow, so I've written this poem:

Labor is red,
the Liberals are blue,
Senator McKenzie has
a colour coded spreadsheet for you.
A hundred million dollars
given to clubs of all sorts,
here are a few of the Lib's
disgraceful sports rorts.
Spend a night by a river
and take in the views,
marvel at the $50,000
given for sailing in Vaucluse.
Love is in the air
at Tea Tree Gully Golf Club.
They got $190,000
to become a wedding hub.
Cupid likes to go shooting, and so does the minister, who gave money to her club. That seems a bit sinister. Noranda netball ignored and bowls in Mount Lawley. Both missed out, left feeling poorly. But to those who missed out the Prime Minister said, 'The process was balanced. The Auditor-General misread.' This government must ensure Sports Australia has its say. They must release the rankings on this Valentine's Day.

**Rotary International**

**Mr YOUNG** (Longman) (13:50): The centenary countdown has well and truly begun for Rotary in Australia and New Zealand, as these organisations will celebrate the first 100 years of service in 2021. This is no ordinary celebration. The year 2021 will mark 100 years of all Rotary organisations across Australia providing service to others, promoting integrity and advancing world understanding, goodwill and peace through their fellowship of business, professional and community leaders. In 1921 four Rotary clubs were created—in Melbourne, Auckland, Wellington and Sydney. From there Rotary and Rotaract clubs were created everywhere across Australia and New Zealand.

 Rotary partners work with other well-established organisations to achieve great things and believe that they have a shared responsibility to take action on the world's most persistent issues, such as promoting peace; fighting disease; providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene; saving mothers and children; supporting education; and growing local economies. Recently I spoke with the Caboolture Rotary club about the key areas of concern affecting our area. This group of hardworking locals from all walks of life are testament to the Rotary movement. Special mention goes to Peter Brown, a Rotarian for 42 years. At this meeting we discussed creating more jobs, which will help address the scourge of drugs and crime in our electorate. It's terrific how much they care about the people of Longman and their community. We should remember to be grateful that we have wonderful organisations like Rotary in our community every day. Don't wait until next year; help your local Rotary club now to kick off a bright new era.

**Paterson Electorate: Fern Bay Pharmacy**

**Ms SWANSON** (Paterson) (13:52): Last month I had the pleasure of officially opening the new Amcal pharmacy in Fern Bay. Pharmacist and owner Alecia Hennessy understands how vital this service is to Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove. It's the first pharmacy in the area and it will service over 3,300 people. That number is growing rapidly, with nearby housing developments mushrooming and under construction. This pharmacy has immediately become an enormous asset for our area; however, the community is still without reasonable access to the supply of pharmaceutical benefits by an approved pharmacist due to an unintended consequence of the pharmacy location rules.

 Most of the customers at Fern Bay Amcal are pensioners, single parents or retirees without the option of driving themselves to another location. Vital medications can't wait, so Alecia has acquired an extra car for the pharmacy and a member of her team makes at least three trips every day to Stockton pharmacy to fill the scripts. Alecia told me:

This is a community that desperately needs this service. Since we opened, over 800 people have signed our petition asking the Minister for Health to help solve this problem urgently, which is 25 per cent of the population and counting.

I've written to the minister asking for his intervention. Please, Minister, reply and help out.
Coronavirus

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (13:54): My electorate reflects the wonderful multiculturalism of modern Australia and it is home to one of Sydney's largest Australian Chinese communities. Those with Chinese heritage contribute enormously to our community, and I am proud to represent them in this parliament, as I am all my constituents. Like all of us, the Australian Chinese community is concerned about the spread of coronavirus in China and other parts of the world, perhaps more so because of the deep family connections so many retain. As the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said so powerfully in this place, it is a time when we must stand by and embrace those in the Australian Chinese community, and we must reject any attempt, particularly through social media, to spread prejudice or misinformation.

I know that fears of coronavirus are having an impact on many businesses in my electorate. My message today is that it is a time to be supporting our communities and our local businesses. We know from all the expert advice that the risk levels in Australia are currently exceptionally low. Our health authorities are doing a superb job, and we should not be deterred from carrying on as we normally would. That's why I was so pleased that my local councils in Willoughby and Lane Cove continued with their Lunar New Year celebrations and why I was so disappointed that a nearby council—Ryde council, in fact—cancelled theirs. It was the wrong call and the wrong message. I urge residents to do what I will be doing when I return to Sydney: support our local restaurants and small businesses in places like Chatswood and the other vibrant precincts that make ours a wonderful part of Sydney.

Climate Change

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (13:55): Today I rise to draw the House's attention to the wonderful students at Wales Street Primary School in my electorate of Cooper. The students, led by Arielle Butera, are just some of the many young activists in my community calling for strong, urgent action on climate change. In December I received their petition with over 54 signatures in support of action to tackle the climate emergency. Arielle says:

I don't think the government is doing enough about climate change or just doesn't care about it and that's a problem because I thought that government was meant to look after Australia not just let it be destroyed.

Arielle, I agree. While the rest of the world has accepted that we are experiencing a climate emergency, it's clear that this is not a priority for the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government. Those who sit opposite are collectively burying their heads in the sand, with no desire or political courage to start to repair the damage that global warming is inflicting on our planet. This must end now. As Arielle says, 'Help protect our future by doing something about it.' I stand in solidarity with all of the young people in my electorate who are standing up and demanding action on the climate emergency. We can, and we must, win this fight. I will be with these young students every step of the way. The signatures on this petition are from children ranging between seven and 11 years old. They deserve to be heard, and I'm very proud to bring their voices to this House today.

Fairfax Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (13:57): Our nation, no doubt, started the year—and, indeed, the decade—with its challenges from drought, bushfires and the coronavirus. But, rightly, we paused as a nation to celebrate Australia Day. In doing so, we paused as a nation to celebrate some great Australians who make such a contribution, and I rise today to mention three from my part of the world. I want to pay tribute to three people who were honoured in the 2020 Australia Day awards. Ken Howes was awarded an OAM for his service to youth development. The work that Ken has done with youth through the Scouts has been quite extraordinary, teaching them those life skills of teamwork, problem solving and leadership. Indeed, leadership is something that Michael Dixon knows about. He was awarded a Conspicuous Service Medal for his achievement as Squadron Sergeant Major for the 171st Special Operations Aviation Squadron. I also pay tribute to Mal Pratt, who was awarded an OAM for his support of surf lifesaving and youth development. Mal contributes so much to the likes of Bloomhill and the Maroochydore gymnastics club. Only last year he started Thrive, a youth hub, in Maroochydore.

To Ken, Michael and Mal, I say thank you for your service.

Budget

Mr HILL (Bruce) (13:58): The Treasurer is now sneaking away from his future budget surpluses blaming bushfires and coronavirus, but the truth is that the budget has always been propped up by dodgy assumptions. With productivity and workforce participation growth flaccid, he spent everything on his huge population growth target. How will this happen? Deep in the budget you discover that the Treasurer's surpluses rely on a big increase in migration and a magical bounce in Australia's fertility rate next year to an astounding level of 1.9 babies per woman. The problem, though, is that Australia's fertility rate actually fell last year to a record low of 1.74 babies per woman. The budget papers give no hint at what secret plans the Treasurer is hiding in his drawers to jack up
the fertility rate, so I ask the Treasurer: what behavioural changes is the government expecting to see that would drive this bounce in fertility?

What policies or firm decrees does he have in his pocket? Are his government colleagues giving him a hand? Should innocent Australian families be worried that the government's 'big stick' might come into play? The government's budgetary con is exposed by last year's population plan, which admitted that fertility rates are falling. Australians are rightly confused. Are women expected to be more fertile or less in 2020? The government has been caught out like a shag on a rock. The Treasurer's budget forecasts can't be trusted. They are the product of his dreams, not rooted in reality.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43 the time for members' statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Aged Care

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Why are up to half of all older Australians in residential aged care malnourished?

Mr Frydenberg: Not a distraction?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:01): I want to address this very clearly.

Mr Albanese: It's a distraction, is it, Josh?

The SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting.

Mr HUNT: The government called a royal commission, and it was one of the first acts of the Prime Minister on coming to office, precisely because we were concerned about the circumstances of Australians in aged care. When the Prime Minister called this, he said that we had to be prepared for findings which would be of concern, things which would confront all of us, so it was done without fear or favour, just to bring to light all of the issues which needed to be brought to light. The royal commission—and I thank the commissioners; sadly, we have lost Commissioner Tracey—found very clearly that there were flaws in the system, dating back not just over three or five years but over recent decades, and we have moved to address those issues. In particular, over $500 million was allocated as part of the response to the first part of the royal commission.

In addition to that, we have been supporting home care, as well as residential care. In particular, we have increased the amount of funding from $13.3 billion when we came into office to almost $22 billion, $23 billion, $24 billion and $25 billion over the course of the current budget. Let us be absolutely clear. We thank the royal commissioners for their findings. We embrace what they have found. We called that out. We also embraced any other findings. That's why we established not just a royal commission but also a permanent standing commissioner responsible for health and safety in aged care. These are the actions that we've taken, as I said, increasing the support, the encouragement and the protections not just in residential care but also in home care, and we will continue to do that without fear or favour.

Women in the Workforce

Mrs McIntosh (Lindsay) (14:03): My question is to the Minister for the Environment, representing the Minister for Women. Will the minister outline how the Morrison government's commitment to ensuring equality in the workplace is benefiting women across Australia?

Ms Ley (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:03): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question and congratulate her on leading the W21 think tank program, a global women's initiative at the US Studies Centre. She, like so many of the female class of 2019 on both sides of the House, will make an extraordinary contribution to this parliament. While acknowledging that we have further to go, it is important to also recognise how far we've come. Our mothers and grandmothers talked not about the gender pay gap but about the opportunity to be in the workforce at all. Until 1966, within the lifetime of many of the people in this parliament, women had to resign from the Public Service when they got married. While women still battle discrimination, it's different to what it was before.

In my field of aviation, I well recall Debbie Wardley, a pilot who took Ansett Airlines to court based on her determination to fly in the left-hand seat of a commercial airliner. The case against Debbie Wardley was that women were unsuitable to fly commercially—their menstrual cycles made them unsuitable; they didn't have the strength to, for example, manually lower the landing gear in the event of a hydraulic failure. In the year that Debbie Wardley won the case, she inspired an awful lot of women to fly aircraft—and I was one of them.

We are supporting more women into leadership positions in the public and private sectors, including meeting our own gender diversity targets of women holding 50 per cent of Australian government board positions overall.
We are at 47.9 per cent. That's the highest we have been at since 2013. So this government is making real progress. As the Prime Minister said, that is the highest percentage of women on government boards since public reporting began. We have reduced the gender pay gap to 14 per cent. It’s come down by three per cent since 2013—and I know that the Minister for Women, in the other place, is determined to get that number down. As I said, the gender pay gap is shrinking.

In 2018 we, for the first time, produced the Women's Economic Security Statement, because we recognise that strong correlation between a country's progress in closing the gender pay gap and its economic competitiveness, its national productivity, its innovation, its economic growth and the ability of companies to attract and retain talent. We are building on investments such as Women in STEM and entrepreneurship through the Curious Minds Future Female Entrepreneurs and we are boosting the Female Founders Program. Many of the high-paying jobs of the future will be in these sectors and will benefit the whole of society.

There are incredible women in Australia—particularly, I must say, in rural Australia. They tend to hide their light under a bushel, but I just want to say to them all—and in fact to women everywhere who are in leadership positions—that the generation coming behind you can't be what they can't see. So step out and shine your light.  

(Time expired)

Aged Care

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Health. The median waiting time for the highest level of approved home care packages is almost three years, and the aged-care royal commission found that people who waited more than six months for a home care package had a 20 per cent higher risk of death. Why on earth are older Australians facing a three-year delay when the minister knows that it increases their risk of death?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:07): I want to thank the member for her question. The royal commission did make findings, and we responded—and we responded rapidly. That included 10,000 additional home care places, which has been part of a 44,000-place increase in the last year and a half and a tiny bit more. We have taken the number of home care places from 60,000 when we came to office to 150,000 now. That is a 150 per cent increase. That is a dramatic increase in the number of home care places.

I know that at the last election the opposition had a chance to contribute to the number of home care places, and they provided zero home care places. We have added 44,000 home care places in the last two years and increased the number of home care places by 150 per cent, and they added zero at the very moment they had a chance to take a stand and to invest a dollar. At the time, they were raising $387 billion in taxes and they provided not one extra home care place—zero. We have increased the number of home care places by 150 per cent. They had a chance only a few months ago to do this. At a time when we had called a royal commission, when they knew that there were important—

An opposition member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat.

An opposition member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Has the minister concluded his answer?

Mr HUNT: Yes.

Morrison Government

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's consistent beliefs and policies are ensuring that it delivers on its commitments to Australians? Is the Prime Minister aware of the effects of any alternative approaches?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:09): We went to the last election as a government, and we went there with our clear beliefs. They were a fair go for those who have a go, that the best form of welfare is a job and that you don't have to hold people down in order for others to succeed. These are the beliefs that underpin the commitments we took to the Australian people at the last election, and they endorsed those beliefs by returning the members of this government and electing some outstanding new members to sit on these government benches so that we could go forward and implement the commitments we made.

We said we wanted to lower taxes. That's what we said at the election—not increase taxes, as the Labor Party said they wanted to do at the election. We said we wanted to lower taxes, and within weeks of sitting as a government, from the last election, we legislated to lower taxes. But what was the alternative? The Leader of the Opposition, the Labor Party, was against lowering taxes. And they were for lowering taxes. Each way, every day,
on lower taxes is what you find from the Labor Party. We said we wanted to legislate the drought fund, because we knew that those right across rural and regional Australia who are hurting from the drought needed that drought support that was determined at the National Drought Summit. We took it to the Australian people. The Leader of the Opposition was against it, was for it—taking each position he possibly could on this issue.

On affordable energy, we have been putting in place the policies we took to the election to ensure that we were supporting the generation of power across our economy and not having any allergies to the source of that energy whatsoever—whether it was on renewable energy, whether it was on pumped hydro, whether it was on ensuring that we had coal-fired power stations in the North with a feasibility study. Whatever it is, we know it's necessary to generate jobs. Those opposite, and in particular the Leader of the Labor Party, cannot make up their mind. He cannot make up his mind on what his policy is. He's going to go to Western Australia this week, and I assume that as soon as he lands the location service enabler will kick in and all of a sudden he'll be for the resources sector. He'll be for the resources sector the second he touches down in Western Australia. But when he gets back to Victoria and he's around the suburbs of Victoria, the location service enabler will kick in again, he'll check his GPS and his language will change completely. Consistency matters, and the Leader of the Opposition hasn't got it.

Aged Care

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (14:12): My question's to the Minister for Health. The minister just boasted about 10,000 more home-care packages, only half of which are currently available; 28,000 older Australians died while waiting for their approved home-care package in just two years. Surely Australians who've contributed all of their lives deserve better. Will the minister admit now that 5,000 packages in response to a waiting list of over 112,000 amounts to neglect?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:13): I want to respond to the member with a very clear position. What we have done we have done based on advice as to what is the safest way to implement, to respond rapidly and to respond to the royal commission. The Prime Minister called a royal commission as one of his first actions, precisely to bring to light all the potential issues. The commission has done a fantastic job. And in responding to and accepting all the commission's interim findings, we made two points in relation to home care: (1) 10,000 places, which is part of a 40,000-place increase in the past two years, or an increase from 60,000 to 150,000—a 150 per cent increase whilst we have been in government; and (2) accepting their proposal for a broader strategic restructure, and we are working to prepare for that, but of course we will have to see what the commission themselves recommend as their final recommendation. But we got on with it immediately.

And I would remind the House that at the same time we have increased the number of home-care places by 150 per cent, that has been at a dramatically faster rate than the rate at which the number of older Australians has grown. That means we have a far higher per capita rate of home-care places for older Australians than ever existed under Labor when they were in government. Labor had a chance during the course of the royal commission to match what we were doing, and they failed: zero places—not one, not a dollar—on something that they now seem to believe matters after the royal commission had been called. I would call what they did at the last election 'neglect'.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:15): I'd like to inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon a former member of this House and current deputy leader of the Tasmanian Labor Party, Michelle O'Byrne. On behalf of the House: a welcome to you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Commonwealth Integrity Commission

Dr HAINES (Indi) (14:15): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, my constituents tell me they are outraged and disappointed by the sports rorts scandal. Many Australians would be shocked to know that the government's last model for a federal integrity commission is so weak that it would have been unable to investigate the former Minister for Sport for her role in the sports rorts debacle. Prime Minister, can you reassure us that the government's bill for a federal integrity commission will give it the power to investigate scandals such as this?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:16): As the member is I think aware, because of the multiple briefings we've had together, the model that we are proposing—and, as I said, it's very complicated, with 350 pages of draft—

Opposition members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr PORTER: The model that we are proposing would have standing powers greater than those of a royal commission. So, on both the law enforcement integrity side and the public sector integrity side, the powers that would be available to the Commonwealth Integrity Commission under our design would be greater than those that would exist for a royal commission. This, in effect, would be a standing power of a royal commission that would enable it to investigate known offences, such as abuse of public office but also other criminal offences relating to corruption, right across the public sector—on one side for law enforcement agencies and on the other side for other agencies.

I might note that there was nothing in the recent report of the Auditor-General that suggested anything of the nature that I think was inferred in the question. In fact, the Auditor-General's report made it very, very clear that every single one of the projects that was ultimately approved—pursuant to guidelines, whereby the minister had ultimate discretion—was an eligible project.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PORTER: I hear the interjections from members opposite. But it was also the case that in previous grants programs—grants programs, indeed, that were overseen by the Leader of the Opposition—there were multiple approvals of grants which were actually ineligible. There was nothing of that nature in the Auditor-General's report here. But what's also clear is that, under our model, if an Auditor-General, who would be a key referring agency, ever took a view, in any circumstances, that there was the potentiality of an offence of any type having been committed, he could refer that matter up to the Commonwealth Integrity Commission, which would have powers greater than a royal commission to investigate.

Aged Care

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Health. The aged-care royal commission drew attention to inadequate prevention and management of wounds, sometimes leading to sepsicaemia and death, and aged-care residents sitting or lying in urine and faeces. Why are older Australians suffering from this neglect?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:18): The royal commission's report was absolutely confronting. It talked about neglect over decades, and it talked about the situation which needed to be addressed. That is why we adopted every one of the royal commission's findings. Not only did we call the royal commission, not only was this one of the Prime Minister's first actions—the opposition have staged and shown an utter hypocrisy in their approach today. That is because when they had a chance only a few months ago—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: This is a serious question.

The SPEAKER: No, what is the point of order?

Mr Albanese: The point of order is on relevance. It wasn't about the opposition. We can't fund things from opposition. Only the government can.

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

Mr HUNT: In terms of those recommendations, not only have we adopted all of the findings of the interim report but it stands in stark contrast to the utter hypocrisy and failure of the opposition. Given a chance only a few months ago, they could have provided one. How many home care places did they provide? Zero! In terms of the other items within the royal commission, it is an uncomfortable truth for the opposition. They had a chance and their provision was zero. But in terms of all of the findings of the—

Mr Albanese: —

The SPEAKER: No—the minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition has already raised a point of order under relevance. I'm listening carefully, so he can't raise another point of order on relevance—you can't, under the standing orders.

Mr Albanese: The point of order is that he is defying your ruling. The question did not go to alternatives at all. It is a serious question. It wasn't a politically laden question. It was a straight question.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my right! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides will cease interjecting.

Mr Burke interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business! I am going to say that I do follow these questions very carefully. I understand the point the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make, and I've made that point when there's been very specific questions that don't ask for alternatives, that don't have political commentary in them. When a question has a final line that is really going to the criticism or talking about neglect, it does open things up somewhat. But I do say to the minister that the question didn't ask for alternatives. Ministers are allowed to compare and contrast briefly, but the question went very much to the government's approach. I call the minister.

Mr HUNT: Mr Speaker, you are correct—there were no alternatives. On that front, in terms of the safety and quality—very important reforms that we have enacted— with regard to the commission: obviously, $496 million for the 10,000 home care packages. Importantly though, as well, $25.5 million to improve medication management and safety for older Australians living in residential aged care, as well as the $10 million for workforce training and support, particularly in dementia, and $4.7 million to improve the implementation of younger people in residential care. In addition do that, what may have been lost by the opposition is that on 1 July, thanks to the work of the now Minister for Indigenous Affairs, new quality and safety standards for aged care came into being. And on 1 January we also had the legislated Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, Janet Anderson, who, with her legislative powers, has now been pursuing these issues. These standards of safety and care, whether in relation to wound management or falls or any other form of abuse or treatment, have never been legislated to this effect before, have never been taken to this level before, have never been elevated to the level of scrutiny that we have put in place on our watch, in our time, precisely because, as the Prime Minister said, when he set out the need for a royal commission, we want to expose all of the challenges, wherever they exist, whenever they occur, and in whatever form that may be.

Regional Australia

Mr O'DOWD ( Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (14:24): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister outline to the House the importance of the Morrison government's consistent belief and policy approach to driving development in regional Australia? And is the Deputy Prime Minister aware of the consequences of alternative approaches?

Mr McCORMACK ( Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:24): I thank the member for Flynn for his question. He understands, coming from the wonderful port city of Gladstone, that industrial city, just how important our resources sector is. And he understands that coal provides $62 billion worth of exports. He understands that it provides two-thirds of Australia's energy supplies. He understands that it provides 55,000 jobs. He understands the importance of the $4 million Collinsville feasibility study for that HELE plant.

Gladstone has the NRG Gladstone Power Station, Queensland Alumina, Cement Australia, Orica Yarwun global chemical plant, Northern Oil Refinery—a wonderful business—Curtis Island gas export facilities and pipelines. They're providing a lot of jobs and hope and optimism and opportunity.

Last night the well-informed Peter van Onselen had a report about a rebel group. When I heard this I was very interested to see where this rebel group was coming from. Initially I thought it might have been the Greens. I thought the member for Melbourne, the former ALP branch member at Subiaco, may have had his come-to-Damascus moment—that he's seen the light shine in, knowing where the light came from. But then I realised that in fact it was the Otis group. Peter van Onselen belled the cat about this rebel group. Imagine that—a rebel group within parliament!

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr McCORMACK: You are just trying to steal my thunder! The Otis menu is very, very interesting reading. On the menu is ravioli egg yolk. No doubt the leader of that group, the member for Hunter, had that when he went there for dinner, because today he's got egg all over his face! It's very interesting to read—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister will resume his seat.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland's missing the moment yet again. I'm going to disappoint the Deputy Prime Minister. The question referred to alternative approaches. It's policy based. I can't see how reading out the menu, as interesting as it is, is relevant to the question.

Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: No, I'm not taking the risk. Just resume your seat. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call. He needs to be relevant to the question. That doesn't involve reading out a restaurant menu.

Mr McCORMACK: It didn't for the member for Maribyrnong. I'm not quite sure that was on the menu. Take the $100 million Gladstone port access road extension. We're building the infrastructure that Gladstone needs and
that people need right across the member for Flynn's wonderful Central Queensland electorate. We're providing the infrastructure as part of our $100 billion infrastructure rollout, our decade-long plan. It's important; it's creating jobs; and it's creating hope for the people of Flynn—and the member for Flynn knows it. He knows how important our resources sector is. It's a shame that those opposite don't ever change the international cheese selection, just like their ever-changing policy position on coal.

Economy

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (14:28): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline to the House how the Morrison government's consistent belief in economic management is keeping our economy resilient in the face of persistent challenges? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches that could threaten our economic prosperity?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:28): I thank the member for Bass for her question. She's been a farmer, a local mayor and a strong advocate for the state of Tasmania, like the member for Braddon is. It's a state which has seen the strongest retail sales across the country, with turnover growing at 6.8 per cent through the year to December. That's the strongest growth in retail sales in more than five years.

The Governor of the Reserve Bank has said that the economic fundamentals of this country are very strong. We have the first balanced budget in 11 years. We have a record number of Australians who are in work. We have passed through the parliament, as a result of the last two budgets, more than $300 billion in tax cuts.

Not everyone in this place has had a clear and decisive position when it comes to lower taxes. The Leader of the Opposition has been up and down like an Otis elevator. He was asked about the tax cuts at a doorstep after the tax cuts had passed: 'Labor initially stood in the way of the tax cuts, but you've ended up with those tax cuts anyway.' The Leader of the Opposition replied, 'No, we didn't.' So the journalist asked him again: 'So you've had a win this week, with the legislation that has passed the parliament?' The Leader of the Opposition said: 'No, we didn't. We lost the vote.' The journalist asked him again: 'How did you lose the vote when you cast your vote with the government in the Senate?' The Leader of the Opposition: 'No, we didn't.'

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't know what he stands for and he doesn't know what he votes for. No wonder there have been 20 MPs on the side opposite who have met in secret, not telling their leader, not telling their deputy, not telling their shadow Treasurer. Only this side of the House is committed to lower taxes and a stronger economy.

Aged Care

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Why do over one-quarter of younger people who go into aged care die within a single year of entry?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:31): In terms of individual cases, it would be very much dependent on the circumstances. I would say this: younger people who go into aged care would be going in because they have a very serious condition, whether it's an acquired brain injury, some form of degenerative condition or some other form of harm, whether through accident, injury or illness. Let us be very clear about that. Having said that, I want to make this point: the person who wrote into the terms of the royal commission the involvement and engagement and treatment of younger people in residential aged care was this person—the Prime Minister. I had the privilege of sitting with him when we drafted those terms, and that was his personal passion. That was the focus and the humanity and the concern.

What we have also seen is that we have accepted the royal commission's embrace of those terms of reference. In particular, there are three targets which the royal commission included in its interim findings precisely to address the care and concern and cause of any harm relating to young people in aged care: firstly, that no people under the age of 65 should enter residential care by 2022—we have accepted and embraced that; secondly, that no people under the age of 45 should be living in aged care by 2022—that's living in, let alone entering; and, thirdly, that no people under the age of 65 should be living in residential aged care by 2025. These are standards which have never been set before. These are goals which have never been set before. These are targets which have never been set before and which we will achieve. It's a deep and powerful commitment.

So I would make this point: under the former government, the number of younger people living in residential aged care moved from 6,577 in 2007 to 6,478 in 2010. Now it is down to 5,606, and we are decreasing still further. It has become the priority for the Prime Minister and the relevant minister, and what we have seen is that the number of younger people entering residential aged care has also decreased, from 536 in the March-to-June quarter of 2017 to 436 in the March-to-June quarter of 2019—a 22 per cent decline, before the royal commission's interim findings. The reason that these standards have been set is that the commission found the importance of and
need for them. But the reason the commission had that power was that this person, the member for Cook, the Prime Minister of Australia, personally drafted them.

**Energy**

**Dr ALLEN** (Higgins) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Will the minister outline to the House the importance of the Morrison government's consistent beliefs and policy approach around energy investment? Is the minister aware of the consequences of any alternative approaches?

**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (14:35): I thank the member for her question and I acknowledge the extraordinary work she is doing in her electorate with clean technology entrepreneurs, who are bringing forward products and services to reduce emissions and reduce the cost of electricity across Australia and across the world.

We are focused on outcomes—lowering prices, keeping the lights on and bringing down emissions while keeping our economy strong. That means doing all this without imposing a carbon tax, without driving up electricity prices and without hurting critical sectors that are the backbone of Australia, like agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Our approach to this is technology neutral, because we are focused on the outcomes.

We are getting on with getting more gas into critical markets like New South Wales. We are removing barriers to coal at places like Mt Piper—one of the newest and most flexible coal-fired generators in the country. We've put a billion dollars into our Grid Reliability Fund. We are supporting record levels of investment in renewable energy generation, and we're a world leader in renewable energy generation. We are investing in pumped hydro projects like Snowy, Battery of the Nation and Marinus Link. We are also a world leader in energy efficiency and household solar, and we've backed the hydrogen sector with a commitment of over $500 million. And we are bringing all of this together with our technology investment roadmap. Our approach is balanced, sensible and technology neutral—and we have no policy allergies.

But the member for Higgins asked me if there was another approach, and there is. It's called 'technology by town'. When it comes to Labor, when they are in St Kilda, it's solar; when they are in Balmain, it's batteries; and when they are in Werribee, it's wind. But in Kingston, at the Otis Dining Hall, it's coal—it's all coal. We don't do technology by town. We'll support all technology that drives down the price of electricity, that keeps the lights on and that brings down emissions.

**Aged Care**

**Ms COLLINS** (Franklin) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Health. Why is the government privatising the aged-care assessment team—the only part of the aged-care system everyone accepts is working well, including the New South Wales minister, Brad Hazzard, who described this privatisation as 'a plan that lacks logic'?

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:38): I reject the proposition in that question, and I do that for a number of reasons—firstly, because, under the current scheme, there are non-government contracts, and that is a very important thing to note. Secondly, I want to challenge the fundamental assumption that things need to stay exactly as they are; that they couldn't be better. All of this questioning is about how things could be better—and they can be better in terms of the assessment system and the way that the experience of families occurs. How do I know this? I know this because, in the Tune review, precisely the question that was raised by the member was addressed. What is it that David Tune said? Mr Tune—one of the most distinguished former public servants that this parliament and this federal government has been privileged to have—said:

I consider that to create a seamless aged care system that is responsive to consumer needs and enable the government to fully understand demand, it should be a priority to combine the RAS and ACAT assessment workforces and systems into an integrated assessment workforce. It may be preferable to implement this using a staged approach, considering opportunities to trial the integration in some locations, for example in particular rural and remote regions or in jurisdictions that have not yet fully transitioned to the national system.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Franklin, on a point of order?

**Ms Collins:** It was about privatisation. We agree with the streamlining but not the privatisation.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Franklin will resume her seat. If the member for Franklin repeats that on a point of order in trying to debate the matter, she'll be out of the chamber.

**Mr HUNT:** The member for Franklin was asking for the source, the origin, the reason. I'm actually reading from the report that recommended there could be improvements in the existing system. I think it's very important to put today into context. On the one hand they say that change is needed; on the other hand they oppose change; and on the third hand it's each way, one way and another's approach. They don't even provide any funding. Let me
say this: 'one way, each way.' But we are responding directly to David Tune's report in the very terms that he set out. We reject, absolutely, the presumption. We're also very happy to work constructively with all of the states and territories.

Here is a question: is the opposition now saying it will abolish the existing non-government contracts that are in place for the delivery of these services? Is that a new policy position where they are saying that they will abolish the existing non-government contracts? Because that system already exists. What we are doing is following the recommendations, as we did with the royal commission, in this case of David Tune. We're doing that to protect people and to give them a better chance at getting— (Time expired)

**Energy**

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:41): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's consistent beliefs and policies are reducing emissions and reducing electricity prices? Is the Prime Minister aware of the costs associated with any alternative approaches?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:42): I thank the member for her question and her interest in this issue. At the last election we took our Paris commitment to reduce emissions by 26 per cent for 2030. We also went to the last election being able to demonstrate that we were meeting our Kyoto commitments, and those Kyoto commitments this year will be met by 411 million tonnes, exceeding them.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland has been warned!

Mr MORRISON: I can also report that, because of the policies we have pursued and the embrace we've had on technology, we've seen emissions fall by 12.8 per cent. In the last year alone we have seen electricity prices fall by 3½ per cent, and we've seen record investments in renewables and record uptake of solar panels on the homes and roofs of Australian households. Our position and our policy has been based on very clear targets and is proceeding to those targets. We've had clear guidelines as well. We're not going to reduce emissions by putting up people's taxes, we're not going to do it by pushing up electricity prices and we're not going to do it by rolling out extinction of people's jobs in rural and regional communities. I wish there was an alternative that the Labor Party might speak of, but there isn't one at present. They have no alternative policy when it comes to this issue.

When 20 members of the Labor Party gather at the Otis restaurant, what I'm more mystified by is that they can actually find a consistent position of the Leader of the Opposition that they can actually oppose. I'm staggered that they can find any consistency in the Leader of the Opposition's policy on emissions or electricity or coal or any of these things, because he has it each way every day.

My advice to those who are meeting down at the Otis regularly is to just wait until tomorrow, because he'll have another policy. He's going to go odds and evens on climate policy. The member for Hunter will agree with it on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, and the member for Sydney can have her days on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. As we go around the chamber, they'll all get their go, because he'll agree with every single one of you on every single position you have. What that says about the Leader of the Opposition is that his each way, every way, every day approach to policy is the reason this leader of the Labor Party can't be trusted any more than the last one. The last one liked to do dodgy deals around lazy Susans. This one is just the same.

**Pensions and Benefits**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Government Services. Minister, how many Australians received debt notices issued under the government's illegal robodebt scheme, how much money are they owed, and when will they be repaid?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (14:45): Let me thank the member for his question. As I responded to the Leader of the Opposition last week, the government announced that it has made a further refinement to the income compliance program, which is part of our ongoing commitment to continually strengthen and improve the scheme. The program has already undergone a number of iterations and refinements since its inception under Labor in 2011. In response to feedback, these changes will make the program more robust by requiring additional evidence when using information to identify them. We've been carefully and methodically working to identify those customers whose debts may have been calculated using apportioned ATO—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat for a second. Members on my left will cease interjecting. I've given the minister ample time for a preamble. The question itself didn't have a preamble. It asked three very
specific questions that asked for figures, essentially. Whilst the minister can't be expected to have those answers with him, he needs to be relevant to the question or take it on notice.

Mr ROBERT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The process is highly manual, in terms of finding the data, and complex, as I informed the House. It's not appropriate to pre-empt that process. As I advised the House last week, I say the same thing now, which is that we'll advise the House—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Minister, just pause for a second. Members on my left! Minister, have you concluded your answer?

Mr Robert: Yes; I have.

Resources Sector

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (14:47): My question is for the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Will the minister outline to the House the importance of the Morrison-McCormack government's—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member will just resume her seat for a second. If members on my left can cease interjecting—I can't hear the question. The member for Mallee will begin her question again.

Dr WEBSTER: My question is for the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Will the minister outline to the House the importance of the Morrison-McCormack government's consistent beliefs and policy approach when it comes to supporting our resource sector? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) (14:48): I thank the honourable member for Mallee. What a fantastic job the member for Mallee is doing in Victoria—a true local member representing her people. Under the coalition's stable economic management, the resources sector is booming. It is booming, and generating record exports, royalties and taxes paid by mining companies. Mr Speaker, I'm sure you know this, but the resources sector contributed eight per cent of Australia's GDP. I know those opposite like it when I talk about the numbers; I know they're keen on the numbers. Eight per cent is $279 billion in 2018-19. What a significant contribution to our economy.

The sector employed 250,000 Australians at the end of 2018-19. That is two per cent of the workforce, or one in 50. It has been one of the fastest-growing sections of our economy. Ninety four thousand people were employed 15 years ago; that has reached 250,000. It is this section of the economy which is delivering jobs. It is this section of the economy which is lifting our GDP. It is this section of the economy which has got growth and economic advantages. It is this section of the economy in regional Australia which is helping keep our people employed, including those in the member for Mallee's electorate. I know that my colleagues, like the member for Flynn, Ken O'Dowd, stand for coal. Resources in his sector employ people, and he supports them. The member for Dawson, George, stands for coal. We all know that George stands for coal and the people who are employed in that region. It's not just coal exports: there's $77 billion in iron ore and LNG exports worth $50 billion.

I'm asked about alternative approaches. We know that those opposite are not quite that supportive. We know that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has said he'd be happy if there were no coal exports, if it collapsed. On this side of the House, we support the industry. I've said to the shadow minister, the member for Hunter, that I'm happy to work with him and the other shadow ministers in the interests of the nation. I'm happy to exchange phone calls and exchange texts and exchange emails. I'm even happy to meet them in a social setting! I'm advised that the member for Hunter has got a regular gig, a regular table—I'm not sure where that restaurant is. I might actually ask for help. Can I ask for help, Prime Minister?

Mr Morrison: You can.

Mr PITT: It's the Otis restaurant. I know that there are 20 seats and 20 people there. I know there's not a seat for the Leader of the Opposition, but, if you can squeeze me in, I'm happy to come and talk to you.

Defence Procurement

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. What binding commitment to a percentage of local content did the government write into its contract for the future submarines?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:51): Thank you for the question. We all know in this place that the Morrison government is investing a massive $50 billion into our submarine program. The 12 submarines will be built—

Ms Rishworth: Where are they going to be built?
Ms PRICE: Good question. Thank you, I'll take that interjection: in Australia by Australians and using Australian steel. We are also investing $535 million at Osborne in South Australia to ensure that we can build the submarines right here in Australia. Sovereign control over the attack class submarines and also maximising—

The SPEAKER: I'll ask the minister to just pause for a second. I'm allowing her a preamble, which she's had now for 30 seconds. Again, this is a very specific question asking for a specific figure, but the minister needs to be relevant. As I said, she's quite entitled under the standing orders to take the question on notice.

Ms PRICE: What we do know in terms of the contracts—sovereign control is, of course, critically important to Australia, as is maximising Australian industry involvement. We are currently in the design phase for these submarines, and I'm advised, to date, that there are over 130 Australian companies and organisations that are subcontracted. The actual proportion of Australian content on the submarines will be determined as the design of the submarines is completed. Australian small companies are vital to the construction of our submarines. And I'm committed—the Prime Minister's committed; we are all committed here—to building 12 submarines in this country using Australian industry content. We have faith in our Australian industry. We are backing Australian industry. We are building 12 submarines in our country, because we are going to create more shipbuilding jobs.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland will leave under 94(a), and if those sitting with him want to save time they might go too. It might just save a little bit of time. I'll give them the option.

National Security

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's consistent beliefs and policies on border protection and national security are keeping Australians safe, and is the minister aware of the consequences of any alternative approaches?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (14:54): I have got a lot of friends over there, Mr Speaker! They're always excited when I come up. It's nice to be back. I want to say thank you very much to the member for Moncrieff for her question on a very important topic. Like all members on this side of the parliament, we are absolutely consistent and strong when it comes to border protection management as well as in relation to national security.

A lot has been said about this Leader of the Opposition—whether he is better or worse than the previous Leader of the Opposition, the member for Maribyrnong. Is he consistent? He's not consistent on different matters. What we know is that when it comes to border protection there has never been a weaker Leader of the Opposition. We know that on the Alan Jones program the Leader of the Opposition said: 'We wouldn't be changing any of the government's policies. I strongly support the measures the government has in place.' But when he left the 2GB studio, he went, on that occasion, to speak to Barrie Cassidy on Insiders. It was at the time of the ALP national conference. This is what the Leader of the Opposition had to say—and it is a very interesting quote: 'I don't believe the boats will come.' Boats? What boats? He was sitting around the cabinet table when 50,000 people came on 800 boats. I mean, what boats could we be talking about? Having just told Alan Jones that he's completely committed to our policies, he goes on to say, 'If people were in a boat, including families and children, I myself—'

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

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr Albanese: From you!

An honourable member: Precious! Have a debate!

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. Leader of the Opposition, let's not just have an argument. You're either seeking the call for a point of order or you're not. Okay, we'll just go on then. The minister has the call.

Mr DUTTON: The opposition has had so many policy positions in relation to boats and national security that it's hard to keep up. But I was interested to know that a new policy group has formed. I was watching Channel 10 news last night, and imagine my surprise when I saw a report about a group of 20 Labor members attending Otis Dining Hall. There was a sense of déjà vu because it automatically took me back to Muriel's Wedding. Do you remember the scene from Muriel's Wedding, where Bill had to go into the restaurant and ran into Deidre Chambers. Imagine his surprise! I watched Senator Farrell—it wasn't the scene inside the restaurant; it was the one outside—where Don Farrell was made up perfectly, make-up on, he runs into PVO, 'Imagine seeing you here, PVO—but I've got 15 minutes worth of comment to provide to you.' And then Senator Kitching gets caught up in
the Senate. I can see PVO in the background winding her up, saying 'You've spoken for 10 minutes—the package only went for a minute and a half.' They are all at sea when it comes to policy. (Time expired)

**Defence Industry**

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. The contract for Australia's Collins class submarines includes a requirement for 70 per cent local content, which was ultimately exceeded. This government asserted to Australian workers that 90 per cent of the Future Submarines contract would be local content. So why on earth is there no binding percentage requirement for local content in the government's contract for the Future Submarines?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:58): We are delivering a sovereign defence capability. As I said in my last answer, mandating a minimum portion to Australian industry, particularly at this time, during the design phase, would be counterproductive.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin!

Ms PRICE: We won't be lectured by those opposite.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned!

Ms PRICE: I'd like to know how many submarines those opposite were considering building. I think it's zero.

**Agriculture Industry**

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison-McCormack government's consistent policy approach is building resistance for agriculture? Is the minister aware of risks associated with any alternative approaches?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (14:59): I thank the member for Cowper for his question. I acknowledge the contribution that the Cowper electorate makes to agriculture, the rich and proud history of agriculture in the Cowper district and how it is going to contribute to the resilience and the future of agriculture in meeting its $100 billion goal by 2030. I heard as I went around the electorate of Cowper and from listening to industry leaders that they want certainty—they want certainty in policy formation and execution, particularly in areas that are so important to Australian farmers at the moment, such as drought and live trade.

Let's not forget the reckless actions of those opposite, who, because of a television show, banned live trade to Indonesia overnight. That trashed our relationship with our nearest and best neighbour. It has taken 10 years of policy formation and execution to rebuild that relationship to the point where we have now been able to sign a free trade agreement with Indonesia. That will actually benefit beef farmers and broader agriculture. That is because of the calm and methodical way in which this government has undertaken its policy formation, ensuring that we give certainty not just to our farmers but to our international partners. That's what calm, methodical government is about. It's also about the drought.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I'll take that interjection. Let me remind those opposite about live sheep. Those opposite were going to walk away overnight. Instead of the calm, methodical approach of science and regulation, they were going to take it away. The Labor Party in Queensland has a policy resolution to remove all live trade by 2030, which will destroy agriculture in northern Australia overnight. That is the reckless approach of those opposite with respect to live trade.

But it extends further than that. It extends to drought. Before the election, in one of the lowest political acts in this nation's history, those opposite voted against the Future Drought Fund—a $5 billion fund giving a $100 million a year dividend. It was the lowest political act, playing on the misery of Australian farmers in the middle of the worst drought. That is one of the biggest kicks Australian agriculture has ever had. It took an election to change their mind. It took the 18 May election to change their mind. I suspect the member for Hunter played a very contentious part in that.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Yes, you did, Member for Hunter. It took you that long because of the near-death political experience you had. You nearly lost your seat. You came out from underneath the rock you had been hiding under for six years. You finally found a voice, albeit from the confines of the Otis restaurant.
Defence Procurement

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. When hundreds of defence industry workers at Osborne in Adelaide have lost their jobs—and there are reports of another 34 job losses announced today—why on earth is the government sending hull fabrication jobs to France, instead of keeping them here in Australia on the future submarines?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (15:03): I thank you for the question. There are 4,000 jobs in shipbuilding at this point in time. We need 15,000 shipbuilding jobs. Once again, we will not be lectured to by those opposite. There are 4,000 jobs now and we need 15,000 jobs. We're working very hard to ensure that we have the skill set in this country to ensure we have the sovereign capability. We will build those 12 submarines in Australia. We will build the workforce that we need.

Trade

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (15:03): My question is to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's consistent beliefs and policy approach to trade are helping to support regional and rural Australians? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (15:04): I thank the member for Nicholls for his question. I know that he knows firsthand the benefits that greater export opportunities bring to the people of his electorate in terms of greater jobs and greater investment. We know that the wealth of our nation has to be built on what we make, what we grow and what we sell. That's why our trade agreements are so very important. They show in real terms to our young farmers that they have a future, that there are further markets out there to sell their goods. They mean that they can exist without being under the thumb and sway of the big supermarkets and without being price takers. They show that there is a future in primary production. They help secure their future in primary production.

In 2019 Australia posted our largest-ever calendar-year trade surplus of $67.6 billion. I know the member for Nicholls was very pleased to hear that. In 2019 Australian goods exports rose 13.4 per cent to a record $391.8 billion, with service exports rising 8.9 per cent to a record $101.1 billion. One of the reasons we've been able to do this is our trade agreements. Take the TPP-11. That has eliminated more than 98 per cent of tariffs in the free trade area, including new reductions on Japan's tariffs on beef, which were as high as 40 per cent, so there are big gains there. On 11 February this year the Peru-Australia Free Trade Agreement came into force, which will ultimately eliminate over 99 per cent of all tariffs on Australian goods to Peru. That Peru FTA guaranteed duty-free access for 30,000 tonnes of sugar, which Queensland Sugar said would be filled within the first year, so there are big opportunities there. We have also brought into force the Australia-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement, which will guarantee zero tariffs on Australian goods to Hong Kong.

It's not just the tariffs we're knocking down; it's the non-tariff barriers as well. Take, for example, export protocols in my area. Once upon a time if we wanted to export cherries to China, they had to go into cold storage for weeks, but now that we've negotiated we can get our cherries straight in and for the first time this season our exporters have reported solid growth. We're breaking down barriers and finding new markets. We ask those opposite to join us and support regional and country Australia. We know you have an inner-city green constituency you want to pander to and we know you have problems with the Otis group. We know all of that. Once upon a time you used to dine at the egalitarian restaurants in Chinatown in Sydney, but now it's the hifalutin restaurants of Canberra. Move away from the creme brulee and the fancy restaurants and come and support regional Australia. Don't wind these trade agreements back, because they're benefitting regional Australia.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (15:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. I have dedicated my working life to the health of children. Children with development delay and other disabilities, including autism, require a developmental diagnosis to qualify for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Children in disadvantaged areas are waiting up to 14 months longer than children in other areas for an NDIS developmental diagnosis. Why?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:07): I'll ask the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to add to my answer, but first I commend you on the work that you have been doing in that area over a lifetime. I know that area well and I know the high regard that you're held in, particularly in terms of the support you've given to families and paediatric support in your community. I understand the reason for the question today and your deep concern about these matters, and I share that concern. That's why we're providing the support to the National Disability Insurance Scheme to ensure they can address the very issues that you're raising in this place today so importantly, and I'll ask the minister to go into those details.
Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (15:08): Thanks, PM. Let me also reinforce the words about Dr Freelander's long career of service. I make a number of points on this issue. First of all, when it comes to health diagnosis, we all understand that that is the responsibility of state health. We can say it is unacceptable in terms of length, but it is absolutely the responsibility of state health authorities. Having said that, a diagnosis is not required for access into the Early Childhood Early Intervention stream of the NDIS. That is quite clear in law and it is quite clear in practice.

In terms of access, yesterday's quarterly data showed that people turning up with children seeking early intervention through the early intervention pathways are getting an access decision in three days. You don't need a diagnosis to enter the NDIS. That is down from over 50 days in terms of people accessing a plan from access. It has dropped substantially down to 54 days. Anticipating a range of these issues, the Commonwealth leaned in on the second phase of the functional assessment trial, which will conclude this month. All going well with the results—and so far they are extraordinarily positive—the Commonwealth will go to market for a functional assessment partner and will introduce functional assessments from 1 July this year to quantify absolutely access to the scheme.

But recognising the member's key point, it is important to understand and it's important for parents and the nation to understand that you don't need a diagnosis to call an early childhood early intervention partner. The act does not require a diagnosis. I encourage all parents to get hold of the NDIS, go to the website, speak to your early childhood early intervention partner and get that early intervention as quickly as possible. The system is designed for it. Request to access is currently three days.

National Security

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (15:10): My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the minister outline for the House the importance of the Morrison government's complete consistency in terms of its approach to national security and to criminal justice, which has enabled it to pass a series of critical reforms designed to keep Australians safe? Is the Attorney aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:11): I thank the member for his question and for his past contribution to our nation's defence. As the member is aware, since 2013 the government has passed 19 tranches of national security legislation and a number of other reforms in criminal law. There's been a complete rewrite of all Australia's laws dealing with espionage, sabotage and foreign interference. We have removed abhorrent violent material after the shocking video footage of the Christchurch events was left online. There have been reforms to deal with the sabotage of agricultural products, trespassing advocates and counter-encryption.

Through all of that, whether it has been about gun trafficking or counter-encryption or boat turn-backs, as the Minister for Home Affairs mentioned earlier, the government's position has always been completely clear and consistent and completely supported by every single member on this side of the House.

I'm asked about alternative policy approaches. Consistency has not been a feature of the alternative approaches in this area demonstrated by the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition was opposed to boat turn-backs; now he supports boat turn-backs. In another example, Labor supports mandatory sentencing for people smuggling, but they don't support mandatory sentencing for smuggling weapons, even though that's an enormous danger to the health and safety of the Australian public. I think the Labor policy alternative approach was summarised perfectly by a short statement made by the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday. Ironically, this statement was made just hours before 20 members of the Labor Party went into the Otis restaurant to discuss alternatives to the policy of the Leader of the Opposition. His great statement on unity was this: 'On our side, we are united. We're committed to doing something to change the country.'

'We are committed to doing something.' It's soaring rhetoric—decisive, inspiring stuff.

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

Mr Albanese: Relevance.

The SPEAKER: That was succinct. That's good. I just say to the Attorney that the substance of the question was about a number of policy areas, so he needs to be confining himself to those.

Mr PORTER: 'We are committed to doing something.' The only problem is that they don't know what the something is. But we are lucky that we have an alternative policy group meeting at the Otis restaurant, sorting out what the something is.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order?

Mr Burke: The point of order is that your ruling is being defied. You gave a clear ruling about relevance, and the Attorney-General is proceeding exactly as he was before.
The SPEAKER: The question asked about national security, criminal justice and any alternatives to those, so the alternative needs to be in the same policy area; it can't just be any other aspect. The Attorney has the call.

Mr PORTER: And so what is the 'something' on boat turnbacks? What is the 'something' on gun trafficking? Well, at the Otis restaurant they'll be back to discuss it. How do we know that they'll be back? Well, you can look online at the restaurant reviews.

Defence Procurement

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:15): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. The minister has today admitted that this government chose not to insert a binding local content guarantee in its multibillion-dollar submarine project. This failure is costing Australian jobs. Why didn't the government provide a guarantee of local jobs in the contract?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (15:16): Thanks for the question. I think it's worth remembering what I've said earlier, which is that there are currently 137 Australian companies who are already in the submarine project. We on this side—one—I'm sure, all of those on the other side—are very committed to ensuring that we have maximum Australian industry content across all of our programs with respect to our $200 billion investment. But, as I've said, getting this lecture from Labor is really quite extraordinary. In six years, Labor did not commission the building of one naval vessel in an Australian yard—not one. By contrast, we are committing 57 naval vessels to be built in Australia by thousands of Australian workers with Australian steel. As I said earlier, we currently have 4,000 shipbuilding jobs in this country, and we need 15,000—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business, on a point of order?

Mr Burke: On direct relevance: the question goes specifically to there being no Australian content clause in the contract, which the minister is yet to refer to.

The SPEAKER: I'm going to say to the member: she's been entitled to a preamble, but there were two specific aspects to the question. Again, there's always the option to take it on notice. The minister has the call.

Ms PRICE: As I've said, we are currently in the design phase, and it has been very clear from the documentation that, once the design—which is a very unique and highly technical design—of these 12 submarines is finished, we will negotiate Australian industry content. In the meantime, the Prime Minister and I, we on this side—and, I'm sure, those on that side—are backing small- and medium-sized Australian businesses to ensure that we get the maximum Australian industry content. We are backing Australian businesses all the way.

Indigenous Health

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (15:18): Prime Minister, over a year ago you committed to community market gardens. Surely we are judged on how we treat our poorest. Dick Smith, in one shining example, put his own money into market gardens. Cannot tenders be called immediately for experienced, qualified agriculturalists to provide direction and planning so councils can act, employing Work for the Dole labour, and farm? Professor Ronkski has volunteered senior nutritionists to advise on combating malnutrition, enabling us to stop stroking lily pad leftie egos and start saving lives.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:18): I thank the member for his question. I agree with the need to proceed with the market garden proposals. Back in November 2018 I wrote to the member, committing to work with communities in Yarrabah and on Mornington Island to set up those very market gardens. I agree with the member that it is so important for the health and wellbeing of communities, particularly in those areas. The National Indigenous Australians Agency has consulted with Indigenous communities in North Queensland on this proposal, and, while there was broad agreement about the concept, I'm sad to say that the communities said that the market garden, for them, wasn't a high priority. That's what they communicated to us.

We remain committed to working with communities in northern Australia that are interested in building market gardens and we're prepared to back that up to improve fresh food supply and health outcomes. We support that. We need to be able to work with those on the ground who are keen to work with us to put those into place. At present, that is not what is being communicated to us by those communities—to proceed with those proposals. But I will be very happy, as my ministers will be, to work with those local communities to seek to encourage them to come to that view so we can start working together with them to achieve this very important outcome that you and I both share as an important priority for that area.

In addition to that, the government has boosted funding for Indigenous-specific health initiatives to some $4.1 billion over four years to 2022-23, and this is an ongoing increase of around four per cent per year. Of this funding, nearly $4 billion is provided through the Indigenous Australians' Health Program. About 65 per cent of funding with the IAHP goes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. That's 63 per cent to the
Aboriginal community controlled health sector. And over half of the IAHP funds comprehensively provide primary health care services, with the ACCHS receiving over 80 per cent of this funding.

The member for Kennedy, like the many members who represent North Queensland—I've got to say there are so many members on this side of the House who represent North Queensland—knows what's important on the ground in those communities. What I find disappointing is that 20 members of the Labor Party have to gather together in a restaurant somewhere to try and get this leader of the Labor Party to understand what's going on in regional Australia. He doesn't get it. They know he doesn't get it. I have concluded my answer. I would ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:21): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (15:22): I rise to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr KATTER: Yes.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy may proceed.

Mr KATTER: The Prime Minister said that the Aboriginal communities had communicated to the government that they did not want market gardens or did not see it as a priority. I am holding letters from the communities stating just the opposite—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy is not showing how he was misrepresented.

Mr KATTER: I personally said that they saw it as a priority. The Prime Minister is saying that they don't see it as a priority. I can bring the letters into this parliament and table them, and I fully intend to.

The SPEAKER: That's closer than usual. I'll say that.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Parliament House: Security

The SPEAKER (15:22): I just need to make a statement to the House for the information of all honourable members. I draw the attention of members to an article published by an ABC 7.30 report journalist based on a confidential working draft of an internal review conducted by KPMG into the Protective Security Policy Framework, the PSPF, alignment on behalf of the Department of Parliamentary Services.

I wish to assure members that this article does not reflect the true state of the department’s protective security maturity. The department continues to work closely with the Australian Signals Directorate in managing the parliament's cyber-resilience. As members have previously been advised, the Department of Parliamentary Services worked in partnership with the Australian Cyber Security Centre of the ASD in dealing with a cybersecurity incident in January 2019.

I note that the ASD commented in its 2018-19 annual report that:

The Department of Parliamentary Services had implemented security practices that helped to identify and restrict the extent of the compromise, minimising the potential impact.

In October 2018 the Attorney-General's Department launched the PSPF reforms aimed at improving clarity, reducing unnecessary red tape and fostering a strengthened security culture across Commonwealth agencies.

The Department of Parliamentary Services then commenced a program to demonstrate acceptable maturity against the new criteria, including engagement of KPMG to provide advice, 'To assist DPS to further mature protective security practices.' The Department of Parliamentary Services has, in fact, achieved a maturity rating of 'managing' at 85 of the 88 PSPF relevant criteria, and a further three criteria were rated as 'developing'. The department did not rate 'ad hoc' against any of the 88 criteria. Without commenting directly on this confidential draft document, it reflects early fieldwork by KPMG and was not scrutinised or verified by the department and does not incorporate a body of work undertaken to demonstrate the department's PSPF maturity rating of 'managing' for the relevant criteria. Comments in the article that 'methods to prevent cyberintrusions are at a low level of maturity' are incorrect. The final report of the alignment review in July 2019 did not make adverse findings in relation to the Department of Parliamentary Services achieving an acceptable maturity rating. I thank the House.
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Coalition Government

The SPEAKER (15:25): I have received a letter from the honourable Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Government to focus on the needs of Australians

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

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

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:26): Members will recall that when this Prime Minister knocked off Malcolm Turnbull—just before he said he had his back in the Prime Minister's courtyard, after Malcolm Turnbull knocked off Tony Abbott—he described Turnbull's government as a puppet show, day after day after day. Now the puppet show is back—the sequel. It's not a 30-minute episode but a full-length movie. We can see it playing out with the PM, Fozzie Bear, as its director. There's no question who is Animal: it's the member for New England, trashing things up and wrecking things as much as he can, although Senator Abetz did apply for the role, and audition. And, of course, Statler and Waldorf: who else but Senator Canavan—although there are a number of other opportunities—and the member for Flynn. There he is, going up to his spot on the balcony. And, of course, there's Gonzo: the Minister for Energy. Who else! Disaster after disaster, but he just muddles through and somehow survives. It is always brave, of course, to reboot an old series, but early reviews are not promising. The mistake, of course, was to remake 'Pigs in space', as 'Pork in sports', but that's what they've done.

The fact is that this government are led by an ad man with no plan—no plan for the economy, no plan for wages, no plan for climate change and no plan for the aged-care crisis. And they certainly had no plan for the bushfire crisis. Remember what they said, day after day, week after week, month after month? They said: 'It's a matter for the states. We don't need a national response to this.' When I went with the member for Page to his electorate, we were told—certainly, I was—by the volunteer bushfire firefighters that they needed economic compensation. They'd been working on the North Coast for months, since the Rappville fire. What did the Prime Minister say? He said they wanted to be there. That's what he told them. What was his response finally when there was a national approach? He made an announcement and he did an ad—a marketing response—with all the military assets, the jingle, and the link to donate to the Liberal Party button as part of the ad.

He couldn't pick up the phone to Shane Fitzsimmons, the New South Wales RFS commissioner but, of course, he could pick up the phone to the police commissioner in New South Wales about the fraudulent document that was given to The Daily Telegraph by the Minister for Energy's office. He could do that. The fact is that, if you care about people, you listen and you engage. You don't have to force people to shake your hand. You don't have to run out of town. The fact is that, if you listen to Australians and treat them with respect, you will get it back, but this Prime Minister continued to evade his responsibility as our national leader when there was a national crisis. It is no wonder that he has been written down because of it. The fact is that this government is only concerned about its own political interests. We saw the doctorate document. We've seen sports rots mark 1, and now volume 2: $150 million put in the budget in May, that was brought forward in March then announced—so it's real money, not election commitments, real money that was in the budget—$150 million for women's sports, except it didn't fund women's sports. It funded their marginal seat election campaign.

This government doesn't understand the difference between taxpayers' funds and LNP funds. This government had candidates who aren't even members of parliament, with oversized cheques with their photos on it, pretending it was their money they were handing over. No wonder they're obsessed with integrity when it comes to industrial relations but don't want a national integrity commission. They don't want one. They promised one in 2018, but they know that if there were a national integrity commission it would have been right after the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction; it would have right after the former Minister for Sport; it would have right after those people pretending that taxpayers' money was their money right around the country, such as the candidate in the member for Morton's electorate. He's a member, but he doesn't get to make the announcement or be at the announcement made by a minister, even though he lobbied for the project, and yet the candidate does. We've got women's sports rooms for teams in South Australia that don't have any women players. And at the same time in the member for Kingston's electorate she can't get proper funding.

The fact is that we saw it all week: a government of chaos and division. A government in which the Nationals thought it was a terrific idea, on the day when we commemorated the victims of the bushfires in regional Australia, to have a ballot for the leadership of the party—a circumstance whereby, on the floor of the House of Representatives, there were 67 votes for the government's candidate and 75 for the candidate not backed by the
government. He's a fine candidate, and you're doing well, Mr Deputy Speaker O'Brien. I was proud to vote for you.

The fact is that, unlike the government, we on this side of the House are making it clear what our principles and values are and how we would be guided into a Labor government after the next election. Next Wednesday in Brisbane I'll be giving the fourth vision statement, speaking about respecting and valuing older Australians; speaking about the need for superannuation and proper retirement incomes and the important place of older people in the workforce; respecting blue-collar workers and not expecting them to work until they drop; respecting the position with regard to aged care. The issues that we raise today, which we asked about flat, were about the sorts of circumstances like residents lying or sitting in urine and faeces; half of the people in aged care being malnourished; a quarter of young people dying in the first year; 30,000 people over two years, who had been assessed and approved for their aged-care package, who died waiting to get a place. What was the response of the deputy leader of the Liberal Party? He said it was a distraction. That's what he said when we asked questions about those issues.

Labor will continue to advance our positive agenda. The five themes I outlined at the National Press Club were: jobs and an economy that works for people; creation of wealth and its distribution; jobs and skills in Australia; good action on climate change creating jobs, reducing emissions and reducing power prices. What have those opposite had to say about these issues? This is what the minister here, who is going to respond, had to say. This is the bloke in charge of resources, 'We have got a real risk, particularly with solar panels and lithium batteries, that they could turn out to be this generation's asbestos.' That is what they have said. What a disgrace. Matt Canavan said, 'Renewables are the dole bludgers of the energy system.' And when Senator Molan went on $Q+A$ — and we encouraged $Q+A$ to invite more Liberals, because there were two of them and none of us; but we're not complaining — when asked, he said, 'I'm not relying on evidence.' Well, we will rely on evidence, which is why one of our themes is to take action on climate change.

We want a fairer Australia — no-one held back and no-one left behind. We'll support aspiration to education and opportunity. We'll make sure that we build infrastructure, including high-speed rail. We want to deal with our place in the world, where Australia is a proud nation, where we punch above our weight, not like when we go to international climate change conferences and say, 'What we need is a fiddling of the books and an accounting trick, rather than actually reducing emissions.' But this Prime Minister has been even worse. He went and spoke about 'negative globalism', in criticising the UN and other international bodies, but there he was this morning: happy to come to the UN International Women's Day breakfast. He was happy to do that!

The fact is that this government have been on a victory lap since May. They don't have an agenda for the future, which is why every single answer to a question today was about the Labor Party. They need to understand that they're actually the government, and they should start acting like it. (Time expired)

Mr HOGAN (Page—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (15:36): It's a pleasure to speak on an MPI. It's been a couple of years, so I'm looking forward to it. I'll wait for a moment too, because it's the first time I've spoken from this dispatch box. I consider it a great honour, and I acknowledge my community for giving me the opportunity.

One of the phrases in the matter of public importance is 'to focus on the needs of Australians'. That is one thing I can agree with the Leader of the Opposition on — when he spoke about his address to the National Press Club and how one of the first things he would focus on was jobs. That is something we always need to look at when we are in this place, representing our communities or representing the government: what have we as representatives or what has our government done with respect to jobs?

In focusing on the needs of Australians, one of the successes of this government — the government that I'm a member of — has been the job creation that has happened under us over the last six years. In that time, over 1.5 million jobs have been created. Unemployment rates have fallen, and we have a record number of people in work. Male employment is at a record high, female employment is at a record high and, very importantly, we have record-high youth employment. I think that is a very proud statistic to have as a government. Employment continues to grow at record levels. So that is fulfilling and proud focusing, I think, on one of if not the primary needs of Australians.

I want to go through a few things about why I think we've done that. These statistics don't just happen. They happen because of the policies and the focus of the government — what the government is achieving. I represent a region that is a very high exporting area. I have beef producers, pork producers, growers of blueberries, macadamias and many other agricultural products. I think one of the proudest achievements of this government — and, compared to when Labor was in government, we've had far more achievements in this area — has been trade
agreements. One of the major things that has maintained the wealth of this country over a long time is the fact that we have always been a trading nation.

To give an example, one of the biggest private employers in my region is an abattoir. They employ, at any particular point in time, over a thousand people. They are standing up—

Mr Perrett: How many Australians?

Mr HOGAN: I'll take that interjection—virtually all of them, Member for Moreton. We have very few visa workers. The Casino community owns that meatworks. We have three generations of two families who work there, and we have very few visa or foreign workers there. They're proud of it, and so they should be. On the free trade agreements we've implemented—obviously, we had the President of Indonesia here this week, which was an historic occasion, and we've done a further trade agreement with them. What we've done as a government is get literally hundreds, if not billions, of customers for our agricultural producers. We've given them hundreds of millions of extra customers and better access to markets where they can sell their product. And that has had a real impact. The drought has been very devastating, but, behind the drought, over the last number of years, the prices for the majority of agricultural products—almost across every agricultural product—has gone up. And that, as I say, hasn't happened by mistake; it's happened because it's been a focus of ours. We've had some wonderful trade ministers, starting from Andrew Robb, since we've been in government, and it has had real results on the ground and created extra jobs and growth and prosperity, especially in regional Australia.

There's another thing that's very important. I'm, again, very proud of the government and its focus on infrastructure. Almost since day one, back in 2013, we've wanted to have a focus on being an infrastructure government. Just to give you some examples—we've obviously got a $100 billion infrastructure program over the next 10 years—one of the biggest infrastructure projects in regional Australia for many years was in my patch. It was the dual duplication of the Pacific Highway between Woolgoolga and Ballina. That project alone directly employed at any particular point of time around 2,000 to 3,000 people. The flow on from that is huge—the indirect jobs that that brings when you have so many people coming to work in a program.

We have, again, some really targeted infrastructure programs that are very important to regional Australia, things like the Roads to Recovery Program—that didn't always exist. The Roads to Recovery Program came from John Anderson, a previous Nationals leader, who understood that regional Australia needed more help beyond what local councils could provide. The Roads to Recovery Program, now widely accepted by both sides of parliament, was the result of a Nationals leader.

The Bridges Renewal Program is a new one. I know Warren Truss, the previous member for Wide Bay, was a champion of this program. Why is that important? Take Kyogle. They have a very small rate base, but they have something like 300 timber bridges, which is an enormous piece of infrastructure to maintain for a council that would struggle to maintain those with the rate base they have. We see that. We understand that. We understand the importance of that, because the area is an important economic driver. They produce great produce around Kyogle, so we instituted that program to make sure we could help them out.

I won't go through it all, but I tell you what, the Building Better Regions Fund, again, is about increasing efficiency and increasing productivity and increasing jobs in regional Australia. It has been a real focus of this government, and it doesn't just happen. It is one of the reasons that we've had the record job growth that I started with. With some of those things the opposition may well say they agree with that infrastructure. They may well agree with free trade, even though they couldn't nail many deals.

I tell you one thing we do disagree on—and I think the last election highlighted where Australians sit on this—is tax. This is one of the major philosophical discussions that we have in this place and where we disagree, because we have been arguing about tax cuts in this place since we got here. We obviously, as you know, Deputy Speaker, were arguing for small business and business tax cuts, and the other side have always opposed that. I don't think they understand that we live in a competitive world, and that, if we want our small businesses and if we want our large businesses to survive and flourish, we have to match and we have to be internationally competitive. We have one of the highest tax rates for companies in the world. We did get through the tax cuts for the smaller businesses, and that was very important. Why do we understand that? We understand that because a lot of us on this side have managed a business or run a business. We understand that when you give businesses a tax cut they will put more of that money back into the business, they have more money to invest in the business and they have more money to employ people in the business. I think it's a great shame, because I actually think that up until the last parliament that Australia had really had a bit of a bipartisan approach on tax cuts. Believe you me, probably one of the glory days of the Labor Party were the Hawke-Keating years. They understood tax cuts. They were cutting company tax rates, large and small.

Mr Hill: It was an offset, you idiot!
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien): The member for Bruce will withdraw.

Mr HOGAN: They obviously don't understand that now, because they opposed us and fought us all the way on those tax cuts for business. They still oppose the tax cuts for large businesses, so they still don't get it. The other big distinction was the tax cuts for small—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Lyons on a point of order?

Mr Brian Mitchell: Yes. The minister is misleading the House. Labor voted for—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, the minister is not misleading the House. The minister will continue.

Mr HOGAN: It was also the tax cuts. We went to the last election wanting to decrease people's taxes. They went to the last election wanting to increase people's taxes. That was the distinction. That was the big difference that the Australian voters saw. Again, I don't think they have heard it. They are great at coming up with ways to spend money. Labor have never had an issue with finding ways to spend money, specifically tax money.

At the last election we saw that the Australian people understand how the economy works. They understand that we need to keep businesses competitive by having international competitive tax rates. They understand that, by putting more money in their hands, we are going to be a more successful economy. They reject, again, higher taxes and a bigger government that will obviously be more wasteful. I think this government over the last six or seven years, which is why we keep getting re-elected, has been definitely focused on the economy. (Time expired)

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (15:46): Appropriately for a government run by an ad man without a plan, the last fortnight has had real a Mad Men vibe to it. They're a self-indulgent rabble obsessed with their own soap operas of personal vendettas without a care for the needs of any of those outside their own little personal bubble. Indeed, parliament's farewell for the departing Deputy Speaker, the member for Page, this week ended up a lot like the infamous Sterling Cooper farewell party for Joan Holloway, except this time it was the member for New England who drove the John Deere lawnmower over the Deputy Prime Minister's foot while important overseas guests were in town. It's been chaos as this divided government without a plan have been mugged by reality. They've got no plan for jobs, no plan for wages and growth, no plan for the economy, no plan for climate change, no plan for energy and—as we saw quite clearly in question time today—no plan for the aged-care crisis. On every front, the pressure on this government is rising as the reality of the challenges facing Australia grows. Now, after seven years of self-obsession and self-indulgence in the ministerial wing, you can just imagine the Prime Minister staring at the blank piece of paper pinned to the wall, Don Draper style, trying to come up with a pitch for an ad that will fix it all.

If there is one thing this Prime Minister knows, it is that when you don't have a plan you rebrand. We've seen some pretty absurd rebrands from marketing teams over the years, such as the new Coke, iSnack 2.0 and the modern Liberals. The Prime Minister's Don Draper-styled rebranding of his secret past as a suburb's rugby union fan into a die-hard Sharks supporter from the shire after his pre-selection was a bit of a stretch. The rebranding we saw today in question time drew a longer bow than at Agincourt, as those opposite claim consistency on government policy, despite having launched 18 separate energy policies in seven years.

But it's the name changes on the sign out the front of this divided government without a plan that have been the most absurd rebrand of all. Across seven seasons of Mad Men, the ad firm rebranded itself from Sterling Cooper to Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce before finally settling on Sterling Cooper & Partners. What amateurs! Across the seven years of this coalition of chaos, the ad firm sitting on the government benches has already rebranded itself from the Abbott-Truss government to the Abbott-Joyce government to the Turnbull-Joyce government to the Turnbull-McCormack government and most recently to the Morrison-McCormack government. You can still buy the commemorative mug for that one. Get it now because it's going to be a collector's item.

The current crisis is demanding a new rebranding effort. Will it be the Morrison-Joyce government or the Morrison-Littleproud government? What we know is that after this week the Australian public will be asking—I can't use the Prime Minister's former marketing team in here—what was the point of the three terms of this coalition Australian government? It hasn't been about the Australian people. It's always been about them: helicopters to Liberal Party fundraisers; holidays to Hawaii and the Philippines; travel rorts; sports rorts; talk small government and carry a big cheque; bonk bans; Malcolm hating Tony; the member for New England hating the member for Riverina; everyone hating Malcolm; the Queensland LNP hating everyone else. At every juncture it has always been about them, not the people who elected them to come here to serve Australia.

It's a striking contrast with those sitting on the opposition benches today. The Albanese Labor team are setting out a positive vision of what we will stand for. There will be a choice for the Australian public at the next election. The Leader of the Opposition has already issued vision statements on jobs of the future, the economy and democracy and will very soon issue one on older Australians. In this week it's worth noting the vision statement on the future of democracy, because it has taken a battering under this government. My constituency see scandals...
like sports rorts—and sports rorts 2.0, the sequel, has an even bigger budget—and they are outraged at a government that is not serving their interests. It's a government that serves partisan interests, not the national interests. It's a government that serves the personal interests of those sitting opposite, not the interests of the Australian public. We need reforms, like a National Integrity Commission, to restore confidence in our democracy. We don't need an advertising campaign; we need substantial reforms to our democracy to restore confidence. This week when we tried to talk about a National Integrity Commission those opposite gagged debate. That really says it all.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (15:51): Today's MPI is 'the failure of the government to focus on the needs of Australians'. Those on the other side have lost their way when it comes to focusing on Australians, particularly coalminers in this country. At the moment the vision that those who sit on the other side of this chamber have is very bleak for that industry. I was brought up in Central Queensland. I went to an all-boys boarding school there and a lot of the guys I went to school with went and worked in the coalmines. Their fathers worked there. My father worked in the coalmine. He was a white-collar worker.

Most of the coal industry guys, rightfully, have belonged to a union of some type and have during their lives predominantly supported those on the other side, the Australian Labor Party. Every time I catch up with my school alma mater, whether it's at an old-boys reunion for the boarding school or elsewhere, more and more of them say to me: 'I can no longer support the Australian Labor Party. They used to represent us. They no longer do.' Increasingly those who wear high-vis and work in the Bowen Basin in Central Queensland are supporting us, and this is not just at the federal level.

I remember my state colleague Jim Pearce, the member for Fitzroy. He was an absolute gentleman. He came up through the coalmine ranks. He was an electrician. Jim originally came from Mount Morgan and was one of Labor's gentlemen. Unfortunately, he lost his seat in Fitzroy. It was unthinkable that the seat of Fitzroy in Queensland could be lost by Labor.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BUCHHOLZ: This is relevant because the MPI is about the need to focus on Australians. I'm highlighting the fact that those on the other side have forgotten their core people. They've forgotten a core of Australians. They have turned their back on them.

We're putting our money where our mouth is. In my portfolio we are looking after Australians who are choosing to use our investment in infrastructure. There is $100 billion. Never before in Australia's history have we invested more in infrastructure. In Queensland there is $10 billion for the Bruce Highway. RACQ, the motor vehicle association, said that that was the single infrastructure priority for Queensland. We're addressing those needs.

We're also focused on reducing the cost of doing business across the country. We're providing all Australians with the skills that they need to succeed and boost their chance in getting a job. Unemployment under us is better. Unlike those opposite, the Liberal-National government is not raising taxes and is not levying Australians to pay for the response to the last cyclone, because this government has had stronger economic management and is resilient.

Mr Perrett: You voted for that, remember?

Mr BUCHHOLZ: We did vote for that, but I can assure you that, because of the strength of the economy under this government's leadership and because our management of the country, we haven't had to rush back into this place and inflict a levy on the Australian people.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

Mr BUCHHOLZ: We come from a broad church, Member for Moreton. We all come from business backgrounds. It was once highlighted to me that those on the other side of this House could not hit the side of a barn with a forecast, when it comes to the economic outlook. We are also getting on and helping those communities who have been affected by this horrendous drought. Some of my businesses and farms up home haven't had income for seven years. We welcome the wonderful rain that's coming. We've put our money where our mouth is, because we have a strong economy, in helping those farms and families that have been affected by drought, by putting $20 million to keep kids in school—$5 million of that is for child care—and giving $1 billion of drought loans to farmers to buy fodder, transport stock, build water infrastructure, agist cattle, mend fences and refinance their existing debt. A new small business drought loan up to $500,000—there is half a billion dollars for that. There's $200 million extra for the Building Better Regions Fund to fund projects in drought hit communities and support those economies. There's an extra $138.9 million for Roads to Recovery, to build those strategic pieces of infrastructure. Of course you can only do that when you have a strong, stable government.
Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (15:56): I congratulate you on your accession to your position, Mr Deputy Speaker Llew O'Brien. We've come to the end of the first sitting fortnight for 2020. I think we would all acknowledge that we came back here very conscious that the nation needed a great deal of us. But I have to say that people could only look at what's happened in this last fortnight in this parliament with a great deal of disappointment.

Sitting at the heart of the government is a huge hole. That hole is the lack of a plan for the issues that Australians are facing and that they need a government to address. It became obvious day after day, through question time over the last two weeks, where we've canvassed issues such as the bushfire recovery response. It is perfectly legitimate for opposition members to raise the concerns of their communities about how the government is responding to the bushfires, both in terms of the reconstruction process and the longer term efforts we need around climate change in order to address the challenges. Each time we ask this, those opposite get up and say it's politicising the bushfire action. It wasn't about politicising; it was about doing legitimately what vulnerable communities that need voices in this parliament had asked my colleagues to do. In particular, my colleagues the member for Macquarie, the member for Gilmore and the member for Eden-Monaro were asking questions that were directly what their communities were asking them.

If the government had had an answer, they had an opportunity to get up and say, 'Look, that's a genuine issue and this is what we're doing about it.' But they don't, because they don't have a plan. They don't have the capacity to put in place the reforms that are needed, so they just hit out at members who are speaking out on behalf of their communities. That's what we've seen in the last fortnight. Why do you get yourself into that position as a government? You get yourself in that position because you think a cheap slogan will solve every problem. It doesn't get you through at the end of the day.

In this debate I particularly want to take the opportunity—and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for putting this issue up—to talk about what we saw in question time today. The government have had two weeks to say, '2020 is going to be a big year for us as a government, with big challenges in the community, such as education'—and we had debate this week in the parliament about the fact that we've lost over 140,000 apprentices in this country. They had a big opportunity to talk about the fact that a report came out that noted there is a significantly higher and growing proportion of people over the age of 55 on Newstart allowance. But they're struggled. There was an opportunity to talk about that. But, no, we didn't get that. We got leadership fights. We got bunfights within parties which focused on: 'Will we split? Won't we split?'

We got opportunities to be transparent covered up by gagging debates and refusing to release documents. We got sports rorts in its various forms. That's what we got from the government.

Today we asked about the aged-care sector. I can tell you—and I know colleagues from this side and I have to assume colleagues from the other side—that this is one of the constantly increasing bread-and-butter issues in our electorate offices, with families ringing in tears because their elderly relatives are not getting the support that that need. The government's response was, 'We created 10,000 places.' As the shadow minister said, only 5,000 were actually implemented, and they know the waiting list is over 110,000. They know that the waiting list and they think a bandaid like 10,000 will solve that. Who are those people? These are the people in their 90s who have been assessed as needing high care to stay in their homes and they're being told they'll have to wait three years. That's the reality.

I want the government to take the example of an amazing 90-year-old lady in my electorate, Val Fell, who received an Order of Australia this year—in her 90s! Val takes phone calls from people who are dementia carers. She organises an large annual conference in Wollongong for the carers of people with dementia. She is constantly lobbying and going off to conferences. Val, in her 90s, could teach this government a lesson about caring about the most vulnerable in our community.

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (16:01): Deputy Speaker, I also take the opportunity to congratulate you on your ascension to the position. I welcome the opportunity to address this matter of public importance. As a proud Western Australian and a proud regional member of parliament representing a regional seat, I completely reject the premise of this matter of public importance. I refer to my own seat and the success of the economy in my seat and the success of the hardworking people in my seat of O'Connor.

If I can just start by the surprise I had when I read this morning's media and PVO was talking about this group of members of the opposition who are meeting together. I thought Otis was a lift, and they were meeting together in a lift, but apparently it's a restaurant in Canberra. I didn't know that, because I come from a long way away from here. I have always known about Otis lifts. You could safely fit the sensible members of the Labor Party—certainly those who have any understanding of regional affairs—in a very small lift.

I applaud the member for Hunter, who certainly had a nearer-to-God experience in the May 2019 election. He has certainly starting to listen to regional people and, hopefully, there are some more people on his side that will
follow him, because regional seats like mine contribute to the very strong economy that this government has produced. We are heading for our first budget surplus since 2007 and, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, that has enabled us to meet the challenges. There have been challenges with drought, there have been challenges with bushfires and, more recently, we now have the challenge of the coronavirus. The government is in a good position financially to be able to meet those challenges and deal with them.

Going back to regional seats like mine, we heard earlier today from the new minister for resources—and I take the opportunity to congratulate him publicly—that our resource sector last year produced $279 billion. I think that was the figure that you mentioned, Minister, representing eight per cent of our GDP. The great state of Western Australia produces a very large proportion of that national income. That national income allows us to provide the programs that make this country the greatest country on earth. We can look after all of our people in the best way we possibly can. That resource sector also provides thousands and thousands of jobs across my electorate.

Obviously the regional city of Kalgoorlie is a working example of the strength of that resource sector and the jobs it provides. In fact it provides so many jobs that we can't find people in Kalgoorlie to fill those jobs. So, one of the great initiatives of this government has been the designated area migration agreement, where a panel of businesses and the local government in Kalgoorlie and surrounding areas can nominate those positions that need to be filled. They're not just positions in the mining sector. They are also positions in child care, in aged care and in the health sector. These are the sorts of jobs that the DAMA is allowing those agencies and businesses in Kalgoorlie to fill, through a very sensible migration agreement.

Agriculture is also a very important part of the economy in my electorate, and of course the free trade agreements that we have signed as a government since 2013, when I was first elected, and I'm very proud to have been part of that journey. Demand for our agricultural products goes through the roof and, quite frankly, prices are at all-time highs. And now that we've had rain on the east coast and are seeing breeding stock kept and flocks starting to be rebuilt, I think we'll see even higher prices and new price records set. That is in large part because of the free trade agreements and the market access we have achieved for our industries as a government.

I want to conclude by saying that the government's record and performance over the past six years has allowed us to be in an excellent position to deal with the challenges we confront on an almost daily basis. That is why the Australian people, on 18 May last year, put their trust in the Morrison government to continue to manage the economy in order to provide the services they require. (Time expired)

Dr ALY (Cowan) (16:06): About a decade ago I was finally able to afford the means to travel. So, for the first time, I travelled to an academic conference in France. I didn't have a lot of money, so I went online and looked through some hotels that I thought I could afford, and I found this hotel on the outskirts of Paris called Le Jardin—the Hotel Le Jardin, just outside of Paris. I thought, 'This looks all right; I'll book this place.' Well, 'le jardin' in this particular hotel turned out to be a dusty collection of fake plastic flowers, hidden away in the hotel's foyer. It occurs to me that this government is the political version of Le Jardin. Whether it's the NDIS or the NBN, whether it's education or health or aged care, this government continues to fail everyday Australians.

Today we see reports in the newspapers that access to the NDIS is dependent on postcode, with children in lower socioeconomic suburbs waiting for two years for the help they so desperately need. You've got to wonder: what kind of government presides over a system that discriminates against children in disadvantaged areas? What kind of government presides over waiting times for home care packages that are so long that people are dying as they wait? What kind of leader turns his back on a country as it burns? What kind of government puts out a theatrical advertisement asking for donations in the middle of a bushfire crisis? What kind of government does out taxpayer money—a hundred dollar bill, y'all!—to pork barrel their own electorate, for their own electorate's advantage? It's not your money; it's taxpayer money. It's money that is paid by the hardworking mums and dads and the volunteers who applied for those sports grants in good faith, believing they would be assessed on the basis of merit, not a colour coded spreadsheet. What kind of government? A government that is so focused on itself that it has forgotten how to govern, a government that is so plagued by chaos and division that it is failing to look after Australians, with no plan for jobs, no plan for wages growth, no plan for climate change, no plan for energy—no plan, just spin. It is a government that continues to defend its sports rorts, even in the face of a scathing report by the Auditor-General, that tells Australians that it's undertaken its own internal review and then refuses to release that review, citing precedence and consistency. It's just a whole lot of spin.

I have noticed something. I have noticed that the government used to use to word 'stable' a lot during question time in their Dorothy Dixers.

Opposition members interjecting—

Dr ALY: Have you all noticed that? In every question they used to ask about stable government—but not any more, because even the theatrical calisthenics of the member for Stirling can't save this government from their
Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:10): It's a shame that, at this stage of the week, it always degrades into this kind of abuse between two political parties in a chamber. We can be better than that. We can be so much better than that and focus on the big issues. Frankly, this week we've focused on a lot of tiny issues. We've focused on a lot of superficiality. The party opposite were so obsessed with themselves that they didn't recognise the Indonesian President's visit. They were utterly obsessed in the Senate with playing the most puerile games since Federation, like trying to stop the Manager of Government Business in the Senate. Yesterday, the media was absolutely subsumed with Labor's obsession with siding with the crossbench to prevent parliament working. That was their contribution to politics for the day.

Labor is a party that actually had no policy around tax cuts, except trying to copy the government. Last quarter we had $8.1 billion of tax cuts. That is not peripherals or superficialities; this is money in people's pockets. This is what the job of government is: responsibly managing the economy and making sure that the September quarter last year showed a $4.5 billion increase in what Australians had in their pockets. It effectively boosted that September quarter by 60 per cent. That's the serious work, that's the grinding work, of running the books and still running a balanced budget.

We've worked on border policy. We've worked on the feasibility around base-load energy. But all Labor can obsess on is their 'walk both sides of the street' approach to emissions, where you have the Otis group emerging this week. It's fascinating that Otis was the guy who invented the elevator with a safety mechanism. You will need more than a safety mechanism to get out of this one. You don't even have a policy on emissions that you can stick by on both sides of the street. The minute you change towns or you leave the city and head to the bush, it is a different policy—trying to please those in the country; effectively trying to reach out to the inner-city Greens who are taking their seats. That is their fixation.

All we are asking those opposite to do is to take seriously the big issues, like the government does—things like international education and responding to coronavirus. That is the work that's quietly being done. I'll throw a little olive branch across to the other side and say that, when those opposite were in government and had a one-seat majority—governments like the Gillard government; certainly not the Rudd government—despite all of our criticism, they were quietly doing good legislative work on the way through. That's something that we have consistently done as well. I don't mind recognising that. A finely balanced parliament can get the job done and we are proof of that.

But, of course, what's so disappointing is that the party opposite has seven members sitting along that bench who deep down wish they could have Albo's job. There are seven MPs along there who think they deserve the Leader of the Opposition's job—and it is only a matter of time. Increasingly, what we see is a cardboard cut-out figure who doesn't know where he stands.

Australians can be sure of a few things. They know that we're focused on jobs. They know there are 100,000 fewer Australians living day to day off welfare, thanks to this government. The previous Labor government increased the number of those completely reliant on welfare payments by 270,000. These unfortunate souls relying on welfare payments could have been in the economy, but it was a government that didn't know how to manage it. The population's gone up in the last 12 months by 300,000 people in Australia, and welfare reliance has dropped by 100,000. They are big numbers, but every one of those is an intensively case managed family—an intensively case managed household—often with no-one in it working for a number of generations, and we have been working slowly to give them the opportunity this great country can offer.

We haven't been that happy about declining PISA standards. But what did we see from the other side of politics? We saw them simply frittering away education money through Gonski 1—just re-investing in the same stuff that doesn't work. They haven't been able to make the tough decisions in education for years. This is a side of government that, given the opportunity and the reigns of health policy, was simply unable to do anything except defend their legacy of having created Medicare. This a party that, when it got tough, when it got really hot in the kitchen, deferred PBS approvals and told Australians to wait for life-saving medicine, because they just couldn't run the budget. That is why they sit on the other side and have an attack like this on fundamentally peripheral things. It has been most disappointing, not for us but for the Australian people, who watch it with embarrassment.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (16:15): It's astounding, isn't it? The topic of the debate is 'the failure of the government to focus on the needs of Australians' and the previous speaker, obsessed with politics, spent 3½ minutes speaking about the Labor Party. I would note, Deputy Speaker, that it is the first time I have risen while you have been in the chair. I voted for you, as the nation saw when I held up my ballot paper.
The talk over the summer, before we came back here for this fortnight, was about bushfires. The sky turned red, our cities were shrouded in smoke and Australians got scared about the future—as if this were a portent—and angry about the lack of leadership from the Prime Minister. Just at the very moment that the nation needed leadership, the Prime Minister and the government failed the Australian people. There has been a lot of focus in the media and the community on the Prime Minister's holiday in Hawaii. I actually don't care about that. Let the bloke have a holiday with his kids. What I do care about is the fact that he lied to the media, snuck out of the country and refused to tell anyone who was in charge.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien): The member will withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

Mr HILL: I withdraw ‘lie’. He did sneak out of the country without telling the media and try to get away with it. But that is not the real failure. The real failures in leadership are far more serious. He failed to prepare the nation for the crisis that was to come. The scientists have been telling the government for six months what to expect. He failed to invest more in aerial firefighting—the things that actually mattered. He didn't take advice. He wouldn't meet with the emergency services chiefs, because he might have had to utter the C-words—climate change—and he failed to prepare the public.

Part of national leadership is taking advice and explaining to people what might come. I've seen what good leadership looks like, in Victoria. It's Daniel Andrews. I was there on Black Saturday in Victoria, when John Brumby prepared the state for what was to come and then had the courage to face up and learn the lessons of failure. There was a failure in response. He was too slow. We have seen Albo being the Prime Minister, all around the country, from opposition. The smirk, the defensive arrogant grin, the partisan, ad-man response, asking people to donate to the Liberal Party!

Australians are decent and fair. The interesting thing, though, is talking over the summer with people who voted Liberal but who aren't sold. They voted against us. Let's be honest: they didn't vote for the government; they voted against us. But they are suspicious of who the Prime Minister is. The polling says it. The research says it. The community tells you. There are a huge number of people who voted for this government who haven't really bought the product, and they don't understand the Prime Minister. What they saw over summer was not just a bad month or two; this was that moment of crisis when the true character of a man, the true character of a government, is revealed. People saw the true character of this government: arrogant, entitled, lacking empathy, forcing people to shake hands, all spin and marketing, all about themselves. The Australian people don't matter to this government. There is no plan for bushfires. There is no plan for the nation. There is no plan for low wage growth. There is no plan for the economy. There is no plan for 110,000 older Australians waiting for their home care packages. There is no plan for the untold thousands waiting for their NDIS packages, after the government cut $1.6 billion to prop up their fake, mythical surplus. There is no plan for jobs.

It's all Labor's fault, apparently, according to all those opposite. It's as if they want people to forget that they have been the government for seven years now. This guy is not a first-termer. The Prime Minister has been in the cabinet for seven years. As we learnt this week, they don't even have a plan for themselves. They are chaotic. They're divided. On the day of the bushfire debate they decided to have a leadership challenge and decide who was going to be leader of the National Party. That went well. A civil war erupted, which has led to your elevation, Deputy Speaker. As I said, that's a good thing. We are not reflecting on the chair; we voted for you. Ministers resigned. My electorate, one of the poorest electorates in Victoria, got not one dollar of an electoral commitment, because they were all out there rorting billions of dollars, spraying it around for their own political purposes.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (16:19): I rise to reject the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's statement. The measure of the success of a government is to keep the country safe and the economy strong, through the good times and the bad, and to be able to provide rapid and immediate support during these bad times. Australia has had a bad start to the year. The devastating bushfires throughout parts of Victoria and New South Wales will have long and lasting effects. Tragically, 33 people have lost their lives, including six brave firefighters; 2,900 homes have been confirmed lost, and more than 10 million hectares has been burnt out.

Due to the strength of the Australian economy and the good fiscal management of the Morrison government, when times got tough the government was in a position to step up and give assistance to those who needed it most. The message from our Prime Minister was strong: we will do whatever it takes to support those communities and businesses hit by these fires, and, if we need to do more, we will.

The bushfire period has been unprecedented. While we are prepared, well organised and well resourced, the Morrison government can be proud of the immediate relief provided to residents, businesses and organisations in bushfire affected communities. Immediate financial assistance was available in a matter of days, with a disaster recovery payment of $1,000 per eligible adult and $800 per eligible child. So far over $105 million has been paid through the disaster recovery payment, and an additional $15 million has been paid in child payments. That is
about a government that is listening to the needs of Australians. We are a government that is focused on delivering. We listen. We care. We deliver.

But we're not just there for firefighters, for the bushfires, for immediate disaster recovery. We're also there and prepared for other things that have happened more recently this year, including the coronavirus outbreak. Australia is an island. Throughout our history the tyranny of distance has actually provided us with a safe harbour from diseases, pests and threats from other parts of the world that have had to deal with these. But, in an increasingly globalised world, with affordable air travel and Australians' penchant for overseas travel, it's becoming harder to stave off a public health emergency such as the novel coronavirus. But, due to good practices and a responsive government, Australia is ready.

We've been ready to protect our citizens and provide support to our international neighbours. The Australian government has worked with departments and agencies to implement measures to manage the risk of coronavirus. Containment is key—and we have achieved that—but so is problem-solving. With strong borders and a strong understanding of population health, we can combat and work to minimise the impact of global health outbreaks such as coronavirus. I'm proud that our Australian government has invested in medical research, resulting in world-class institutes like the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. We should all be proud, as Australians, that the Doherty institute was the first lab outside of China to sequence the coronavirus. The Morrison government is working on minimising the effects of the virus, which will ultimately benefit Australians from both a health point of view and an economic point of view.

When health emergencies hit we have to be ready. Australia was ready, responsive and receptive as a result of being continually focused on the needs of Australians. We listen, we care, we deliver for Australia. I completely reject the proposition of the opposition.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER (16:23): I have a short statement for the House. I wish to report to the House on my attendance, with the Clerk of the House, at the 25th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, otherwise known as CSPOC, in Ottawa from 6 to 10 January this year. CSPOC is held every two years. It's a valuable opportunity to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest with over 50 presiding officers from the national parliaments of Commonwealth countries. The aims of the conference are to maintain and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of presiding officers, to promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and to develop parliamentary institutions. The agenda for this year's conference included several keynote addresses, one of which I delivered on the topic of parliamentarians as effective legislators and constituency representatives and the evolving support that this requires. The keynotes were followed by useful workshop discussions, including one chaired by myself on openness, transparency and accountability of parliaments.

As the representative presiding officer of the Australian parliament which will be hosting the next CSPOC here in Parliament House in January 2022, I was pleased to attend the meeting of the CSPOC standing committee, of which I'm now the chair, and to invite the Commonwealth presiding officers to our parliament here in Canberra in two years time.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020

Assent

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

COMMITTEES

Human Rights Committee

Report

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:25): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I present the committee's report entitled Human rights scrutiny report 2 of 2020.

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

Mr PERRETT: by leave—I am very pleased to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights second scrutiny report of 2020.

This report contains a technical examination of legislation with Australia's obligations under international human rights law, as required under the committee's statutory mandate. It sets out the committee's consideration of five bills introduced into the parliament between 4 and 6 February 2020, and legislative instruments registered on the Federal Register of Legislation between 4 December 2019 and 8 January 2020.
As members know, the committee's mandate, as set out in the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011, is to examine legislation for compatibility with human rights: defined to mean the rights contained in the seven core international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party. In understanding how human rights are to be applied, the committee has regularly looked to the way in which UN human rights treaty bodies have interpreted the treaties, as well as to the interpretations by comparable regional, international and domestic human rights courts of other countries. While none of this is binding on how the committee carries out its scrutiny function, it can assist the committee in gaining a broader understanding of the content and application of human rights.

Where a provision in a bill or instrument appears to limit rights, the committee considers whether any limitation is reasonable, necessary and proportionate. To do so it asks three key questions:

- whether the limitation is aimed at achieving a legitimate objective;
- whether there is a rational connection between the limitation and that objective; and
- whether the limitation is proportionate to that objective.

In undertaking its task, the committee has access to specialist human rights law advice, which guides the committee as to the application of these legal tests on a case-by-case basis. The committee's deliberations need to be underpinned by this legal advice, as having full consideration of well-established legal tests and precedents assists the committee to accurately identify the rights engaged by legislation and the permissibility under international law of any limitation on these rights. While we as parliamentarians are well equipped to consider debatable questions of whether a measure appears to be reasonable, necessary and proportionate, we do so based on this important legal advice. This is vital to ensure the legitimacy of the process of technical legislative scrutiny.

Where further information is required to determine these question, the committee writes to the relevant minister seeking clarification. In this report, the committee seeks further information in relation to one legislative instrument, the Aviation Transport Security Amendment (Security Controlled Airports) Regulations 2019. This instrument amends the way in which Australian airports, and aircraft, are categorised for security purposes. This would permit the use of advanced security screening measures, including body scanners, at domestic airports. This may engage the right to privacy, because body scanners produce an image of a person's body, and may reveal objects contained under clothing, or within a person's body. These measures may also engage and limit the right to freedom of movement, as a person who does not agree to undergo a body scan would be prevented from proceeding through the airport and boarding a flight for 24 hours. The committee is seeking further information as it is unclear how much detail of a person's body would be displayed to a security screening officer, including whether it would reflect a person's body weight; reveal a physical disability; or reveal the presence of personal health equipment such as a pacemaker, colostomy bag, or prosthesis. The committee is also questioning whether alternative security screening processes are available where a person doesn't wish to submit to a body scan.

The committee has also made concluding remarks in relation to the Disability Discrimination Regulations 2019, which prescribe a number of state laws as being exempt from the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. This appeared to engage a number of human rights.

The Attorney-General has now provided this advice. The committee commends the work done by the Attorney-General in conducting consultation to consider whether each of these exemptions are necessary. However, the committee is concerned that it has not been demonstrated that the exemptions are, in each instance, a proportionate means of achieving the stated objectives. In particular, it is not clear that providing a blanket exemption from the Disability Discrimination Act is the least rights restrictive way of achieving the stated objectives, or that there are sufficient safeguards in place. The committee also considers that it has not been demonstrated that a person who has been discriminated against would always have access to an effective remedy in relation to that discrimination. The committee has drawn these human rights concerns to the attention of the Attorney-General.

With these comments, I commend the committee's Report 2 of 2020 to the House.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Llew O'Brien)** (16:29): It being 4:30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Moore Electorate: Budget**

**Mr GOODENOUGH** (Moore) (16:30): May I take this opportunity to advocate, on behalf of the local community, for a number of funding priorities within my electorate of Moore—in particular, in the areas of Financial Assistance Grants to local government, building community facilities, aged care and health. As part of the process, submissions will be carefully assessed for inclusion in the upcoming federal budget. Both capital
funding and recurrent funding is required to deliver improved services and facilities for my local residents. The upcoming federal budget will be framed in the context of challenging economic conditions, with natural disasters, such as the recent bushfires and floods, and international crises, such as the coronavirus, negatively affecting Australia's economy. These events are having a detrimental effect on our domestic economy, which necessitates spending restraint and responsible economic management for the long-term benefit of our nation. It is in this austere context that the budget will be framed.

The Commonwealth provides Financial Assistance Grants to local government in the form of local roads funding and general purpose grants. In the current 2019-20 budget, the grant to the City of Joondalup totalled $5,595,749, which greatly assisted the city to provide essential services to ratepayers, without significant increases in rates. It is essential that this level of funding is maintained and increased to offset the effects of inflation and rising municipal costs. By partnering with the City of Joondalup the Commonwealth is able to deliver community facilities through federal funding contributions for capital works. The local priorities include new premises for the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club, the redevelopment of Heathridge Park to accommodate the Ocean Ridge football, tennis and cricket clubs, the upgrading of clubroom facilities at MacDonald Reserve in Padbury for the Whitford Junior Amateur Football Club. In addition, a strong case can be made for a federal contribution towards the master plan upgrades at Percy Doyle Reserve for Sorrento Bowling Club, and facility upgrades at HBF Arena, Joondalup, utilised by a number of sporting clubs.

Access to age care services continues to be a key priority within my electorate, with, currently, a high level of unmet demand and long waiting times for elderly residents. An increase in aged care funding for additional places is one of the most important considerations for the upcoming budget. As at 30 June 2019, there were 444 residential aged care places funded in my electorate, with a further 16 short-term restorative care places and 121 transition care places, bringing the total number to 581 places. However, this is still insufficient to meet demand. Local families require improved access to aged care services and facilities to meet their individual care needs and financial circumstances. Forward planning is required in order to have sufficient resources available to meet future aged care requirements in our community. I call upon the government to increase the available funding in the budget for residential aged and home care services for our senior services.

In terms of medical services, the federal government has delivered on its funding commitment of $158 million towards the Joondalup hospital expansion, due to commence later this year. Demand for medical services in Joondalup continues to grow, as our regional city services the wider northern coastal corridor, with long waiting times. Recurrent funding of Medicare services continues to be a growing area of expenditure in the budget.

A number of constituents have contacted me in relation to expanding federal subsidies to cover reimbursement for a greater range of out-of-pocket medical expenses. I forwarded these proposals to the Minister for Health for evaluation and consideration as part of the budget process. Under the Morrison Liberal government the budget continues to subsidise access to a wider range of imaging and diagnostic services, pharmaceutical benefits and professional consultations. This year subsidised access to medical devices, such as continuous glucose monitors for diabetics, has been expanded to cover a wider range of eligible patients, and a wider range of medications has been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. As a strong advocate for expanding the provision of medical services within the City of Joondalup, I support an increase in medical funding within the budget. I look forward to participating—(Time expired)

Japanangka, Mr Kumunjayi

Coniston Massacre

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (16:35): Congratulations on your appointment, Deputy Speaker Llew O'Brien. Two weeks ago I attended the Hetti Perkins aged-care facility in Alice Springs to recognise the achievements and the 100th birthday of Mr Japanangka, now Kumunjayi because of cultural reasons. He was born at Coniston in the Northern Territory in January 1920. Kumunjayi passed away on 31 January this year. His first language was Anmatyerre, his second language was Warlpiri, and his home community was Yuelamu on Mount Allan station.

The Coniston massacre of 1928 was the last documented massacre in Australia. Conservatively, over 60 Aboriginal men, women and children were murdered in the Central Desert region over several months. Kumunjayi was a witness to these murders, including, grossly, that of his mother. The massacre was not a single event but a series of raids following two other events. The first was the murder of Frederick Brooks, a white dingo trapper, on 7 August 1928 at Yurrkuru—Brookes Soak—after a dispute with an Aboriginal man, Bullfrog Japanangka, who believed that this man was living with one or more of his wives. Many innocent Aboriginal people were caught up in the violence that followed. A reprisal party, led by Constable George Murray, set out from Coniston station on 16 August and killed five people that day. By the time they returned to Coniston station on 30 August at least 17 people were dead. The killings continued around the region until mid-October.
A board of inquiry began in late 1928. It found that 31 Aboriginal people had been killed by Constable George Murray and others following the murder of Brooks. There were a minimum of six sites where killings were officially recognised by the board to have taken place between August and November 1928. Aboriginal people of the region mention other places where they say killings took place, but these were not mentioned in the board of inquiry. Shamefully, the board of inquiry also found that Murray and his party had acted in self-defence. How could they possibly do that? The board and its findings were widely criticised for having no Aboriginal witnesses, except tracker Paddy, and no counsel for Aboriginal people, and because the evidence was not made public.

The murder of so many people has long been a cause of deep sadness for Aboriginal people in the region whose families suffered from the cruelty. The lack of acknowledgement by the non-Aboriginal community of what occurred during those fateful months of 1928 increased the despair felt by Aboriginal people about this shameful moment in Australian history. The story still remains vivid and painful to the descendants of those who were so cruelly taken. Many people still talk about their family members who were gunned down during ceremony or hunting.

The effect of the Conston killings is felt widely in Central Australia. It scattered people far and wide. Some never returned to their country. In 2018 the families of an estimated 100 murder victims, alongside members of Constable Murray's family, travelled to the remote outstation of Yurkurru, Brookes Soak, approximately three hours north-west of Alice Springs, to commemorate with songs, dances, speeches and prayers the 90th anniversary of these killings. In an act of reconciliation, over 500 people gathered to join together to share the truth about this colonial past with the families of the victims and the perpetrators. The event was a practical example of truth-telling: Australians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, officially uniting so the nation can move forward. Constable Murray's great-niece, Liza Dale-Hallett, said of the commemoration:

We were warmly welcomed. We came together with our shared histories to openly speak about the trauma and suffering of the past. We believe that facing our history, Australia's history, is so important to our future. These story are not being heard. This history is not just yours and ours. It is every Australian's history. It is important that Australians open their hearts to listen to understand how important this past is for all of our futures.

Jupurrurla Kelly, the chairperson of the Central Land Council, said:

It's good that the descendants of Constable Murray and his trackers commemorate this sad anniversary with our families. It shows that individual people can become reconciled by telling the truth.

Kumanjayi, who died at the end of January, was a leader in the Central Land Council. He got his land back at Mount Allan station in 1988 after a protracted fight with the Northern Territory government. He was a performer, an artist and, in his younger days, a stockman. He featured in Australian films, including Rabbit-proof fence.

The old man's life saw the near extinction of his community when he was a child. He grew up experiencing and knowing the detailed raw emotional story and fate of his family killed in the Conston massacre. He lived to fight for his community's control of their land. He also lived to see the reconciliation of families from both sides of the Conston massacre—an event of national significance to all Australians. Rest in peace, old man.

Leslie Harrison Dam

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:40): With major rainfall events all over the east coast, I recognise that many homes and many people's lifestyles will be under threat, and we advise everyone, where possible, to follow all of the relevant local emergency recommendations. In South-East Queensland, of course, the rainfall events haven't come a moment too soon. Spared most of the ferocity of this year's bushfire season, we are seeing heavy rains in Queensland.

In my area, one of over 30 dams in the SEQ water network is Leslie Harrison Dam. It was built many decades ago and then expanded, with higher floodgates for greater capacity, taking it up to 23 gigalitres. It lost its dam gates back in 2014—the expectation of the community was that these gates had been removed for routine general maintenance—taking the capacity of this dam back down to 12 gigalitres. If leaving this dam as just a shadow of its former self were not bad enough, we've also lost the capacity to be able to store water in our local area. One of the biggest freshwater sources, and the freshwater source most closely located to the CBD of Brisbane, is a shadow of its former glory.

Since then we've seen a delicate kabuki by Labor MPs, trying to avoid the reality, which is: there is very good evidence for upgrading and maintaining dams for safety reasons, as these requirements increase every few years, but the data upon which we make these decisions should be made public. Great engineering firms have done this kind of work, but for some strange reason, like a dog sitting on a haystack, state Labor won't release the report. There's something that they're exceedingly paranoid about. We'd like to know the reasons why this dam is a shadow of its former glory.
This is liquid gold, falling over a spillway and into Moreton Bay. This dam was almost full, at its low level, when these rainfalls arrived. We hit 100 per cent, obviously, within a few hours, and now everything in this current low-pressure rainfall event is basically spewing into Moreton Bay, over the top of my local Capalaba Warriors rugby league club, through the Capalaba Bulldogs soccer club, all over the golf club and course, and all over the race track.

Of course, you know what will happen? When it settles down, after the locals have been working themselves to the bone, putting in sandbags, trying to protect assets, trying to lift material out of harm's way, the state local MP will turn up like Santa, give out sports grants and pat himself on the back—the same state MP that won't even fess up to why these gates are not on the dam, returning its capacity to its former glory. We know the one-sentence answer: it's too expensive to put them back on. We could respect that if we could see the evidence, but, as soon as you ask the Labor Party for that evidence, it is simply not released. So, of course, that makes us concerned.

Our concern is that the scope of the GHD report—although I'm sure it was extremely detailed, methodical and systematic—only examined two possibilities: one to leave the gates off and the other to put them back on. Our question is a simple one: what other options have been explored for this very, very important watercourse? Strategically located right next to a potential future 2032 Brisbane Olympic bid for South-East Queensland, with swimming, shooting, cycling just up the road—virtually walking distance away—this is a very important natural asset. All we're asking for is a mature, considered and serious look at whether it can become the great recreational asset we think Brisbane needs.

It's a beautiful lake. It's not just about having a high-tide mark that pleases residents as they commute to work; it's about letting that dam be everything that it can be, contributing to the grid. And if it's not making a significant contribution then remove it from the grid when capacity is high and let locals use it for recreational purposes like non-combustion motorised movement on the bay, fishing and canoeing. These are things that everyone loves doing, and it's nice to be able to do them on a freshwater watercourse as well. Many sports rely on fresh water—and we don't have to do it with motorised craft, so we can look after those who live near the lake. In conclusion, right now we have a state MP who is hiding under his desk and blocking the odd constituent. Every time he gets a Facebook message he hits the delete button, hiding under his desk, unable to come and talk to the locals about it. Fess up about why this dam is such a disgrace. It's a simple message: Don Brown, lift your game. Explain why our dam is in such a shambles. Talk to us about the economic options and, for goodness sake, release the report that will inform this entire debate.

Medicare

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (16:45): From January this year, the Morrison government and his Department of Health implemented the Modified Monash Model, which decides how much of an incentive doctors in regional areas receive to bulk-bill. This new scale is based on more contemporary data, which is a good thing, but in regional areas like mine they have fallen through the cracks. The electorate of Paterson has fallen through the cracks of this new data collection and Monash model. Unbelievably, areas like Port Stephens, Maitland and Kurri Kurri have been reclassified from regional to metropolitan.

I was born in Kurri Kurri Hospital, a thing that I'm incredibly proud of as no babies are born there anymore; they all go into Maitland Hospital, which is a superb hospital. How is it that my home town of Kurri Kurri, of about 6,000 people, is now classified as the same as Sydney—that enormous metropolis?

If you've ever been to Kurri, you'll know it is a beautiful place. We won tidy town of the year for the whole country. We have the most amazing murals. Bus loads of people come to Kurri to look at our enormous murals. The trick is you've got to be able to find the kookaburra in every mural. It's a wonderful town. We have the Kurri Kurri Nostalgia Festival, where we get hundreds of beautiful vintage cars. About 50,000 people come to our little town over a weekend to dance rock-and-roll, to wear their most beautiful full circular skirts and to crack out the Brylcreem. It is a wonderful, great place.

The sense of community in Kurri Kurri comes from the fact that it was the first planned town in Australia that was specifically built to support the mining communities and the pits that we had around the area.

Mr Gee: And the Bulldogs.

Ms SWANSON: And the mighty Kurri Kurri Bulldogs—I'll take that interjection from the member of Calare. Go the doggies!

Of course, the people who live in Kurri now have a great sense of community but they're really worried about their health. These changes mean that doctors in Kurri, and in Paterson more generally, face a 34 per cent cut in the financial incentive to bulk-bill. Countless practices and doctors have been really good. They've been ringing me saying: 'Come and have a meeting with us. We really need you to understand this problem.' Countless local practices have told me that they've been forced to stop bulk-billing patients because of the cuts, while others have
warned that these changes will render them unviable altogether. I even know of a development application for a new bulk-billing medical practice that has been withdrawn because they know they can't afford to open it. In a regional area, that is scandalous.

A 34 per cent cut might not sound like a lot, but the math is astounding. There are medical centres in my community that bulk-bill around eight people an hour across several doctors, and they're running at capacity. In just a five-day week, operating from 8 am to 6 pm, they will lose $1,300 per week. That amounts to $67,000 a year. That's the equivalent of about two staff wages for administration. They're thinking of having to stop bulk-billing or potentially having to cut people's jobs. There are those two casual staff that add up to $67,000, so the choice of the practice owner is, 'Do I let my staff go, or do I stop bulk-billing?' What sort of a choice is that in a small community town?

Since January this year, I've heard from literally thousands of people in my community who have been or will be affected by these cuts. They're single-parent families, people with children, pensioners, concession card holders—the list goes on. These are the people who had to save up, in some cases, to get medical attention. Price should never prevent Australians from seeking medical attention, not in Australia in 2020.

These changes to bulk-billing do not make sense to me or my community. But don't just take it from me. I have set up an online petition. Thousands of people have signed it and hundreds have made comments and shared it. Check out my Facebook page for more details.

**Climate Change**

**Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes)** (16:50): Over the past week we've had many groups around the country calling for net zero emissions by 2050. So let's do the maths and see exactly what that might do for the environment. With Australia's 1.2 to 1.3 per cent of global emissions, zero emissions in Australia by 2050 will do nothing to stop the climate from changing. It will do nothing to change the sea levels down at Fort Denison. It will do nothing to stop the decline that we are seeing in cyclones hitting Australia. It will do nothing to change the fact that we remain a land of drought and flooding rains.

The call for net zero by 2050 is playing Russian roulette with our economy, our nation's prosperity and our wealth creation and jobs. It puts at direct risk our ability to fund our public hospitals, to support children with disabilities and to list those life-saving drugs that we put on the PBS. Net zero is not just about erecting pretty wind turbines and sending money off to China in exchange for solar panels.

According to the BP statistical review of 2018, we used the equivalent of 144 million tonnes of oil equivalent from three fossil fuels, but we used twice as much energy from gas and oil as we do from coal. To take all our fossil fuels, going to net zero, and substitute them with low-carbon sources, we would have to build something like 150 nuclear reactors over the next 30 years. That's five medium-sized nuclear reactors every year for the next 30 years. That's what net zero means. So it's not just the destruction of the coal industry. It doesn't just mean no more cooking or heating with gas.

What does net zero mean for our airline industry? There was an interesting quote from Professor Julian Allwood, a professor of engineering and the environment at Cambridge, recently in the Financial Times, and the headline was, 'The only way to hit zero is to stop flying'. For all the talk of our electric planes and so-called sustainable fuels, the professor said:

... past experience with innovation in aviation suggests that such ambitious targets are unrealistic and distracting. The only way ... [to] get to net zero emission aviation by 2050 is by having a substantial period of no aviation at all. Let's stop placing impossible hopes on breakthrough technologies ...

There is no guarantee that any experimental technology will become commercially viable in the long run. Just take Steve Jobs and Apple. They're one of the most visionary and innovative companies on the face of the planet, yet they had a list of failures as long as your arm: the Apple Lisa, the Macintosh TV, the Apple Pippin, the Apple Newton, the iMac hockey puck mouse, the AirPower wireless charger—failure after failure and yet these innovative geniuses put hundreds of millions of dollars into investing in those ideas that never worked.

Professor Allwood went on and he said:

... the commitment to net zero aviation by 2050 is really a commitment to zero aviation. Rather than hope new technology will magically rescue us, we should stop planning to increase fossil-fuel flights and commit to halving them within 10 years with an eye toward phasing them out entirely by 2050.

Those calling for net zero are not just coming after the coal industry; they are coming after the jobs of everyone that is involved in the aviation industry. That is not just the employees of Qantas and Virgin, the baggage handlers and everyone else who works out at the airport; it is the entire Australian tourism sector.
Let's not forget that last financial year we had 9.3 million international visitors to this country. They spent something like $50 billion throughout our economy. From hotels and motels, transport tourism operators, cafes and restaurants to tourist shops and local artists—that money went into their pockets. If you kill aviation you kill all of those jobs. It's also exporters of fresh produce that rely on ample space in the belly of commercial air flights to get that cargo price down so they can export to their markets. Ultimately, it also affects young Australians and their ability to travel and see other great cultures. So, if these people want the debate about net zero, bring it on. Let's talk about the facts and get the facts on the table and debate them.

**Arts**

**North Richmond Bridge**

*Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:55)*: When the government put arts under the new Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, it sent a very clear message to Australia that the government does not think arts are important—so much so that they didn't even bother to put the name in the title of their own department. But, if we want a healthy and thriving society, we must embrace and nurture our arts, not just because of what the industry contributes economically or the positive effects the arts have on our health and wellbeing—as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra did this week in this place—and not just because, even before we have our children at preschool, our education of them starts in the home with Australian shows like *Play School* and *Bluey*—and, yes, they are the arts.

The reason it's really important is that the arts teach us empathy—to understand the perspectives of people who come from different cultures and different backgrounds. Through the storytelling of film, dance, books, visual arts, song and drama, we can learn from things we might never have the chance to experience in our own lives. And, just as powerfully, we can also see an experience that we have had and, by seeing it played back to us, find clarity and meaning in our own story. When New Zealander Taika Waititi said at the Academy Awards:

I dedicate this to all the Indigenous kids in the world who want to do art and dance and write stories—he was reminding people how important the power to share your story is. These stories, our stories, told by artists and writers, musicians and performers, are documenting Australia, our present and our history, and it's time the government was on the right side of that story.

Traffic around North Richmond Bridge is nearly always a nightmare—no less so this week with floods. The people on either side of the bridge have made it clear to me that what they want with the planned duplication of the bridge is a bypass. Of the more than 700 responses I've so far received seeking input into the proposed options, three-quarters of them are calling for a bypass. They want a route that goes north or south of the existing inadequate bridge and goes around—not through—Richmond and North Richmond. More than half want the North Richmond southern bypass route and the other 20 per cent want the northern bypass. The other options were much less preferred.

I provided the New South Wales RMS project team with an overview of the responses I've received and some of the themes that have emerged. As one resident wrote:

Of the proposals presented, the North Richmond southern bypass route is the only one with some merit. The prime aim of an additional bridge near North Richmond should be to divert as much existing and future traffic as possible away from the townships of North Richmond and Richmond by way of a bypass route.

Another said:

Only the southern bypass will be effective in stopping the terrible traffic congestion in North Richmond in peak hour.

There were, of course, other views, such as this one, for example:

The Southern bypass route does not make sense, considering all the development proposed for the north side of North Richmond off Terrace Rd. People bought in Redbank development not expecting the southern proposal.

This is a project that is funded to the tune of $200 million by the federal government, supported by Labor, with a small contribution from the New South Wales government. My fear is that, in spite of the process of consultation, the decision will ultimately be based on budget, and, seriously, what can you build for a bit over $200 million in a flood-prone area? As we've seen in the last few days with the bridge going under in the flood, it is a crucial access point. Certainly, there are calls in the feedback I received for it to be as flood resilient as the Jim Anderson Bridge that state Labor constructed decades ago—the last new bridge to be completed in the area. Strong preference reflected in the comments many people made was to have a sustainable, long-term approach, including a genuine bypass rather than a duplication. We received comments like: 'The bridge needs to have enough lanes for the growing population,' and 'Don't make it a band-aid solution.' The social impact of the proposals was also raised. One person told me:

| CHAMBER |
People who live across the river rely on this bridge for everything. Consider the implications of the bridge on the community, not just people passing through.

People also want to make sure that the heritage of the region is respected. There are concerns about the impacts on polo fields, the Colo soccer club grounds and also using the project as an opportunity to improve access to the Hawkesbury River. This is an important project and these views need to be taken seriously.

*House adjourned at 17:00*
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman) took the chair at 10:00.

STATMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms McBRIEDE (Dobell) (10:00): This summer has been a season of grief, loss and hardship for many Australians. The unprecedented bushfire crisis, followed so quickly by floods, has changed Australia. Sadly, this government may yet be remembered for its failure to respond properly to what one New South Wales Liberal minister has called ‘a humanitarian crisis’. In the middle of so much suffering, it was difficult to hear the National Disability Insurance Agency confirm that more than 1,200 people have died while waiting for a National Disability Insurance Scheme plan. How is it possible in a wealthy country like Australia that over 1,200 vulnerable people have lost their lives while waiting for the government to help? How can the Minister for the NDIS and Minister for Government Services—the minister responsible for the NDIS—claim that no-one has died waiting? Why didn't the minister tell the public about this crisis? The Prime Minister at least admitted that the deaths were unacceptable. Australians with disability are dying while waiting for basic aids and treatment. The NDIS is meant to be a path to independence, yet, in some cases, loved ones believe delays have led to and hastened deaths.

Nicole, a mother in my electorate, has been fighting to get her daughter Rebecca access to NDIS for at least six months. Each time I hear from Nicole, I hope I won't hear the worst. Rebecca was born with a genetic syndrome, hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, and a long list of associated impairments. She is now 21 and weighs only 41 kilos. Her first application for the NDIS was rejected because it didn’t say she lived with a permanent impairment. Rebecca needs to be lifted out of bed and can't shower herself, but the NDIA assessed her as not being impaired. She was born with a genetic syndrome, yet the NDIA says her condition isn't permanent. An occupational therapist has reported that Rebecca is in desperate need of a new bed, an electric wheelchair, a shower chair and assistance with self-care. With the help of a local area coordinator, Rebecca submitted a fresh NDIS application, which was, again, rejected. This time the NDIA informed Rebecca that she hadn't exhausted all treatment avenues. Her mother said she's ready to start picketing government offices.

This is what happens when you rip $4.6 billion out of the NDIS and you outsource and continue to understaff the scheme. The NDIS can change lives, and it does. But the neglect and indifference of this government is nothing short of cruelty to Australians living with disability. In April, the government's Carer Gateway will go live. It is supposed to make the lives of carers easier. One of its stated objectives is to assist carers—like Rebecca's mum—to navigate the NDIS. Bill Shorten, shadow minister for NDIS, and I are meeting with carers, NDIS participants, advocacy groups and support services to make sure no-one is worse off as a result of these changes. When will the Prime Minister and the Minister for the NDIS properly fund the NDIA so that those needing access, like Rebecca, will get help when they need it?

Bennelong Electorate: Australia Day Honours

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (10:03): It is once again the time of the year when we celebrate the contributions of great Australians to our national life through the awarding of the Order of Australia and other awards as part of the Australia Day Honours List. I would like to honour several of the worthy recipients of Australia Day honours from my community of Bennelong. Firstly, Ms Catherine Inglis, who has been made a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the building and construction industry. Ms Inglis has held several senior roles in the industry. She is the current national director of the Housing Industry Association and works as a general manager of Brickworks Ltd, focusing on innovation. In addition, she has contributed to Standards Australia as a member with specialist expertise in prefabricated concrete elements. Outside of her work in the building industry, she is also a passionate ceramicist, and has been a member of the Australian Ceramic Society for over 25 years and has served as the organisation's federal president.

I’d also like to acknowledge Dr David Leece, also for his admission as a Member of the Order of Australia. Dr Leece's award has been made for significant service to the environment and to defence and security studies. Dr Leece has had a wide and varied career, which I would like to recognise in full. He has served as the assistant commissioner of the Natural Resources Commission of New South Wales, and as the executive director and chief scientist of the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority, and he has worked as a research scientist for the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. In addition to his work with the environment, he has a record of extensive service with the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales. He has variously served as the organisation's secretary, editor and vice president, and, most recently, as president between 2013 and 2016.
I'd also like to highlight the excellent work of Mr Hassib Elias, who has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the Palestinian community of New South Wales. I've known Mr Elias personally for some years and I have always been impressed by his commitment to the community and his work to foster strong multiculturalism. Mr Elias is the founder of the Palestinian Association of Australia and president since 1973. He is also a member of the Multicultural Advisory Committee for the City of Ryde, and, perhaps most astonishing of all, he has been assisting refugees and migrants to settle in the community for more than half a century. He is a wonderful addition to our community. I am very glad that Mr Elias has been rightly recognised for his work.

Congratulations to Catherine, David and Hassib, and all others who were rightly recognised for their efforts this year.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Bennelong, who might find that Catherine Inglis is on my side of the Gladesville border and not his. I call the member for Burt.

Defence Industry

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (10:06): It is absolutely clear that the Australian defence sector no longer has any confidence in the Morrison government delivering on its rhetoric on Australian industry content, which it has been harping on about for many years.

This morning, in The Australian newspaper, I was appalled, as I'm sure nearly every Australian was, to read that it is expected that local firms might not get even half of the value of the future submarine contracts that will be required to complete the project. To read the defence minister's revelation in that article that the government's goal was not to set Australian content targets but merely to 'maximise the opportunities at all times' is absolutely flabbergasting. What this is saying to Australian industry is that we're not about protecting you; we're not about ensuring that you get the best opportunity. This is a government that says, 'If you have a go, you'll get a go.' But it turns out that, when it comes to Australian defence industry, they're not getting a go out of this government at all, and it's leaving the defence industry sector in Australia with an uncertain future.

Over the last six years, this future submarine project has blown out by 10 years. Only a few weeks ago we had the Auditor-General raise serious concerns about the delays in even planning this submarine project. They can't say how much Australian industry content there will be, which is going to have a significant impact on the capacity and involvement of Australian jobs. More critically, it means that there is a lessening of the opportunity to develop Australian sovereign capability when it comes to defence.

What is this government doing to ensure that we get the best benefit out of this spend on the future submarine project, and, indeed, across all of our Australian defence procurement projects? The real question the government has to answer is: why haven't they been stronger on mandating the Australian industry content requirements in this contract? Why haven't they been setting actual deliverable targets that can be enforced to make sure that we develop a great Australian defence industry in this nation?

I have had many, many companies come to me, over months and months now, since I came into this portfolio, complaining about the difficulty of getting access to defence industry work, and complaining that the primes that are involved are always linking up with their foreign relationships and other companies that they already have in their supply chains, instead of doing what the government says they should be doing, which is: making sure that they're using Australian industry to deliver these projects. It's not just about the jobs; it's about making sure that we see the development of capability, making sure that we're using Australian design teams, and making sure we're using Australian know-how.

The government is spending $200 billion on defence industry over the next decade or more, and they need to be maximising jobs and sovereign capability. (Time expired)

Queensland: Health Care

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (10:09): The nation is now watching what is the weeping sore of Queensland Health, and that is Redland Hospital. I don't think we've ever seen a Labor health minister so egregiously drain a hospital service of resources, but that's exactly what's happening on the south side of Brisbane, where an extraordinary $39 million was leached from the Metro South Health hospital budget over the 2017-18 financial year. You'd think, having been caught out in August of the year before last by me, they might have eased off a little. The peddle did come off the floor slightly, but they took another $17 million, which, over two years, amounts to—yes, wait for this—Labor leaching $1 million every fortnight out of the hospital service. How can you possibly run a hospital service with money seeping out of the budget like that? Let's be honest about this: it's the Commonwealth contributions, increasing from $83 million to $96 million in those two years, that pays the nurses, keeps the lights on and actually makes sure that we've got a hospital service at all. You've got a free-riding state
government that's draining not just our area but Wide Bay and Central Queensland. They took $10 million out of children's health services.

I'm standing here today, though, because, added together, $39 million came out of my hospital services and only $22 million came out of other, selected parts of Queensland. The excuses are appalling. I've met with the most senior economists from Queensland Health in the minister's office to hear him respectfully say that it's all about taking from Peter to pay Paul and the delayed payments from the Commonwealth. The delayed payments from the Commonwealth don't amount to even a fraction of what's being ripped out of Redlands Hospital. Let's be serious about this: this hospital can't cope as long as you're draining it like this; this hospital can't survive as long as you won't build a car park; this hospital can't serve as long as one denies it an MRI. It's all Queensland Health.

Why do they attack my area? Let me give you a tiny hint: when $39 million vanished in 2017-18, $40 million appeared in Metro North, the Labor state health minister's area. We're seeing a transfusion across the bridges, basically artificially supporting Brisbane north, which simply doesn't have the activity. How do I know that? Commonwealth payments are based on activity. That tells us how much work's being done in each of these hospitals. I've got the busiest area in Queensland and I'm seeing the money being sucked across for political purposes.

Of course, no budgets will be released. They sit on those; they hide them. They won't tell you how much money comes out each of my Metro South Health hospitals. Obviously, I care about Redlands. I have to assume it's all coming from Redlands until it's proven otherwise. It's not that hard to release a budget. After squeezing Don Brown like a wet handkerchief, we finally got the staffing budget, and guess what's happening? It's going up. What we know is that the ripping off is happening from the non-staffing budget. Please release the non-staffing budget—no luck at all. These guys are politically gimped. We have chased them at every corner of Metro South Health to get an answer. This is Labor doing their political trickery and moving their infrastructure where it suits their marginal seats, and I will make sure we get an answer if it's the one thing I do.

Australian Capital Territory: Bushfires

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (10:12): It has been 17 years since the 2003 Canberra bushfires, but the memory loomed large over the capital in the recent summer months. Emergency services battled multiple fires in record-breaking heat. My constituents in Jervis Bay were evacuated as the fires closed in. One blaze still burns, despite the rain. The Orroral Valley fire, which started in Namadgi National Park on 27 January and burned out of control for more than a fortnight, is now contained, but it has burned more than 86,000 hectares, around 30 per cent of the land area of the ACT.

Away from the fire front, the impact of the bushfires has been felt across the capital. There was an air quality index of 4,091 on New Year's Day 2020, around 20 times the level considered hazardous. It was the worst air quality recorded anywhere in the world on that day. The smoke forced offices to evacuate. Questacon, Old Parliament House and the National Gallery were among those that had to close their doors. The Australian National University and the University of Canberra asked staff and students to stay home. It hit our business community hard. As my Labor colleague Mick Gentleman told the ACT Legislative Assembly earlier this week, 'Canberra businesses rely on our excellent weather, characteristic of the most liveable city in the world.' But these conditions changed and we entered what Canberra Business Chamber chief, Michael Schaper, described as uncharted territory. Businesses were closed, somehow continuing to pay staff wages while getting very little trade in through the door. Those businesses affected by the fires can access the Barr government's disaster recovery assistance, including concessional interest rate loans for small businesses, by contacting Access Canberra.

But we know that it's a bandaid, not a solution. Action on climate change is needed not just from an environmental standpoint but from an economic one as well. Peter Strong from the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia was right when he said it was clear that climate change is having an economic impact. Ask any insurer.

This is a problem that requires answers and action at a federal level, but those in Canberra can do their part. Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, and I urge all parliamentarians to give a little love back to the capital by spending a bit more time here in the ACT. Support a local business that has to close its doors due to smoke. Get a coffee from the best barista in the world, Sasa Sestic, or go to BentSpoke and try their Barley Griffin beer, which took home a championship trophy from the International Brewing and Cider Awards. Get the best burger in Canberra from Young & Frisky, which coincidentally is right next to my electorate office in Gungahlin. Or try the award-winning chocolate from Jasper + Myrtle. Let's celebrate Canberra and let our businesses get back to their award-winning best.
Capricornia Electorate: Shine Energy

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Assistant Minister for Children and Families and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia) (10:15): I wish to take this opportunity to speak about an important and promising energy project that the Australian government is supporting in Capricornia. It is Shine Energy's high-energy, low-emissions coal plant in Collinsville. At the moment, we have people in Australia up in arms over the prospect of a new coal-fired power station being built. But there is a story of the people of Collinsville and the traditional landowners that is either not being told or simply being ignored because it doesn't fit the predetermined narrative the inner-city elite already have in their minds.

For my parliamentary colleagues, Collinsville is located about 1,300 kilometres north of Brisbane and 87 kilometres south-west of Bowen. It's smack-bang in the middle of coal country. Over the years, Collinsville has seen its fair share—and I would argue more than its fair share—of economic downturn and decline in population. Shine Energy have a very simple ethos that underpins everything they do. They want the same opportunities that are given to other energy companies to use the land they have lived on for thousands of years to create prosperity for their own people. It's a simple goal when read on paper but harder in its execution, given the current political climate for coal projects. They want to work towards economic prosperity and positive social outcomes for their own people by working together to reach a collective goal. But the people who oppose this power station are getting in the way of that. The coal-fired power station would deliver 2,000 jobs during construction and 600 in operation, with a significant focus on Indigenous employment.

I must also take this opportunity to commend the CEO of Shine Energy, Ashley Dodd, for his ongoing commitment, professionalism and passion to get this project up and going. In conclusion, I wish to say this as clearly as possible: I want a coal-fired power station in Collinsville. I urge anyone who doesn't support this project to look Ashley Dodd and the people of the Birri nation in the eye and tell them why they don't deserve this project. Shine Energy's coal project is more than worthy of bringing new life and new industry into the area. New and reliable energy generation in Central and North Queensland is vital to drive down prices and bolster system strength. We want it to deliver reliable and affordable power to commercial consumers in North Queensland. We want it delivered to secure long-term jobs for our children's future and we want it to deliver prosperity and security for the traditional landowners of the Birri nation so they have better opportunities to live and thrive.

Health Care

Child Care

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (10:18): If the people of Brand needed any more examples of just how the Liberals don't care about them, they've got it in the ever-increasing cost to go and see the doctor and to put their children into child care. The health department have confirmed what many Australians already know: that the cost of health care has skyrocketed while the Liberals have been in government. The people of Brand are paying an average out-of-pocket fee of over $37 to see a GP. This is a record high, up nearly 30 per cent since the Liberals first came to government again in 2013.

The Liberals have reclassified the suburb of Baldivis from rural to metropolitan, which reduces the bulk-billing incentive by over 30 per cent. If the Liberals think arbitrarily changing the goalposts has no effect on the communities that are already struggling, they are absolutely wrong. Whether you agree or disagree with Baldivis being reclassified for Medicare bulk-billing incentives, from rural to metropolitan, the practical effect of this decision from the Liberal government is that the people of Baldivis will likely pay more to go to the doctor because this government will pay less to support GPs who work to keep this growing community healthy. This is a cold-hearted decision made here by a cold-hearted government thousands of kilometres away from Baldivis, with absolutely zero understanding of how many people in Baldivis are struggling with the high cost of living and the associated absolutely zero wages growth. It's an indiscriminate decision that shows that the Liberals simply don't care about the people of Baldivis and across the wider region of Brand.

On top of this, out-of-pocket fees to see a specialist are even worse, with people in Brand paying an average of over $85 to see a specialist—up a mindboggling 54 per cent under the Liberals. Many of these people are on either the age pension, the disability support pension or another form of government support payment. Slightly over 20 per cent of the people in Brand are always bulk-billed by specialists, so these costs are hitting thousands of locals across Rockingham and Kwinana every year. People are worried about getting another shift at work. They shouldn't have to worry about the cost of going to see a doctor or a specialist.

Then there is the rising cost of child care in Australia. Recent reports show that the cost of child care has skyrocketed by 34.6 per cent since the Liberals were elected in 2013. The federal government promised a new childcare system would put downward pressure on fees, but, as every parent in Rockingham and Kwinana knows, this is absolutely not the case. Instead, fees have climbed over five per cent nationally in 12 months and three per
Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:21): I rise today to recognise Mount Gambier resident Jack Hopgood, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday. Jack is a softly spoken, humble man who is not overly comfortable with attention. I expect I'll be dutifully reprimanded for updating the House as to his story, but it needs to be heard in this place. Mr Hopgood celebrated his milestone birthday on 22 January with family and friends at Mount Gambier's RSL—an organisation he's been actively involved with since returning from World War II in 1945. Not only is Mr Hopgood one of Mount Gambier's most prominent World War II veteran; he's also a surviving prisoner of war. Mr Hopgood was enlisted in the RAAF at the age of 19 and on 1 April 1940 was deployed overseas, aged 20, leaving behind his job and his father's garage. He served in Sumatra and was captured by the Japanese in Java. He was taken to Singapore as a prisoner of war in 1942. He was held by the Japanese for more than three years. Upon returning to Japan in 2017 at the invitation of the Japanese government, Jack remarked: 'I don't hold any resentment. Hate is a useless emotion.' Perhaps some of us in this place should take note of Jack's views—a true expression of forgiveness. Upon returning home from war in 1945, Jack returned to his father's garage, eventually taking over the business upon his father's death.

Jack is a valued member of the Mount Gambier community. Jack was involved with the Mount Gambier Aero Club and the Mount Gambier Veteran and Vintage Car Club, and was a founding member of the Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce. Jack is an avid golfer and was instrumental in the establishment of the Blue Lake Golf Club, of which he is a former chairman and life member. He was also largely responsible for the beautification of the lakes area in Mount Gambier, achieving a lot in his five decades of service to that committee. Anyone who's been to the Blue Lake at Mount Gambier would be shocked to see what the area looked like before the committee's improvements. The once bare landscape now has areas of parks and gardens. It's a huge attraction for tourists and local residents alike.

Mr Hopgood was awarded an Order of Australia in 2018 for his decades of dedicated service to the Mount Gambier community. Upon receiving this award, the modest Mr Hopgood remarked, 'When you live this long, you hope you've achieved something, otherwise you probably spent a lot of time in bed!' Mr Hopgood, our community and our nation are in debt for your service. Thank you.

Baha'i Faith

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (10:24): The people of the Baha'i faith in my electorate of Wills and across Australia are deeply concerned about their brothers and sisters in Iran. Since 1979, the government of Iran has made it official policy to discriminate against and persecute members of the Baha'i community, Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority. In 2016, the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described Baha'is as 'the most severely persecuted religious minority in Iran'. The Australian parliament in 2012 and 2015 condemned the persecution and treatment of Baha'is in Iran.

In recent months, the Baha'i people in Iran have faced a new and increased form of oppression through Iran's national ID card program. The national ID card now requires people to identify with only one of four religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism or Zoroastrianism. Anyone who does not, including Baha'i's, is denied an ID card, effectively rendering them a nonperson. Without this card, a person in Iran can't get a driver's licence, a passport or a work permit; they can't open and use a bank account or enter into a contract—pretty much anything that you need to do in modern life. These are fundamental rights that are important, and they're being denied to a group of people based on their religious faith.

I'm extremely concerned about this latest development in the long history of persecution of the Baha'i people in Iran. As leaders in a democracy in this place, we must speak up for people around the world who are being denied their rights on the basis of their faith, race or ethnicity. I urge the government and the Minister for Foreign Affairs to make representations to the Iranian ambassador on behalf of the people of the Baha'i faith.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk about arts in my community. In my first speech in 2016, I spoke about the importance of the arts in society. A thriving arts sector is the heart and soul of any society. Many of my constituents in Wills are that heart and soul, working and creating in the arts. I think we've all experienced that feeling when a creative work inspires you, moves you, makes you think about something in a different or even better way or makes you stop thinking altogether and reminds you to just be in that moment. That's what the
power of the arts is about. It gives us something that's almost indescribable—something fundamental, I think, to being a human being.

That's why it beggars belief, even with this government's disgraceful track record on the arts, that, during the last week in this place in 2019, the Liberal-National government abolished the Department of Communications and the Arts and merged it into a so-called superdepartment which became the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. The artists, the musicians, the actors, the dancers, the singers and the filmmakers of Australia deserve better than that from this government. They deserve their own department. They deserve a government that supports them, not a government that cuts funding to the arts every chance they get, because the arts are so critically important to our society.

Page Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr HOGAN (Page—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (10:27): I want to acknowledge the Australia Day award recipients from the Kyogle local government area at the recent Australia Day awards. There were three different official functions in the Kyogle LGA. I want to start with Woodenbong, because I had the pleasure to celebrate Australia this year in Woodenbong.

I want to congratulate the Citizen of the Year, George Stein. George currently volunteers for the Northern Rivers Community Transport and has previously held positions on the Woodenbong and District Golf Club and the Woodenbong Progress Association boards. The Business/Service award went to the Woodenbong Driveway, locally owned by Rod and Kim Watson. The service station and workshop are institutions and are much loved in Woodenbong. Woodenbong Driveway faced stiff competition this year.

The Community Organisation/Event award went to the Woodenbong Rural Fire Service, given the recent fires in the area. They were the best example of dedication, effectiveness and great community effort. The Australia Day appreciation awards were received by the Pod Army. The Pod Army were a group of local community residents who had their own utes with water tanks and hoses in the back, and they themselves helped defend the town of Woodenbong from the recent fires. BlazeAid have also been doing wonderful work in bushfire impacted communities around Woodenbong.

At the West of the Range Australia Day ceremony in Bonalbo, the Citizen of the Year award went to Pastor Peter Boughey. Peter has been the town's pastor for 20 years. He works with Indigenous youth a lot in the Toys Change Lives program. Peter is a great guy. Ryan Stubbings and Laura Sudholz were the joint winners of the Young Citizen of the Year award. They came to the aid of an elderly man who collapsed on a footpath in Bonalbo. They're both school captains, and they are terrific young role models. The Community Organisation/Event award went to the Bonalbo Show Society. What a wonderful organisation that is. The Sportsperson of the Year award went to Emily Watson, who represented Australia playing futsal in Brazil last year.

In the award ceremony in Kyogle, Col Griffiths was named the Citizen of the Year. Col is currently serving his third term as the president of the Kyogle Golf Club. He was the inaugural chairman of the Kyogle Seniors’ Centre and has been a member of the Kyogle Lions Club since 1990. He has done a great job and is a great community advocate. The Senior Citizen of the Year award went to Fay Little for years of volunteering for many organisations across the Kyogle district. Congratulations, Fay. I know your family are very proud. Zac Clark was named Senior Student of the Year for excellence as an all-round student. Alison Coote was named the Senior Sportsperson of the Year after representing Australia in triathlons and qualifying for the world championships in Hawaii. Congratulations. The Junior Sportsperson of the Year went to Rigby O'Meara, who is a multidiscipline athlete with strong results in swimming, athletics, Rugby League, soccer and basketball. In Kyogle, the special community service awards were presented to all the RFSs in the region, which have done a wonderful job protecting our community. Congratulations to all of them.

Health Care

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro) (10:30): Many members will know that in recent months I've had some health issues which relate to renal and kidney problems. I want to refer to that in this opportunity, because of the lessons I've learned out of it. Effectively my conditions were caused by my service in the ADF, particularly my deployments in Somalia, Timor and Iraq, where I suffered some severe episodes of dehydration and had no idea what sorts of long-term effects that would cause. I was very fortunate to be in the hands of a wonderful doctor who has performed a magnificent service for veterans in our community here in Canberra, Dr Hodo Haxhimolla, and we all really support him for his dedication to looking after veterans. He's also pioneered some wonderful methods of treatment in this space.

The key lesson from that is obviously the issue of keeping on top of this dehydration issue. I would really recommend that ADF veterans get out there if they've had dehydration episodes on deployment or in training.
They should get baseline tests and scans done to make sure that they're on top of this and get in early because I can definitely indicate that it's not fun when it actually blows up on you.

I also wanted to draw the connection to the situation with fireys through this disaster season. With the effects of climate change meaning longer periods of firefighting and the intense heat from that, fireys are all at grave risk from those sorts of dehydration issues and the long-term effects they can have. I would also recommend that we put a lot of effort into making sure we are putting a good management regime around our fireys to ensure they stay hydrated. One of the big factors in that, of course, is that they are overstretched at the moment. I had one firey telling me during this crisis that, with his brigade, the previous record for their teams being in continuous rotation was four weeks. They've been out there now for eight weeks at a time and not only are they completely bugged but it's very hard to stay on top of how you personally look after yourself in those sorts of conditions. So we have to look at how we get better numbers out there to respond to these mega disasters.

During this period, I've put out some ideas about how we might do that. I think, in the first instance, that's going to need to involve some sort of incentivisation regime that hopes to draw in more volunteers. If you look at it, not only do we not have the numbers out there but, when you go to all of the RFS stations—as I do to go to their presentation nights, and I've been pleased to be with Shane Fitzsimmons on those occasions—the demography of those stations is not great. Effectively you've got people who are in their 60s and even 70s. A lot of those people have to be backroom operators, so people who are on the front lines of the fires are really stretched at the moment, and they can't stay away from their businesses and farms for as long as we're requiring them to now. There's not only a very serious health issue here but also a management issue of how we deal with these crises going forward.

Calare Electorate: Australia Bushfires

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (10:33): I've spoken in the House before about the firefighting effort in the Calare electorate. Our fireys and emergency services personnel were simply outstanding, but so too were the huge numbers of volunteers and community members who supported them during this awful fire season. Time does not permit me to name all of the volunteers in our region who worked so hard to get our communities through such a devastating time, but I would like to acknowledge some of them here today.

In the Rylstone area, Kate and Stacey Lobley started preparing meals from the local fire shed, which grew into a whole-of-community effort when the local Rotary Club pitched in and started offering 24/7 meals out of the kitchen of the Rylstone Showground. The Rotary Club of Rylstone Kandos managed to deliver 2,900 meals in less than 22 days to sustain our fireys while they battled the blazes. Everyone was welcome—fireys, aircrew, police, ambos—from the crack of dawn until late at night.

The members of the Oakes family—Robyn and Gary and their children Rachel, Gemma, Glen and Rhys—were simply outstanding and played a very significant role in delivering thousands of meals to tired and weary fireys and other volunteers. Even their son-in-law, Pedar Cusack, who was visiting from Ireland, joined in the volunteering effort.

I also wish to acknowledge Klaus Keck, President of the Rotary Club of Rylstone Kandos, and the members of the club who were there day in, day out, including Graham Jose, Greg Bennet, David Connell, Carol Heilman, David Fuller, Janell Cole, Marion Crossman, Margaret Jose, David Roach, Amanda Roach, Peter Hatfield and Phillip Freeman. To the family and partners of Rotarians, Margaret Connell, Nancy Keck, Helen Fuller, Chantelle Dimano, Lavina Inglis, Devonti Dimano, Isayah Picatoste and Marley Inglis: we thank you.


Over at the Ilford and Running Stream hall, I'd like to thank community members Kellie Benjamin, Kelly Lilley, Christine Reeves, Denise Stafford, Denise Sim, Jane Young, John and Faith Cauchi, Chris and Sissey Reynolds, Amy Weatherley, Sue and Greg Garlinge, Peter Hay, Sarah Lodewijks, Melissa Lodewijks, Louise Wakefield, Penny Golden, Glynis Lilley, Leonie McFarlane, Darryl Clapham, Toby and Kate Dupaire, Fiona McDonald and Buzz Sanderson, Audrey Rutter, Tania Selby, Jacqui Wakefield, Wendy Dobbin, Michelle and Noel Smith, Wendy Chadwick, Sharni Mord, Gavin Mceldon, and Jacqui and Ian Waddell and their daughters,
Lucy and Amy, for this wonderful effort that helped get our communities through this very difficult and trying time.

Mr CHAMPION (Spence) (10:36): I'd like to extend my condolences to all who have suffered through a very brutal bushfire season, and, in my home state of South Australia, those people and communities who have suffered through both the Kangaroo Island and Cudlee Creek fires. To say that this has been a profoundly difficult experience to go through is an understatement. I know because my previous electorate, Wakefield, went through a terrible fire, the Pinney fire, only a couple of years ago. These are terrible times, and we thank all who have been and are involved in dealing with these fires. It's very confronting for volunteer firefighters and units. I think the intensity of these fires is something that is new, and so we in this parliament, including the government, should be providing them with all the support they need.

My local brigades, both Dalkeith CFS under captain Clint Marsh, and the Salisbury CFS under captain Ken Potter, have done a lot of firefighting in the community over many years, and I thank those brigades for their efforts, along with all the brigades within the boundaries of my previous electorate—in Gawler River, which is just across the border, and all of those north of that, including my home town, Kapunda; and Greenock. As I said before, the intensity of these fires means that we have to properly look at the sort of equipment that we provide to these brigades.

I'd also like to thank the local Hazara community, including the Wali ASR Centre and Imam Mehdi, and the Baba Mazara Foundation and Imam Ali, for raising $87,444 in funds for bushfire relief. These are very proud Australians. They work very hard and they're very, very keen on making sure that they give back to their new nation. This bushfire season, they were as affected as everybody else by the intensity of these fires and the loss of lives, homes and communities. So they really set out to raise as much money as they could for our communities. It's a fairly mighty figure, $87,000, and I would like to congratulate them on their efforts—and it would be good, too, if they could continue!

La Trobe Electorate: Local Sporting Champions Program

Mr WOOD (La Trobe—Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs) (10:39): I'm proud today to speak about some very talented young individuals in the electorate of La Trobe. The Local Sporting Champions program provides financial support of up to $750 for travel costs to sporting championships. I'm glad that so many young sporting stars have been awarded the opportunity to be a local sporting champion under this program. Many of them have received financial support of up to $700 to attend the 2020 international school basketball under-15 cup in Croatia. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate these sporting champions and wish them the very best of luck in the upcoming championship. Some of these very young and talented people are Lachlan Currie, 14; Luke Fennell, 13; Phoenix Windsor, 13; Hayley Letts, 13; Kaitlyn Scott, 15; Ethan Bolton, 14; Dakota Crichton, 14; Rebekah Dumont, 14; Jessica-Belle Catheray-Harvey, 14; Cedric Rault, 13; Ryan Baker, 13; and Truman Byrne, 11. I'd also like to acknowledge Gareth Rees, 16, who is receiving $600, as he will be attending the Volleyball Australia schools cup in Coomera in Queensland, and Sophie Pinkerton, 13, who will be receiving $500 to attend the Australian Open Water Swimming Championships in Brighton in South Australia.

They all have very bright futures and are all doing exceptionally well. On behalf of the Australian government and all members of parliament, to all our young people right across the country who've received this opportunity: we acknowledge your fantastic efforts, your dedication and your commitment but, above all, your leadership to other young people in the area, because, every day you're out there training and giving it your absolute best, you're being watched by your friends and your peers. To all the parents who are always driving to various training events and championship events: we thank you very much for everything you do in supporting your children and giving them this great opportunity. As the member for La Trobe, I congratulate all those who have received this opportunity. We very much look forward to watching you in the future. Keep up the great work.

Australian Bushfires

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (10:42): I want to take the opportunity to offer my condolences to all those who have lost loved ones in this devastating season of bushfires. I want to do that on behalf of my community of Calwell as we grieve for the 33 lives lost; the more than 18 million hectares burnt; the 2,800 homes, filled with precious belongings and precious memories, destroyed; the thousands of buildings destroyed; and the staggering one billion native animals that have perished. My condolences in particular go to the families of those firefighters who lost their lives. As we all know, both professional and volunteer firefighters have been at the battlefront of these devastating fires. They are courageous Australians and indeed they are courageous friends from overseas who came to help. They put their lives at risk in order to save ours, and we owe them a great debt. As a life
member of the United Firefighters Union, I want to acknowledge that and I want to acknowledge the work that firefighters do.

The fear and concern that already exist worldwide around the effects and consequences of climate change made the Australian bushfires the focus of international debate but also precipitated a global expression of support and solidarity. Whilst a debate rages about climate change and how we deal with its impact, millions of Australians and expats opened their hearts and their wallets, contributing staggering donations towards our relief fund and relief efforts. The generosity of Australians and our friends abroad needs to be acknowledged, because rebuilding in the aftermath will be a massive job and a financially challenging one. But our collective effort will see us through this, as it has done before.

Because we are a migrant country made up of diasporas from around the world, the devastation of these fires impacted in home countries where relatives and friends were in angst about the welfare of loved ones in Australia. But it also spurred Australians of migrant background, especially in the new and emerging communities, to reach out to their fellow Australians, desperately wanting to help.

In my own community, although they were far removed from the fires, my constituents moved quickly to lend a helping hand, and I want to acknowledge that in this chamber today. I represent a very large Sikh community, who joined with the Australian Sikh Support organisation. They rallied almost immediately and, as we've all come to know, became a visible feature of the relief effort across the devastated communities of New South Wales and Victoria. I want to thank my local Sikh community. Charity and service to others is integral to this community's sense of obligation and comfort to humanity.

We had more than 70 local volunteers collect packages of foods, materials and donations, and our Sikh gurdwara in Craigieburn supported the effort, providing storage and warehousing for these provisions. In particular, I want to thank Ravinder Kaur Gurjit Singh, Manpreet Singh Sapra, Apinder Singh, Yashpal Singh, Ravinder Singh, Yashpal Singh, Paramjit Kaur, Divjot Singh, Harman Singh and Rachpak Singh for driving the effort locally.

Swan Electorate: Roads

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (10:46): I want to take the opportunity to report to the House and to the residents of my electorate on the Manning Road on-ramp. Residents of the area know that the Kwinana Freeway and Manning Road on-ramp is a critical piece of road infrastructure in South Perth. In 2016, the federal Liberal government made a commitment to the residents of the area to invest the necessary resources to construct the southbound on-ramp, along with a merge lane and other works that would tackle congestion in the area. I'm pleased to report that the work is underway and on track for completion this year. The contribution of the federal Liberal government is 80 per cent of the $35 million project cost, and work required to relocate power and light poles in surrounding streets is progressing, as are the roadworks to build the on-ramp.

It's fabulous to be able to tell the residents that they are now less than a year away from being able to use this new route to travel south on the Kwinana Freeway from Manning Road. While there continue to be road closures in the area to allow for work to be completed, the WA department of main roads advises that the project will be completed in September this year. This is a great outcome for the residents of Swan and surrounding areas, as this particular on-ramp had been on the books since the 1980s. It reflects on the engagement and advocacy of local residents and community groups, and the local MLA, Mr John McGrath, who I would like to particularly thank for his strong support for the project.

It has to be noted, though, that this project—you might not believe it, Mr Deputy Speaker Zimmerman—was opposed by federal Labor. Labor senators in this building stood up in this parliament to speak against this important piece of local infrastructure. Under Labor, the residents of Swan, and indeed people all across Australia, would be missing out on important infrastructure investment. This project is just one part of federal Liberal's record of $100 billion of investment in transport infrastructure. This level of investment is only possible when the government carefully manages the finances of the nation—something those opposite are incapable of doing. The federal Liberal government is committed to delivering on this project and the congestion-busting infrastructure required to get people home earlier and safer, and I look forward to updating the House on this project as it proceeds.

Sydney Electorate: Sydney Metro

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (10:48): I want to take the opportunity to raise the need for an additional metro station on a line that the New South Wales state government is already constructing. The Sydney Metro project is already underway, but there must be an extra station in the Green Square area in my electorate between the Waterloo and Sydenham stations, which are already planned for this track.
The New South Wales Minister for Transport and Roads recently revealed that there is already one change to be made to this project—a $200 million change to the Sydney Metro project—as a direct result of an unsolicited request by Macquarie Bank. I’ve been told by the same minister that, during the planning stages of the Chatswood to Sydenham metro line, it was found that a station in the Green Square area would have limited commuter and economic benefit. Somehow, the department of transport and roads does not consider the fact that this area is set to become Australia’s most densely populated suburb a significant enough reason to put more public transport into the place. There really needs to be an extra metro stop put in.

We expect 61,000 people to be living in the Green Square area by 2030. There are 30½ thousand new residential dwellings in Rosebery, Green Square and Victoria Park Parade. Infrastructure needs to be built to accommodate the people who are already moving in and the thousands of additional people who will move in in coming months and years. I chose to live close to the centre of the city. I love it. I don’t mind density. What I say is: when we are building these new apartments and new townhouses, we have to make sure there is good-quality open space, there are good-quality schools and medical facilities, and, of course, there is public transport. That’s because if we’re not putting in the public transport now the resentment people will have about not being able to get to work and not being able to move around their community will become very acute.

Green Square is set to become more densely populated than London or New York. The Green Square heavy rail station that already exists on the route from the airport to the city gets so crowded at peak hour sometimes that they actually shut the doors. They don’t let more people onto the platform, because it’s dangerous. They have to let a few trains go through before it’s safe enough for commuters to get back on the platform. When we already have public transport at capacity, when there are thousands of additional apartments to go in and when it is obviously still possible to change this planned metro route—because changes have been made for Macquarie Bank—why won’t the state government listen to local government, state MPs, and local residents and businesses and build a new station? (Time expired)

**Australian Floods**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (10:51): As we stand in this place, once again, across my electorate of Forde and across the south-east of Queensland it’s raining. I know that across the east coast, from South-East Queensland all the way down to the Victorian border, this rain is greatly appreciated. But, as famously immortalised by Dorothea Mackellar in her poem ‘My Country’, Australia is a land of droughts and, now, flooding rains, as we’ve seen up and down the east coast.

What these events show is the resilience of our communities and the willingness of communities right across the country to support those doing it tough. It reminds me of a time a couple of years ago when, across my electorate of Forde, we had some significant floods in both the Albert and Logan Rivers in the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie. Hundreds of residences and businesses across Forde in suburbs like Eagleby, Beenleigh, Mount Warren Park, North MacLean, Chambers Flat, Logan Reserve, Waterford, Cedar Creek, Carbrook and Yatala were affected and needed assistance. I vividly recall, when visiting people’s properties and farms across my electorate whose homes were flooded and inundated with mud, rubbish and debris from the floods, the wonderful job done by our community. As we now again have flood warnings in our local rivers, and more broadly across the south-east, it’s so pleasing to see people, once again, being out and about in the community seeking to help those in need.

In the lead-up to the weather events we’re having in my part of the world, we’ve seen our communities locally do the same thing for fire-affected communities in New South Wales and Victoria. They so willingly want to get out and help, and do what they can to ensure that those fire-affected communities know they are supported by the broader Australian communities and are not suffering on their own.

I want to take the time to thank my community of Forde for its willingness to stand up in times of disaster not only to support their neighbours locally but also, more importantly, to support their fellow Australians right across this great nation in times of drought, fires or floods.

In closing, I’d like to remind my community not to take for granted driving through floodwaters and other things at this time. We’ve already had reports of people being rescued. Please take care.

**Racism**

Mr BURNS (Macnamara) (10:54): In 2020 we should be talking about fascism as a historical curse of the past and not as a present threat; yet, here we are, a dangerous place in history where far Right populism is back on the rise in Europe and in America, and we need to be vigilant against those who promote it here in Australia.

The Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban, has a history of promoting far Right tropes, including anti-Semitic ones. He leads a government which has used its power to attack freedom of the press, the judiciary, the
opposition, academia, NGOs, asylum seekers and religious groups. Under his leadership, Freedom House has downgraded Hungary to only ‘partly free’. So what on earth was former Prime Minister Tony Abbott doing appearing as a headline act at the Budapest Demographic Summit, a Hungarian-government sponsored conference, together with far Right leaders from Italy's Lega party and Marine Le Pen's French National Front?

At this conference, Mr Orban spoke about the replacement theory, which argues a sinister conspiracy theory exists from globalist elites to breed out whiteness from Europe to collapse Western civilisation. Tony Abbott not only appeared at this conference but also praised the man who made these horrid racist comments, saying he had the 'courage to defy political correctness'. Boris Johnson's UK Conservative Party gave a formal reprimand to one of their MPs, Daniel Kawczynski, who attended the conference, and yet the so-called Liberal Party of Australia still fetes Tony Abbott as a hero. There's nothing liberal about Viktor Orban's reign over Hungary.

Just a few months ago, the Morrison government appointed Tony Abbott to the board of the Australian War Memorial. Australian soldiers fought fascists to defend freedom and democracy in this country. No man who stands next to these sorts of far Right antidemocratic ideologues should be on the board of the Australian War Memorial, not even a former Prime Minister of this country. Former Prime Minister Abbott should apologise, or he should remove himself from the board of the Australian War Memorial, a position I think everyone in this House would agree is of the highest importance. I will finish with this: we need to be vigilant about racism in this country. We need to call it out at every single turn. We are seeing it on our streets, and it is time this government took action on it.

**Wentworth Electorate: Water Safety**

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (10:57): I wish to congratulate several brave off-duty Bronte Surf Life Saving Club lifesavers and Waverley Council lifeguards who courageously performed the mass rescue of 11 people caught in the dangerous rip at Bronte Beach on Saturday evening 1 February, when the beach was unpatrolled. Bronte Surf Life Saving Club captain James McLennan and his wife, Kirsty, were having dinner on their balcony at Bronte at about 7.45 pm when they spotted distressed swimmers being swept out to sea. Both Kirsty and James raced to the club, grabbed rescue boards and paddled out in choppy waves and difficult conditions. James was first to reach the swimmers and quickly brought five swimmers onto his board and to safety.

While James was performing this rescue, a call-out from Bronte surf club's WhatsApp group was meeting with a big response. An incredible 18 volunteer surf lifesavers and three off-duty Waverley Council lifeguards responded to the call for help, including a 13-year-old Nipper.

Conditions at the beach were particularly nasty that evening, making the rescue effort challenging. Nine of the 11 rescues were serious, and one patient was taken to hospital. Were it not for James's efforts, it's very possible that nine people could have lost their lives. Two of the volunteer lifesavers were serving drinks at a 50th birthday in the clubhouse that evening and, unable to find appropriate swimwear, stripped down to their undies to join the rescue effort in true Aussie fashion. Mark Spooner from the Sydney branch of Surf Life Saving New South Wales said: 'It was the most incredible rescue I've ever heard of. It was full-on heroic.' I could not put it better myself.

The Wentworth community is very fortunate to have everyday heroes amongst us who go above and beyond, even when not on duty. I am proud to represent an electorate where surf clubs are the lifeblood of the community and where volunteering is alive and well. I would like to pay tribute to all our surf lifesaving volunteers from all our local surf clubs, not only in Wentworth but also across Australia, who sacrifice their free time so that Australians can enjoy our unique coastline. In particular, let me extend my thanks and congratulations to James and Kirsty McLennan, to the Bronte Surf Life Saving Club and to all those involved in the mass rescue for their immense courage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members’ constituency statements has expired.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Closing the Gap**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House take note of the document.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (11:00): Yesterday was an important day, as we reach the end of the original Closing the Gap frameworks, and I'm pleased to see that my colleague from across the chamber, the Hon. Warren Snowdon, is with us this morning. I know that he and I often agree on many things but sometimes when we make speeches he has points of difference.

Tom Calma, 12 years ago, instigated the work that was implemented by the Rudd Labor government in establishing a set of targets to address Indigenous disadvantage in Australia. While they were established with
good intentions, the government of the day failed to acknowledge the critical role that Indigenous Australians themselves play in closing the gap. As the Prime Minister stated yesterday:

Over decades our top-down government-knows-best approach has not delivered the improvements we all yearn for.

For far too long, governments of all persuasions have done things to Indigenous Australians and not with them. It's not the time to play politics on this issue. A bipartisan approach will be significant if we are to change the future for Indigenous Australians. Now is the time to lead, to recognise our collective failings and to reach out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, to work with them, to walk with them, to listen to them and to welcome them to the table so that together we can realise what we all aspire to—that is, equity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

I am heartened by the gains in early childhood education, with a 95 per cent achievement level, and, more importantly, the gains in secondary pathways, year 12 attainment, that lead to real jobs. I do acknowledge that progress has been slow in other areas. The past 10 years have not delivered the results they should have, and there is no shying away from the responsibility we share to get the next 10 right, and the 10 after that. This demonstrates the need to adopt a new approach to closing the gap. Key to this is shared accountability and shared responsibility. Governments, Indigenous Australians and their communities and organisations need to come together. The Morrison government is committed to working with Indigenous Australians to optimise outcomes over the life course, and we have issued a call to all governments to continue to work together on national priorities for collective action and supporting local communities to set their own priorities and tailor services to their unique context.

For the first time in the Closing the Gap process, Indigenous expertise is at the centre of decision-making. This represents an opportunity to set, implement and monitor Closing the Gap along with Indigenous Australians. The year 2020 marks the next stage in an unprecedented partnership between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations, the Australian government and state and territory governments. The Morrison government, through the leadership of the Prime Minister, is bringing together COAG and the Coalition of Peaks to deliver the new partnership agreement. Our Closing the Gap Refresh will deliver shared responsibility and accountability. Indigenous Australians at local, regional and national engagements are embedding knowledge and leadership and will be involved in co-designing systems, policy and operational frameworks and working with government to action change. We are taking the time to ensure Indigenous Australians are empowered and in a genuine position to make informed decisions.

In this new way of working, we share priorities with Indigenous Australians and with state and territory governments in the areas of early childhood, education, employment and business opportunities, community safety, suicide prevention, health and supporting local people to drive local solutions. We will also address the other issues impacting Indigenous Australians such as domestic violence, suicide, access to basic health care and clean water. These are equally important. We must continue to encourage conversations across the nation so we become more comfortable with each other and our shared past, present and future. This has led to local action to achieve change.

Governments, Indigenous Australians and communities have a shared commitment to closing the gap. Change will happen, and we must not be afraid to learn from each other. Indigenous Australians are the key agents of change. Governments need to draw on their insights, knowledge and lived experience to deliver on Closing the Gap for current and future generations.

As I said earlier, I'm heartened by gains, including in early childhood and education and its long-term impact. This is why, as the Minister for Indigenous Australians, I have been tasked by the Prime Minister to develop a new whole-of-government Indigenous early childhood strategy. This will be a new way of working together to achieve our shared goals, working with experts, families, frontline service providers and communities.

Longer term we know that education has a direct impact on the ability for Indigenous Australians to obtain employment and other opportunities. The employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians narrows as education levels increase. In the last 10 years, the number of Indigenous Australians accessing higher education has more than doubled, and currently almost 20,000 Indigenous Australians are attending university. This is worth celebrating.

Currently, the House Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs is looking into and will report on opportunities for employment and economic development for Indigenous Australians. As I travel around Australia, I am constantly reminded of the vision, commitment and entrepreneurship of Indigenous Australian business owners. Indigenous businesses play an important role in economic growth for the Australian economy, especially in rural and remote regions.
Businesses operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians tend to employ higher levels of Indigenous Australians at a greater rate than in comparison to non-Indigenous businesses. They also play an important role in addressing the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Owning a business or working in an Indigenous owned business is a powerful way for Indigenous Australians to take control of the economic future for their families and communities.

On Tuesday morning, 125 Indigenous businesses came to Parliament House to participate in the Supply Nation trade fair. They showcased the important role Indigenous businesses play in the Australian economy—from construction to tourism, from small businesses to recruitment agencies. Based in Wollongong, Evolved Communities provide cultural awareness training, and have clients including the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business; the Department of Environment and Energy; and the Treasury. Australian Indigenous Coffee, based in my home state of Western Australia, runs their Coffee to Art Program, where proceeds of coffee sold on remote mine sites in the Pilbara are donated to the Budabee Foundation's Women's Nullagine Art Program. This program supports Aboriginal women at Nullagine in practising their art and stories and passing them onto younger generations. This should also be celebrated.

Let's together start celebrating each of these gains and achievements. Let's do away with the deficit mentality that has for so long plagued Indigenous Australians. Every improved outcome and achievement needs to be celebrated and used to build momentum for greater improvements. Governments, Indigenous Australians and communities have a shared commitment to closing the gap. Change will happen, and we must not be afraid to learn from each other.

We owe it to future Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to build a better future, a greater nation. We owe it to all Australians that they feel as though they have a future ahead of them that will deliver worth and value for work. We will continue to work every day to get more children to school; to support pathways into long-term employment; to address and reduce suicides and other detrimental elements right across this nation; and to empower and give a voice to those who need it most. These are first and foremost my priorities and the priorities of the Morrison government.

For the first time government is walking this journey hand-in-hand with Indigenous Australians. I am optimistic that, by walking hand-in-hand and in partnership with each other, we will create a better future that has greater outcomes. We will see the levels of disparity across every jurisdiction of this nation, including within communities that are a part of the rich tapestry of the geographic diversity of this nation, show improvements in a way that we've not seen before.

I want to acknowledge the work that has been previously done by all governments, but it hasn't been able to raise the bar to the level in which equality of outcome is achieved. Each and every minister who has prevailed within Australian government arenas for Indigenous Australians have strived to achieve, but the challenge in that is that we've not done it in partnership, and the new paradigm should make an incredible difference.

I serve in this role with a great sense of pride because I am given the privilege of being able to walk with our people, sit with them and listen to them and to build on the opportunities that have been established from a foundation in the 1970s right through to now. What I do hope is that every member in this parliament will walk with me in achieving those outcomes, because, when we achieve them, we will close the gap.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (11:10): I acknowledge the minister's contribution to this discussion, and I will raise in my contribution a couple of the issues which he has referred to. Yesterday in the House of Representatives in the debate on the MPI, I had the opportunity to speak on the Closing the Gap statement. In that speech I made it very clear that there was a disproportionate impact, evidenced in all the material that's provided through this statement, on people who live in very remote and remote Australia. These are largely the constituents in my electorate of Lingiari, over 40 per cent of whom are Aboriginal people.

What this document says very clearly is that Aboriginal people are the most disadvantaged people in the country and that their life outcomes are a lot poorer than the rest of the community's. According to this document, the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal people living in remote or very remote communities and people living in the rest of Australia is around 15 years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are living 8½ years less than those in metropolitan centres.

There are real issues here, and I don't think that the responses from the government thus far have indicated any capacity to address those issues. I understand and I totally applaud the move going forward to work with COAG and the Coalition of Peaks. I think that's a very positive step. But let's put this in context. The minister, in the contribution he made just before me, said that he wants Aboriginal people to work with government to action change and to share priorities, and he wants the government and those people to not be afraid to learn from each other. I applaud those statements. The fact is, though, it's not what's happening.
In the Northern Territory, there have been cries for help around health infrastructure, around housing, around roads and around all the social determinants that create the environment in which people might get a better health outcome. They've fallen on deaf ears as far as this Commonwealth government is concerned, despite the fact that there is a one-off agreement with the Northern Territory government to provide some money for remote housing.

What's happening at the moment will not address the changes that are required to deal with those communities—to get the outcomes the expiring Closing the Gap targets had as objectives. We here are all responsible for this, and we need to do better. I'm hoping that the revised Closing the Gap targets are coherent. They include justice targets and they include targets on the number of kids being taken away from their families. Those sorts of targets should be included, because they need to be. But, at the same time as we are doing that, the government is taking action which is totally against the desires of Aboriginal people.

There is now no guarantee, as a result of decisions made by the Attorney-General, to provide ongoing funding to Aboriginal legal services around this country. The decision has been taken to stop funding the family violence legal service peak body in this country. This has been done by this government. On the one hand, you can say, 'We want to walk with you and listen,' but it's very different when policy decisions are being made in various portfolios that impact upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—First Nations people of this country—and no notice is taken of what they're saying.

Yesterday, I gave two examples of how Aboriginal people in my electorate and across the north of Australia have made it very clear that they don't want the rollout of the cashless debit card. They don't want it. But, despite the fact that they don't want it, there is an aspiration, desire and will by this government to override their views and say to them, 'You're going to have it whether you like it or not.' There is absolutely clear evidence that the income quarantining that has been imposed upon Aboriginal people is impacting upon the lives of Aboriginal families and on their health outcomes—that's very clear—yet this government is blind to what's happening. I'm pleased that the minister has got these aspirations of walking, listening and learning, but it requires action, and that action must be taken.

Yesterday I referred to action which had been taken by a previous government. You'll recall that the first Hockey-Abbott budget took $500 million out of the First Nations budget. One of the items that they hit was an antismoking campaign. Thankfully, bringing down smoking in Aboriginal communities is now seen as very important, but Joe Hockey said that it was a waste of money. There are people in this place who are advancing the argument for it and doing the work on the ground, where the Aboriginal people are, who said to Mr Hockey: 'You're not listening to us. You've not heard what we're doing and you don't know what we're doing. You're just saying that what we're doing is useless.' That isn't the case.

At the time, this was in 2011, Ian Lacey, a person who I know well, said: 'We visit schools, youth detention centres and sporting clubs—a huge range of community events—every day to explain to our people that high smoking rates are one of the key causes of our low life expectancy. We also work on improving nutrition and increasing the amount of physical activity our mob engage in. These are the key lifestyle changes that they require.' That's what they did, yet it didn't stop the Treasurer of the day saying that it was a waste of money. It's been proven not to be a waste of money. Ian works for the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health in Brisbane, which was established in 2009. It has operated in South-East Queensland for 10 years now. The Indigenous population of South-East Queensland is 100,000 in 2020. That's 40 per cent of Queensland's First Nations people and 11 per cent of Australia's First Nations people.

In 2009, when the institute was established, they had five clinics operating in South-East Queensland. Today, they have 20. This is all coming from within the Aboriginal community. These are changes that they are making, and I know that the minister, who is not here, acknowledges the importance of the work they have done. They have established a very important health-justice partnership, supporting Indigenous families with legal education and advocacy via their own community legal service. That is something that they are funding in this health precinct. It's very important and something for us all to learn from.

IUlIH have increased the number of preventative health checks delivered in South-East Queensland by over 4,000 per cent. This is driven from within the community. I know about it because I had the privilege, as the minister, of providing the initial funding for it. They've closed, as a result of their work—one organisation comprising Aboriginal health services from South-East Queensland—the health-adjusted life expectancy gap 2.3 times faster than predicted trajectories. This is enormous. The IUlIH jobs network increased the number of jobs from 200 to 1,300. That's 1,300 people employed, 700 of whom are First Nations people. They've halved the preterm birth rates.

What these people are doing is interrupting—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—
Mr SNOWDON: I want to conclude my contribution by going back to where I started, about the government saying they wanted to look, listen and learn—walk with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. The very first thing they need to do, then, is recognise the Statement from the Heart; implement a voice to the parliament and have it constitutionally entrenched; and have a makarrata commission and truth-telling. If they can do that, they'll have listened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the moment, what they've demonstrated is that they're not prepared to listen to those arguments and the plea from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people right across this country to do something that they want rather than what the government wants.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:31): I welcome the Closing the gap report with sadness, like many members in this House. It's sober reading about the collective failure of the nation to address the disadvantage over generations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. There are people who might, from time to time, want to use these issues as political point-scoring. Frankly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people deserve better. It's not a failure of one government or two governments or three governments; it's a failure of what happens when you break apart a culture, a tradition, a connection to country and ideals and the human consequences that then flow.

There are of course in this Closing the gap report some areas with glimmers of hope, particularly around educational attainment and meeting two of the seven standards. We are particularly happy to see that happen, including having 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025. In 2018, 86.4 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education compared to 91.3 per cent of non-Indigenous Australian children. The gap has halved for Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 with year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

These are of course signs of opportunity and of growth, because education provides a foundation for people being able to make informed decisions and go on to live happy and successful lives. That's why the Liberal Party in the Gladstone administration in the United Kingdom many years ago established the whole principle of universal education. At the heart of it, universal education comes with the principle of equal opportunity for all people regardless of their circumstance. It is continued throughout the Australian tradition here, but there has been a gap, a chasm, around the realities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In many of the other remaining metrics around life expectancy and health and wellbeing, there is so much further to go. We know that it all isn't going to be solved overnight. That failure is not because of a tick or a flick of a bureaucrat's pen or a lack of funding but because often issues around health and inequality exist across generations, across cultural problems and against a culture of responsibility that we need to foster over time. That should never be used as an excuse. We must be able to demonstrate clearly that we're heading down the right path and that we're seeing improvement. But, sadly, those standards and those goals have not been met.

I particularly want to welcome the speech by the Prime Minister on the Closing the gap report not only because I thought it was one of the finest speeches that he has given as Prime Minister but, more critically, because his focus—as well that of the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the great Ken Wyatt—was not to accept the report and say, 'We failed yet again; let's keep trying more of the same.' In fact, what they did was turn around and give an appropriate, philosophical, practical plan to address the issues of disadvantage which have led us to the situation where we have not achieved the targets that we have set for ourselves.

I think the focus the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians have put on community and not Canberra is particularly welcome, because many members for a long time have talked—and rightly so, I might add—about the failure to encourage Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders to have the freedom to take responsibility. They have spoken about the lack of self-determination. In the words of the Prime Minister: 'We have failed the opportunity to recognise that freedom is built on empowerment and responsibility.' So focusing on community and not Canberra reflects a fundamental understanding about how the success of all of our lives is built.

We are individuals, but we do not sit on islands. We come together and form family, and the community is the foundation for nationhood. It's something that we take for granted every day: how to build a nation from the citizen and the individual up. Too often what we have had, in the issues affecting Indigenous Australians, is the exact opposite: Canberra deciding how people should live their lives, and Canberra seeing through the lens of bureaucrats and of the people in this place, and thinking they understand best the reality, the conditions, the circumstances, the culture, the attitudes and the traditions of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. And, frankly, too often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been displaced in favour of the world view of people who sit in this city.
So to focus on community and not Canberra, to have a yarn and to listen to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, to take us all as a nation on a collective journey, is the foundation for addressing closing the gap in the future, and I would hope that the members opposite would welcome the initiative of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians have taken, because I think it provides the opportunity for not just a reset but a sense of ownership by all of us, but most by those who would seek to gain the most from a change in policy. To empower people, with our support, to take the maximum opportunity for control over their own lives and that of their communities to advance the collective interest—that's what we should want for ourselves and that is what we should want for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, if you want to empower people not just today but for future generations as well.

I said in my address-in-reply speech to this parliament that one of the most important evolutions that I've seen in my lifetime, in my 39 years, has been the embracing by the whole of the Australian community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and culture and traditions into the culture of the nation—a powerful and ongoing symbol that we all share about our past and how we can move forward together as a nation. But we can never do that while we continue to have citizens who are not able to realise their full ambition to live a happy and successful life, and that is the closing of the gap that we need. The journey is not over, and we all share a great responsibility to make sure that we build it together, in partnership, with respect and through listening, so that we can empower people to be able to live out their full Australian dream.

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (11:38): I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of our country. I acknowledge the Ngunawal and Ngambri people on whose land this parliament meets. I also acknowledge the Dharawal/Tharawal, Gandangara and Dharug people, the traditional owners of the electorate of Werriwa. I acknowledge country not just because of the convention; I acknowledge our first people because it is the right thing to do, because, in some small way, I want to acknowledge their pain and to add my voice to ensure that recognition and reconciliation are things that we, as a nation, find a way to do as soon as possible.

I am disappointed to be making a speech in the parliament again that will point out that, 12 years since the apology, we are still not anywhere near meeting all of the targets that we set then and only two of the seven have been met. While it is good that the early childhood education and the year 12 attainment targets have been met, it is disappointing there is little change for any of the other five measures, and it's blatantly clear that so much more work needs to be done with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to improve the way they live and their opportunities. It's a tragedy that our First Australians are dying too soon, are educated far less, are incarcerated too often and suffer more preventable disease. The numbers show this tragedy in real terms. Sixty-four per cent of the burden of disease on our First Australians is preventable. The unemployment rate of First Australians is 21 per cent—four times the current non-Indigenous employment rate. Over one-quarter of incarcerated adults in this country are First Australians and nearly half of all juveniles incarcerated are First Australians. The research shows that First Australians are more likely to be incarcerated than African-Americans.

In 2017, suicide was the leading cause of death amongst our First Australian children aged five to 17. In that same year, one-quarter of all Australian children who died by suicide were First Australians. One in 10 households in public housing is Indigenous. It is the social impact of these raw numbers that should break the hearts of all Australians, but what these statistics don't measure, what they hide in each and every point on a graph, is a person like you and me—it's a mother and father who won't see their baby grow; it's a family that doesn't have parents, aunts or uncles to tell them their history, teach them language or identify their ancestors.

Eight Indigenous Australians have been members of this place, and we celebrate their achievement with them, but it is the Constitution of this land that must also celebrate our First Australians. I acknowledge the work of the member for Barton, Linda Burney; Senators Malarndirri McCarthy and Pat Dodson; and the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt. There is no question that our First Australians have long been and continue to be the subject of cultural and systemic discrimination. While we can't go back and correct the wrongs of the past, we have the ability and the power to stop those wrongs continuing and stop them now. We just need the will to truly want to change the future.

We should start with the recognition of our First Australians in the Constitution. We should accept and listen to truth-telling. We need to work with our First Australians to improve their quality of life. This report should be the line in the sand, but we've tried so many times to draw that line. From Wave Hill Station through to Redfern and this place, these lines cannot continue to mark the gap. This gap must close and it must be done here. We must finally end the drawing of such lines. There is no option. We must act and we must end the shameful history of the systemic discrimination against our First Nations people. We have the generational opportunity to improve the lives of our First Australians. We must learn from them, but we must learn with them, and we must close the gap.

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (11:43): When Minister Wyatt came to my electorate of Lindsay last year, we announced funding to the Nepean Community and Neighbourhood Services, and Community Junction...
Incorporated to help improve school attendance and keep Indigenous students engaged throughout their education journey. ‘Helping children get to school ready to learn and receive a quality education. We must partner with people on the ground to achieve these outcomes.’ Those were the words of Minister Wyatt. The Closing the gap report shows just how important those words still are today. We all want to close the gap. This year, Indigenous Australians won't be told how to close the gap; they will tell us. Working with people on the ground in my community of Lindsay, I know they want nothing more than being able to have their voice heard on issues that impact them.

Indigenous expertise at the very centre of decision-making offers the opportunity to set, implement and monitor the Closing the Gap process. As the Prime Minister said, the Closing the Gap speeches over the last decade have portrayed a tale of good intentions—indeed, good faith—but the results are just not good enough. The top-down government approach to closing the gap is changing, giving Indigenous Australians the capacity to drive the conversation and the agency to carry it out. The Closing the gap report shows just how much work we have ahead of us. But I very much believe we need to do as the Prime Minister does and not fall into this deficit mindset. Two points in particular fill me with hope for the future, and they are education and jobs.

In March last year, I met with kids and families at the Cranebrook Breakfast Club, which is hosted by Nepean Community & Neighbourhood Services. It enables kids to have a good meal before they head off to school in the morning. Most importantly, it increases the attendance rate of the kids who go there before school. I was so pleased to make one of my election commitments a school bus to pick up kids and take them to the Breakfast Club and then to school, and I couldn't wait to see that new bus in action. I know it's really helping that neighbourhood centre. They've told me that the vehicle means that they've had double the number of students being picked up and dropped off each day. These are some of the most vulnerable students in our community, and they have enormous potential.

There are students like Rhys, a young Indigenous student from Cranebrook High School, who I first met at the neighbourhood centre where his mum worked. She told me that he would one day like to study law, and I know he is off to university now and has the best and brightest future ahead of him. I know his mum is rightly very proud of his successes. Investing in programs and policies to support students like Rhys gives them the opportunity to pursue their education and succeed.

Education from the first day of preschool right through to the last day of year 12 is a tool that empowers people to start their journey. It sets up our young people's future and enables them to take control. When we get more kids into preschool and out with a year 12 qualification and then onto university and other studies, fulfilling their passions and interests further, we're witnessing the lifelong opportunity of education, which is the best pathway to a job.

In 2019, 86.4 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds were enrolled in childhood education compared to 91.3 per cent of non-Indigenous children. The target of reaching 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled by 2025 is on track, as the Prime Minister said. Between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of Indigenous children enrolled in early childhood education increased by almost 10 per cent. Early education is the foundation of this pathway. When this pathway leads to year 12 qualifications, we see more and more opportunities.

Between 2008 and 2018-19, the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 attaining year 12 qualifications or equivalents increased by 21 per cent. Indigenous Australians aged between 18 and 29 with a year 12 qualification are between 1.5 and three times more likely to gain employment. For those who go onto university and complete a Bachelor's degree, 2016 data shows that there was effectively no gap between the employment rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In my electorate of Lindsay, the link between a good education and the future could not be any clearer. I am working really hard to establish a network that connects emerging local industry and our small business community with local schools—schools like the ones that Rhys and students from our Cranebrook Breakfast Club go to—to make sure that they're ready for the jobs of the future. I will continue to work with our local community organisations—like the Breakfast Club, Nepean Community & Neighbourhood Services and Community Junction—to ensure we are doing everything we can to support our local students.

It's no coincidence that the two Closing the Gap targets that are on track are education and jobs, because they go hand in hand. It all starts with education. It is a fundamental building block in life. We must work to break down the barriers of entry to education that Indigenous Australians face from a young age. With increased Indigenous involvement in decision-making, we are reshaping the way Indigenous Australians can set their own targets and prepare their own journey with their own goals for their own future.
When Minister Wyatt stood with me and my local Aboriginal community in Cranebrook, I committed to them that I would listen. I look forward to continuing to do this. I want everyone in our community to have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations, no more so than amongst our young Aboriginal children.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (11:49): I’d like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the country on which we meet, the Ngunawal and Ngambri peoples, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I’d also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that I’m honoured to represent in this place, the Dharrwal people. In particular, I’d like to acknowledge the work of the Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation Aboriginal Medical Service. Tharawal is a fantastic place. It is a place of positivity, a place of learning, and a place of acknowledgement of the history of the Aboriginal people in Australia. I acknowledge the work of the staff of Tharawal, and in particular the chief executive officer, Darryl Wright, and the many nursing and medical staff, including my friends and colleagues Jenny and Andrew McDonald, and the medical director, Dr Tim Senior. The wonderful work they do shows me how far we have come in terms of Indigenous health since I was a child, not only in terms of Indigenous health but also in terms of what we note are the social determinants of health. Sir Michael Marmot, who was the head of the World Medical Association, has been to Tharawal. He noted the enormous work that’s been done and the positivity regarding health outcomes for Indigenous people. He commented on how good Tharawal was—and it certainly is. It certainly is a place where the gap is closing in many areas.

I’ve spoken before in this chamber about the significance of today’s date. The date of the Apology to the Stolen Generations should serve as a constant reminder of the pain, suffering and cultural decimation that’s been inflicted on our First Australians. Part of the apology was truth-telling and the acknowledgement of what’s happened in the past. It’s very important that we remember it. We should not whitewash history. In my electorate of Macarthur over 200 years ago was the site of the Appin massacre, when troops under the orders of Governor Macquarie massacred many Aboriginal men, women and children. Their heads were then set on poles in the neighbourhood as an example to the surviving Indigenous people. We should not forget this history. We should not forget the mistakes of the past.

Today is the day after the presentation of the Closing the gap report. Let’s remember the significance of the fact that very few of the outcomes have been achieved. Even those achievements that have been spoken about are very modest. The significance of the Closing the gap report cannot be underestimated. We must continue to monitor our progress in closing the gap and in securing better outcomes for Indigenous Australians by acknowledging them and by giving them a voice. We should be allowing them to be the ones directing their own history. That means acknowledging the Uluru Statement from the Heart and acknowledging the fact that we need to enshrine an Aboriginal voice in our Constitution. The reality is that this is not happening. This government should be taken to task for the fact that they will not do this. I want to commend previous speakers and those who I spoke alongside yesterday on this matter as a matter of public importance. I believe that there is a lot of goodwill and a lot of genuine people on both sides of the aisle. I’m not denying that. But the fact that the government refuse to acknowledge the Uluru statement and accept it, and refuse to want to enshrine an Indigenous voice in our Constitution, is an evolving tragedy. They must learn.

As I remarked yesterday, a lack of progress in a number of key areas is indicative of a government that’s failing to act and, I believe, failing to understand and appreciate a number of the key issues facing our First Nations peoples. Words do matter. The Apology to the Stolen Generations is one of the defining moments in our nation’s history:

![image]

The meaning and the sincerity behind these words should be serving as a guidepost for us all.

I’ve spoken about the Appin massacre. Even today we can go out to a property at Appin, Mt Gilead, and the remaining barn that is there still has the gun emplacements where the Aboriginal people were shot by the settlers and soldiers inhabiting their land.

A legacy of a failure to close the gap is not one that I want to leave to my children or my grandchildren. We owe it to our nation’s future, to our First Nations people and to all Australians to get this right. That means that we need to close the gap and we need to give Aboriginal people the ability to do this and direct this themselves.

The evidence is stark. Overwhelmingly, Indigenous people are top of the statistics in things like child removal, incarceration of children and youth suicide. These things are part of the problem that we are facing. Aboriginal child mortality is a national shame and one that must be addressed on an urgent basis. As I mentioned yesterday, we are seeing in our Indigenous population things like rheumatic fever, a disease that has been eradicated...
throughout the developed world. That is something that we should be ashamed of and we need to address urgently. We can and we must do better.

These things serve as a warning to us all about the cost of complacency. We’ve been looking at the Closing the Gap targets for 12 years, and progress has been extraordinarily slow. The *Closing the gap* report tells us that we’re not on track to close the gap that exists in a number of really important things such as child mortality. We are failing to close the gap in reading, writing and numeracy. Disparity exists in rates of school attendance as well as in employment and life expectancy, particularly for Indigenous men and particularly for Indigenous men in remote and isolated areas.

An entire people in Australia are being left behind and are facing challenges that the rest of us can barely comprehend. Our First Australians, people who have known and cared for these lands for more than 60,000 years, are being discriminated against and have, on average, a poorer quality of life across the board. If this were the case in any other section of Australian society, the outrage would be palpable. These are not just statistics, as my friend and colleague and an extraordinary parliamentarian, Linda Burney, a proud Wiradjuri woman, said; these are people. We must do better.

Australia’s First Peoples—mums, dads, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters—are Australians who are facing great disadvantage in many areas of life on a daily basis. They are people who belong to one of the richest, oldest and most beautiful cultures in the world who are not being treated fairly. This day and this report provide a valuable voice for our First Australians. It’s a sad voice and a reminder that we have a long way to go. It’s a day when we pause and listen to Australia’s First Peoples, who continue to suffer poorer outcomes in a wide range of areas, not just health but also literacy, jobs, housing et cetera. We cannot afford to be complacent and we should not be dismissive of the outcomes that we have failed to achieve in the previous 12 months. We must stop repeating the mistakes of the past and genuinely listen to our First Nations Australians. We ought to all collectively today affirm our support for the Uluru statement and support new and ambitious targets that close the gap and deliver our First Nations people a better quality of life.

Debate adjourned.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr GOODENOUGH** (Moore) (11:58): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

**Werriwa Electorate**

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (11:59): The people of Werriwa are a constant source of inspiration, whether it’s the schoolchildren and their teachers at presentation days, when I have the opportunity to visit the schools in my electorate, or volunteer groups whose front-of-mind responsibility is to make sure that everyone has opportunities in our community and on the sporting fields and a warm meal when they are too old to prepare it themselves, when they are escaping from violence or when they are homeless.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those community groups, schools and volunteers who take the time to speak to me, welcome me to their community events and trust me to listen to them and tell their stories here. Over the past few months, there have been many people for whose work in our community I’d like to put my thanks on the record. One of these people is Mrs Wilma Falcone of Cecil Hills. Mrs Falcone was awarded the Public Service Medal in the recent Australia Day awards for outstanding public service to the social housing sector in New South Wales. Since 1997 Mrs Falcone has been working on social housing projects that have delivered over 23,000 homes for the less fortunate. Her history since 1997 of working with social housing shows the highest dedication to the Public Service. I congratulate her on being recognised for her work by being awarded the Public Service Medal and for her dedication to the people of New South Wales.

On Australia Day the local councils also recognised other outstanding citizens for their influence and work in our community. Liverpool City Council recognised citizen of the year Rajesh Venkataramaiah, senior citizen of the year Bob Brassell, young citizen of the year Kira Rosch, the Fraser environment award winner Maree Stacy and small business award winner Wild FX, and the Macquarie award went to Pino Sgambellone. Campbelltown Council recognised Emma Macfarlane as its citizen of the year and Riley Tonna as the young citizen of the year. Fairfield Council recognised Andy Snook as the citizen of the year, Blanca Assunta Barrios as the young citizen of the year, Kath Whiteley as volunteer of the year, Douglas Draper as volunteer of the year and Fabian Monge as sports achiever of the year. I thank and congratulate all those who were recognised.

It was also a pleasure to be invited to attend the annual presentation of the Iraqi Australian University Graduates Forum. The forum is a not-for-profit, non-religious, non-political community organisation that celebrates the differences amongst members and brings all the Iraqi ethnicities together to provide support for
refugees and newly arrived people who settle in our community. The forum provides social programs. One of those recognises high achievers at both university and Higher School Certificate level. On the night, there were seven university graduates and 21 HSC high achievers recognised. A number of those attended schools in the electorate of Werriwa. It was a pleasure to add my congratulations to Mary Kate of Thomas Hassall Anglican College, Jenna Farhan of Clancy Catholic College, Fahad Al-Maree of All Saints Catholic College, Abdolh Alshamlaan of Al Faisal College, Zeineb Fozan from Amity College High School, Luke Lazar of Freeman Catholic College, Abraham Takriti of Good Samaritan Catholic College and Musa Musa of Freeman Catholic College. I congratulate them all for their fine achievements and wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

It was also a pleasure to attend and join in the very colourful and sometimes very loud celebrations for Chinese New Year at the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society at the Mingyue Lay temple in Bonnyrigg. The crowd that was observing the first day of the Lunar New Year saw not only the traditional dragon dances and some fireworks but many cultural dances and songs. There was a stunning performance of the national anthem as well as Australian and Chinese music by the New South Wales Police Band. I would like to thank all the volunteers and the board of the temple for another superbly run event. I've been lucky enough to attend these events for a number of years, and the precision of organisation and the detail the organisers go to to make everybody welcome is amazing. I would especially like to thank the chairman, Mr James Chan, and the president, Mr Vincent Khong, for the invitation this year and for making me so welcome. I also congratulate all the volunteers, who had very little sleep leading up to the event, especially on the night before.

Closing the Gap

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (12:03): I rise today to congratulate the Prime Minister on his address to the House and on his annual Closing the Gap update yesterday. It was frank and fearless and provided a clear pathway of what needs to be done. So much needs to be done. The 2020 Closing the gap progress report shows that, while there has been progress on some targets, not all have been met. This is a tragedy. We, as a government, as a parliament and as a nation, know there is more work to do. A strong country is one that is at peace with its past. We still have more to do to ensure that our First Peoples have the same opportunities for a safe, healthy and prosperous life, but I believe that constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians is an important next step on that road to a stronger future for all Australians, and I thank Minister Ken Wyatt, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, for inviting me to be a member of the committee on constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians.

Many years ago, in my time in the Northern Territory, I looked at the high mortality rates for newborns in our Indigenous population in Arnhem Land. What I saw there shocked me. It mirrored what I had seen in Kenya as a medical trainee years before; yet here we were in Australia, a First World country. It was hard to grapple with the stark difference between the remote Indigenous communities and the inner city of Melbourne, where I lived. At the time, census child and infant mortality rates were considerably higher than the national average. In 1986, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers aged between 15 and 29 lost 26 in every 30,000 children who were born, compared to 15 in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Fast forward 30 years, and there has been a marked improvement in outcomes for Indigenous women and their children, but it's still not good enough, and the rates of mortality remain twice that of non-Indigenous children. More Indigenous mothers are attending antenatal care earlier and more frequently, and education about the risks of cigarettes means fewer women are smoking during pregnancy. These are all fantastic measures that hopefully will lead to improving outcomes. But, importantly, life expectancy for Indigenous Australians remains not as good as it needs to be, and we need to do more. The target to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation, by 2031, is not on track. Non-Indigenous mortality rates have improved at a similar rate, but the gap has not narrowed.

Education is the key to self-determination of our Indigenous people. Education leads to better health and social outcomes for all communities around the world. Therefore, since the two targets that are on track to be met are early childhood education and year 12 attainment, I would congratulate the many people who are working in this sector on achieving these fantastic outcomes. They really should be congratulated. We know that there has been a significant change in getting kids into school and helping them to finish year 12, but we do know that attendance at school is not as good as it should be, particularly for some groups of people within the Indigenous community. The earlier and longer any child is in formal education, the better the long-term outcomes will be for that child. Today, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are staying in school longer. Literacy and numeracy outcomes have improved. More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have year 12 or equivalent qualifications, and that will lead to more of them attending higher education and more of them entering professions like law, medicine and nursing, and lead to all forms of health and education outcomes—for the wider general community as well.
The government realises that, to make significant inroads and to work towards achieving our targets, we need to bring the Indigenous community along with us. We need a refresh. We need to change the way we're doing things. For the first time in the Closing the Gap process, Indigenous expertise is at the centre of decision-making. This represents an opportunity to set, implement and monitor Closing the Gap targets alongside Indigenous Australians. Our Closing the Gap Refresh will deliver shared responsibility and accountability. I believe that every child in Australia should have the same opportunities, the same access to education and the same health outcomes as the next child. This is why I am proud to be part of a government that recognises that we need to do better and is working to close the gap.

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**  
**Morrison Government**

Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga) (12:08): Last week, I added my voice to the bushfire condolence motion here. I made particular reference to the work of journalists and news organisations during the crisis, especially the work of the ABC. This summer has proven to us what a vital resource rural and regional journalism is. By having regional reporters, producers and crews who were on the ground in fire affected regions, Australians were given accurate local information, which, at a time of crisis, literally contributed to saving lives. The ABC was often the first to deliver messages and emergency updates in real time. The significance of the ABC during this time should not be underestimated. It's for this reason that I am astounded by the government's complete disregard of the ABC and the work it does. In fact, it goes further than disregard. Just yesterday Senator McGrath stood up in the other place to attack the ABC, describing it as a joke and saying that the public see it as 'unAustralian'. I think you've misread the room, Senator. Australians value the ABC and they're appalled by what's happening to it under this government.

Australians living in regional and remote areas have already suffered because of cuts to the ABC. They know that any further cuts to the ABC in the budget mean cuts to the services that they need to provide vital local information during times of emergency. This government has cut a total of $366 million from the ABC since 2013. This has led to: more than 800 ABC staff losing their jobs; the axing of the Australia Network; the shutdown of short-wave radio; and the cutting of programming hours with factual programming dropping by 60 per cent, drama by 20 per cent and documentary by 13 per cent.

On the eve of the 2013 election, Tony Abbott promised that there would be no cuts to the ABC—a promise that did not last into government. In June 2018, the Liberals' Federal Council voted almost two to one to privatise the ABC. And now we have Liberal senators standing up to attack our national broadcaster. Labor will always support the ABC. Australians need their ABC more than ever. It's our strong, trusted and independent national broadcaster. It supports us in times of emergency. It's an Australian institution.

Having worked at the ABC myself, I know how seriously its staff take their role and their responsibility to this institution. If the government really cared about the future of the ABC, and about viewers and listeners across the country, it would fund it properly and stop the cruel cuts. But, of course, it's unsurprising that the Morrison government neglects our ABC. They continue to attack the vital services that Australians depend on. They just don't understand what's important to Australians. They're too busy focusing on themselves and covering up for scandal after scandal.

We see that in the Community Sport Infrastructure grant program and how it's been corrupted and used as pork-barrelling in marginal seats. Meanwhile, in my electorate of Jagajaga, the Greensborough Hockey Club misses out on $500,000 worth of funding, despite being rated as highly deserving by Sport Australia. The mums, dads and kids at that club have worked hard for the extra support for the facilities they need to play well and they're not being supported by this government. In fact, they've been passed over purely for political reasons. What a disgrace! If that wasn't bad enough, the Prime Minister has used the top public servant in this country to cover the scandal by issuing a report that clears his office of any wrongdoing. When asked to give details of that report to show how he's been cleared, the Prime Minister refused. He's consistently refusing to be accountable for what's happened and to show us the report that he says justifies his actions. If you've got nothing to hide, why not show us this report? Be upfront with the Australian people; show them that this is all above board.

That's not the only piece of advice the government has been trying to hide. Last week we were again made aware of how dodgy the government's robodebt scandal truly is. Internal emails prove that the scheme is, in fact, illegal and that the government knew this. When did they know? How long were they unfairly and unjustly and illegally targeting vulnerable people with debts that shouldn't have existed?

We've seen, through the bushfire crisis this summer, the Prime Minister is not the leader he pretends to be. He's loose with the truth, selective with facts and not up to the job. Australians want a leader who will put national
interests first. Instead, we have a marketing guy without a plan and a scandal riddled government putting themselves first.

**Boothby Electorate: Australia Day Awards**

**Ms FLINT** (Boothby—Government Whip) (12:13): Australia Day saw outstanding men and women in my electorate of Boothby recognised for their service to our community through the Order of Australia awards and local council awards. I am delighted to be able to congratulate this year's recipients and to acknowledge the contribution of so many local residents and groups to our local community.

I recognise the following residents for their outstanding service. Dr Helen McLean was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her significant service to dentistry, and to professional associations. Dr Walter Russell was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to medicine in the field of anaesthesiology, and to medical health standards.

The following local residents were awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2020 Australia Day honours: Mrs Judy Burke, for service to community health; Mr Donald Cant, for service to the community through a range of organisations; Ms Anne McEwen, for service to the Parliament of Australia and to the community of South Australia; Mrs Helen Oxenham, for her service to the community through social welfare initiatives and advocacy; Ms Brenda Rayner, for service to music; Dr Andrew Rolland, for service to medicine and to local government; and Mr Bruce Wilson, for service to conservation and the environment. Dr Dale Lambert, a world-leading scientist in high-level information fusion, was awarded a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service in the use of artificial intelligence in surveillance and reconnaissance, command and control, intelligence, and autonomous platforms.

My local councils also recognised local volunteers at ceremonies on Australia Day. I was present for several of these and I would like to sincerely congratulate the following recipients. From the City of Holdfast Bay. The Citizen of the Year award went to Ian Grant, who dedicated 12 years as president of the Glenelg Community Club; Young Citizen of the Year, Alex Miller, for her tireless work over four years, resulting in the North Brighton Community Garden; Community Event of the Year, Glenelg Brass Band; and Community Recognition Award, Anthea Williams. A Community Recognition Award went to Be The One members Jonty Belfield, Sam Patterson, Bryce Gassner, Sam Young, Alex Triplow and Austin Edwards. This group of young men formed Be The One to raise money and awareness for charities and current issues, including the bushfire crisis. A Community Recognition Award also went to Tamara Aitchison for her life-changing work with Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

The Local Hero Award went to Barry Heffeman. I know Barry really well. He is a Vietnam veteran, and he founded the William Kibby VC Veterans Shed in Glenelg North. The shed is a wonderful haven for veterans and ex-service personnel, where they can go to discuss their concerns, past trauma and welfare issues in a safe environment, whilst also doing really good work for the community. I have had the honour of visiting the shed on a number of occasions and I know that everyone in my community is incredible grateful to Barry and his volunteers for the wonderful work that they do to support veterans in our community.

Another Local Hero Award went to Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club female boat crew members Diane Donaldson, Katrina Meehan, Stephanie Wyatt, Dayna Blyth and Ken Screen because during a training session three kilometres offshore, this boat crew of volunteer surf lifesavers rescued a fisherman who had fallen out of his moving boat and wasn't wearing a life jacket.

I congratulate these recipients from the City of Marion: Citizen of the Year was John Turner; Young Citizen of the Year was Jessica Musson; and the Community Event of the Year went to Emmaus Christian College for their work with the Ernabella Aboriginal community.

From the City of Mitcham, Citizen of the Year—there were joint recipients. David Ennis was recognised for his dedicated service in our local community, including his work with the Repatriation hospital and museum. The other citizens of the year were Geoff and Lis Bartlett, who were recognised for their five decades of service to the Blackwood Hills area and community through the Blackwood South Neighbourhood Watch and Blackwood Action Group. I would like to take this opportunity to personally recognise Geoff and Lis for their award. They're very dear friends of mine, they are incredible community volunteers, and I was really, really pleased to see them finally recognised for their tireless work for our local community. The Community Event of the Year went to the Mitcham City Brass band—and, everyone in the community, if you haven't already seen them, please do; they are absolutely brilliant.

Each of these honours recipients, whether recognised nationally or locally, are dedicated members of our local community, and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of them for their contribution to our community and our broader society through all the wonderful volunteer and professional work that they do.
Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (12:18): As a proud Sydneysider I rise to highlight the importance of one of our most loved and cherished assets, our beautiful harbour and the unique pockets of protected bushland that surround it. In my area of Warringah, I refer specifically to Chowder Bay, Georges Heights, Middle Head and North Head Sanctuary. These are truly iconic sites, sitting at the gateway of Sydney Harbour. To Indigenous communities, the traditional custodians, these places are sacred, holding great cultural and spiritual significance. Over the centuries, European settlers also appreciated the tremendous beauty of these sites but saw their strategic importance for defence. Ironically, the use of these sites for military purposes meant they were largely untouched by development. As a result, in September 1998 the Commonwealth government was able to put in place a unique form of protection by creating the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. This statutory agency was tasked with rehabilitating former Defence and other Commonwealth lands around Sydney Harbour, conserving their natural and built heritage and returning them to the people of Australia. These lands had been hidden away from public view for many years, left derelict, run-down and, in some cases, contaminated. In his speech announcing the harbour trust, the then Prime Minister, John Howard, described Sydney Harbour as:

… probably the world's greatest harbour. It is one of the great natural beauty spots of our nation. It is the cradle of European settlement in Australia and it is one of those parts of our country which gives immense pride and immense pleasure, not only to the residents of Sydney, but also to all Australians because it wins such wide acclaim around the world.

I couldn't agree more.

The creation of the trust followed years of lobbying by community groups adamant that these extraordinary places on Sydney Harbour should be maintained as public spaces and kept safe from redevelopment. These groups, collectively known as Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores, included Friends of Cockatoo Island, the Headland Preservation Group and Foreshore 2000 Woolwich. Today, 22 years later, I thank them for their foresight and vision and their dedication to protect our beautiful environment. The threat was real that these sites would be developed—prime real estate with breathtaking harbour views. It was only through the hard work of those community groups and the vision and leadership of Prime Minister John Howard that the land was saved.

But now that legacy is under threat, as are these precious parcels of unique bushland. The trust is currently the subject of a review, and the community has very real concerns that this could lead to these areas being left unprotected and ripe for development. The trust was established as a transitional body, to rehabilitate sites and hand them over to the New South Wales government for inclusion in the national parks and reserves system for ongoing management. But the question must be asked: what risk does this pose to these sites and what legislative safeguards will apply? There needs to be transparency and accountability as to the future of these iconic sites. As stated by the harbour trust itself, these sites must be maintained and kept safe from redevelopment.

My view, and the view of the general community in Warringah is that the Commonwealth should fund the trust on an ongoing basis to rehabilitate the sites and maintain them. These sites have great meaning for not only the people of Warringah but all Australians, due to their iconic location, their rich Aboriginal heritage, their military history and, of course, their environmental value. As they are sites of national significance, it is right and proper that the Commonwealth take ownership of their ongoing care and protection.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Headland Preservation Group, the North Head Sanctuary Foundation, the Mosman Parks and Bushland Association and the Friends of Quarantine Station. These hardworking volunteers have fought to conserve these areas, protect them from the risk of development and maintain them as sanctuaries to be enjoyed and loved by all Australians. I call on the government to honour the work of these volunteer groups, to respect the wishes of the local communities and to maintain the legacy of former Prime Minister John Howard by committing to ensuring that these iconic sites are protected for generations to come.

Coronavirus

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (12:23): I rise today to speak on the coronavirus and the effects that it is having directly on my electorate in these early stages. It was reported this morning that there are now 44,754 cases worldwide, in 27 countries, and reported deaths are 1,112. These figures are certainly concerning, but there was news from the Chinese government in the last 24 hours or so that they believe the epidemic may have peaked. Let's hope and pray that is the case. We know about the primary hotspot, Hubei province, but what happens if other parts of the world become secondary hotspots? We are a long way from out of this challenge at the moment, but I have to commend the Australian authorities, particularly Professor Brendan Murphy, the Chief Medical Officer, and Greg Hunt and the whole team. The Home Affairs office have done a very effective job in shutting Australia down and stopping the importation of this virus. We have 15 reported cases in Australia. I understand at least five of those people are over the virus and there have been no new cases recorded lately.
In my electorate, we have a real seafood focus. There are two industries which are probably feeling the brunt of this immediately, even though the knock-on effect will continue. The first is the wild-catch abalone industry. I've spoken to some leaders in that industry. Perhaps we're a little bit better off than Tasmania in that most of our product goes out frozen. Consequently, it has a two- or three-year shelf life. They are able to continue harvesting at the moment, but they are getting no income. If they start to shutdown, they risk losing their skilled workforce. They're wondering what will happen if we store too much abalone in cold store—what that would do to the market in the longer term. But they are continuing to fish at the moment.

Then we have the southern rock lobster industry. In my patch, the northern zone of the southern rock lobster in South Australia is a 300-tonne fishery. It's nowhere near as big as the one in Tasmania with 1,000 tonnes, but it's a very significant employer in a very important industry. Largely, their markets have evaporated at the price they need to harvest and they have shutdown. I'm not aware of a lot of rock lobster being taken at the moment. How long that sort of crisis lasts remains to be seen. One thing we do know—and we can see this from the SARS virus—is that, when it was over, the economy bounced back very quickly. So, if this coronavirus can be rounded up, isolated and shutdown, I would expect a quick recovery for all of these industries, but of course we don't know what that outcome will be yet.

On students, we only have one regional university campus in the Grey electorate. In South Australia we have around 6,000 Chinese students, and they are worth $1.8 billion to the economy a year. I spoke with a vice-chancellor the other day. They are very concerned about what that loss of income might mean if those students don't roll up for the first semester or, indeed, whether they come back for the second semester if they're not here for the first. Virtually every university in Australia will be dealing with that at the moment, so it's a challenge.

We have quite interesting growth in the tourism industry. Last year we had 66,000 Chinese visitors to South Australia. In my electorate we have some wonderful tourism assets. We see visitors from all over the world. The Flinders Ranges, the Outback, the Yorke Peninsula, the Eyre Peninsula and the beautiful Clare Valley are all significant drawcards for people coming to South Australia. We all expect that there will be a cutback in Chinese tourist numbers, but we don't know what the knock-on effect will be through the rest of Asia—whether Japanese numbers will be limited or whether Korean numbers will be limited as a result of their fears around the coronavirus and travel at the moment. If you want to think about the prospect of travel, you only need to look at the cruise ship that's tied up at Yokohama in Japan at the moment. My heart goes out to not just the Australians on board but also everybody—the 3½ thousand people on that ship. The mental stress of being in a place which feels like it's an incubator for a disease that may kill you is enormous. I think the Japanese are doing a very good job of handling it. They are removing the people with symptoms immediately and putting them in isolation, but, even so, we know that if you're on that cruise ship you've probably got a much higher chance of catching coronavirus than you would back in Australia. We will keep our eye on that and hope and pray for the very best.

Climate Change

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:28): Our climate is changing around us. The evidence is now there for us to see. This year we had the 'black summer'—the toxic air, a billion animals perished. It was the worst drought in our history and there were changes in our oceans with bleaching coral reefs. I cannot accept that anybody wants to see this. I do believe that, after this 'black summer', there will be a unity of purpose and a yearning for leadership. We're often asked to quantify the cost of action on climate change, but we're rarely asked to quantify the cost of inaction.

According to the University of Melbourne, the potential damages to Australia from climate change, based on current global emission patterns, will be well in excess of $580 billion by 2030 and well in excess of $760 billion by 2050. That's more than $5 trillion in cumulative changes from now until the end of the century. The Insurance Council of Australia, which makes its business from managing risk—that is what it does—says that climate change is occurring along a rapid and severe pathway and that, without intervention, it presents a serious risk to environments, economies and communities. This is no longer going to be something in the future tense; it will be reflected in the premiums that we pay for our insurance this year and next year. The cost of not acting is profoundly higher than the cost of just taking the action we need.

So much is at stake in my local community. We live on a coastal plain. We face destructive erosion and the inundation of the waterfront. Similarly, the highland, farmland and rainforest on the escarpment are at risk from changing climate patterns. In the Illawarra, in the Southern Highlands and on the South Coast, we are in a unique position to not only make a significant national contribution to responding to climate change but also grow our local jobs and our economy. Our region has enormous opportunities, such as a highly skilled workforce geared towards industry and services. We've got industrial land ready for use. We're connected to a world-class port in Port Kembla, strategically important for transport infrastructure, including rail and motorways. We've got the Port Kembla steelworks and hundreds of associated downstream fabricators. We've got one of the 100 universities in
the world with excellent foundations in research, supported by a strong vocational education sector. Our region is also rich with renewable energy sources—solar and coastal winds, as well as wave energy.

It's not hard to see a future where jobs growth in the Illawarra, in the Southern Highlands and on the South Coast comes from taking action on climate change. There would be new jobs in solar and wind, from the beginning to the end—manufacturing components, design, construction and the management and maintenance of them. There would be logistical support for domestic and international trade industries. There is opportunity for us to work in battery manufacture, with a high-skilled workforce and available land. We have the buildings and the infrastructure needed to move product around the country and around the world. We've got what it takes. We've got a steelworks and the downstream businesses to manufacture the right steel for the right job.

We also mine coal in the Illawarra, and coal has been a lightning rod in this debate. Somehow it's become a proxy for the ambition of taking action on climate change. I want to say this: coalminers care about the future of their families, our environment and our region like the rest of us. We cannot make them the battering ram in a toxic argument. Just as we need coking coal to transform iron into steel, we can and do need to work with our coalmining communities to transform our economies and our regional economies to ensure that we have a future for everyone.

The scope of our region to leverage off our existing investments and existing infrastructure in manufacturing, heavy industry, education, training and services, and logistical and transport infrastructure puts the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands and the South Coast in an exciting position to develop new jobs in responding to climate change. I believe our next chapter will be our region becoming a greenhouse powerhouse, with jobs and opportunity for all. To achieve this, we need to bring the whole community along with us and not get bogged down in this present toxic debate.

**New Horizons Tasmania**

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass) (12:33): Equality and access for all is at the heart of a truly inclusive society. It's also the foundation that inspired the creation of New Horizons Tasmania over 30 years ago. The brainchild of Launceston's Robyn Hanson, New Horizons was created with the idea that sporting inclusion quite simply changes lives. Offering sport, recreational and social opportunities for Tasmanians with a disability, the club welcomes members with any disability—intellectual, physical, autism spectrum disorders and mental health issues—from ages five years and up, as well as their families. Currently, New Horizons facilitates 18 programs each week in Northern Tasmania, and new satellite programs in Hobart 48 weeks of the year. In addition, they host school holiday programs, carnivals, social functions and interstate sporting trips.

It is a testament to both Robyn and now her daughter Belinda, who has been at the helm since 2006, that the club has continued to succeed and thrive as new opportunities are identified for participants to learn a new skill or follow an area of passion. Members benefit hugely from their partnerships with mainstream sporting bodies, including AFL Tasmania, Tennis Tasmania and Cricket Tasmania, as well as local clubs who lend and lease their venues and equipment and welcome play and participation among their membership. New Horizons also works in conjunction with national disability and sports organisations to provide pathways to representation for elite athletes with a disability.

It has been Robyn's passion and determination that has seen New Horizons members frequently represent Tasmania at an elite level, including at the Special Olympics. The club has sent many athletes to participate at the Games over the last 20 years, which is an incredible achievement. Launceston will play host to the Australian Special Olympics Junior National Games in 2020 and the National Games in 2022, which is a huge coup for our city and an opportunity all of us in the electorate of Bass can be proud of. The club is in the midst of training a number of athletes for both the junior and national games.

A powerful ripple effect of New Horizons programs is the promotion of the importance of inclusion and the dynamism of people with a disability in our community. Currently the club has 462 active members, with about 70 volunteers on the books, 30 of those quite heavily involved. Almost all of the programs at New Horizons are run by their volunteers, who have given many years of service. In addition to the wonderful community members who volunteer their time, the club has also been able to reach its goals with the generosity of a number of community organisations, including local Rotary clubs and the council and those who support the club's annual fundraising event, which raises much-needed funds. I know it was particularly thrilling for the club to be chosen as the City of Launceston Lions Club charity partner for the annual Christmas parade last year.

Nothing speaks more to the difference an organisation like New Horizons has on its participants, their family and the community than hearing firsthand accounts, some of which I would like to share today, on the subjects of inclusivity, confidence and creating a sense of belonging. On inclusivity: 'I wouldn't have been able to represent Australia without New Horizons club.' On confidence: 'Confidence is a big thing for me, so I've learned to be
more confident, and that's been shown at work as well, which is great, because that's a big thing up at work.' On friendships and belonging: 'Making new friendships that will last a lifetime through the club has been very beneficial to me.'

Just recently the club sent a wonderful team of young players to Victoria to participate in the National Cricket Inclusion Championships, held in Geelong, which provided a terrific opportunity for players to engage in a high-level championship and be lucky enough to meet Nathan Lyon. Well done to the team for their fantastic effort, resulting in securing third place, and I must give kudos to Victoria, who took out the championship. I'd also like to congratulate the team for raising $1,200 for bushfire relief.

I am a passionate supporter of the New Horizons club, and I was pleased that the Morrison government was able to provide $115,000 in funding to assist the club in the continuation of its sports programs. I commend current director Belinda Kiito, daughter of founder Robyn, on the continued growth of the club in recent years, and I look forward to continuing to work with the club in the future.

**Calwell Electorate: Asahi Beverages**

**Peace Boat**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (12:38): On Thursday 23 January I had the opportunity to visit the Asahi Beverages factory at Tullamarine in my electorate of Calwell. I want to thank the Japanese ambassador, His Excellency Ambassador Reiichiro Takahashi, or Rei, as he likes to be called, for assisting in the organisation of the visit. I was accompanied by the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne, Katsushi Horigome, and the Deputy Consul-General, Shunsuke Saito. Accompanying us also on the tour was the Asahi general manager, Kiyoshi Oguri, and the chief strategy officer, Kazutomo Tamesada, who provided us with a tour of this very large scale and significant business operation in my local community. The factory was previously a Schweppes brewing manufacturer and distributor. It was purchased by Asahi Beverages and today employs 260 core staff, with additional employees during peak season. I was told that some of the staff employed there are ex-Ford workers, given the closure of Ford in Broadmeadows.

Asahi has invested $2 billion in Australia and New Zealand operations since 2014. This is a significant investment in Australia and Australian jobs, one which adds to the diversification of manufacturing opportunities in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, where we have over the years suffered the loss of thousands of jobs associated in particular with the closure of the car manufacturing industry.

The Asahi Beverages production line includes but is not limited to Asahi beer, which is made in their Laverton brewery, and of course the stable of the former Schweppes soft drinks. Its distribution line also includes, amongst others, the very famous VOSS water and Jack Daniels.

Asahi's investment in Australia includes their first locally designed and produced beer. In September 2019 Asahi launched their draught beer Two Suns, made using 100 percent Australian malt and wheat and using, as they say, 'precise Japanese brewing techniques'. This is a new beer which is marketed as a Japanese Australian collaboration. Two Suns beer was created by brewers Yosuke Tajika and Geoff Day. To quote Scott Hadley, the chief commercial officer at Asahi Beverages: 'The beer has been launched at a time when Australian drinkers are changing their beer preferences to lighter options. Until now there has been an absence of consumer choice in the "easy drinking" category. We identified that gap and are proud to welcome Two Suns to the Asahi Premium Beverages portfolio.' Of course, I welcome it also. Not being much of a beer drinker, I'm quite enjoy Two Suns. It's milder and has a much friendlier taste. I believe this is a great initiative and adds to strengthening and continuing the bilateral relations between Australia and Japan.

I am of course very pleased to be the deputy chair of the parliamentary friends of Australia and Japan. On Saturday 18 January, I was invited to board the Peace Boat, which had docked at Port Melbourne's Station Pier. The Peace Boat is an initiative established in 1983 and is a Japanese based NGO which holds special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It was founded by Yoshioha Tatsuuya and I quote the founder in its purpose as 'a symbol of our message of peace and sustainability'. Inspired by the national memory of the devastating consequences of the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945, survivors and the people of Japan, through conversation and interaction, wanted to alert the world and raise awareness about the horrors of weapons of mass destruction; the devastation to communities; and the long-lasting consequences and threat to human life, peace and sustainability.

The Peace Ship has a partnership and membership with ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which was founded in Melbourne in 2006. ICAN has been the leading body in the global movement promoting the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty currently has 80 signatory member states, 35 of whom have ratified the treaty. Australia has yet to ratify the treaty. Dave Sweeney is the founder of ICAN and, in 2017, ICAN received the Nobel Peace Prize for their work. It was a great honour
for me to be on board the Peace Ship and have the opportunity to hold the Nobel Peace Prize medal. I want to congratulate Dave Sweeney— (Time expired)

Mattiske, Mr David Henry
Veterans

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (12:43): I rise to speak about a very special WWII veteran in my community. David Mattiske is an ex-serviceman who I first met on Anzac Day last year. Recently he shared some of his incredible story and delivered his report on the 75th anniversary commemorations for the Leyte Gulf landings and Battle of the Surigao Strait in the Philippines.

This clash of warships, including the HMAS Shropshire, occurred in World War II on 25 October 1944. David, who is now 94, signed up to the ADF on his 18th birthday and spent three years in the Navy before moving to the HMAS Shropshire. He's a wonderful gentleman and just saying his name brings a smile to my face. He was in my office recently, just last week. In his words, the Shropshire was the most efficient and battle honoured ship in the Royal Australian Navy. It took part in the greatest sea battles of all time.

In honour of the Battle of Surigao Strait a magnificent three-level memorial has been built in Surigao in the Philippines. It's at the centre of Surigao history to remind our Filipino friends that, during the time when they were being liberated, Australia was there to help them. Within this memorial, a wall that stands in permanent remembrance of the HMAS Shropshire crew and as a special acknowledgement of David's efforts has now been unveiled. The inscription on the wall is David's own quote. It says: 'Let us pray that we never have another world war.'

I'd like to acknowledge three other gentlemen from my electorate who accompanied David on the commemorative trip: Ken Orr, the deputy president of the Southport RSL branch; Rob Nicholls, who represented his father, Stan, and also served in the HMAS Shropshire Philippines campaign between 1943 and 1945; and Michael Everett, a close friend to David. There's a large veteran community in my electorate of Moncrieff, with 1,000 men and women who have served. This community spirit was felt over the festive season last year, when I was privileged to attend the Christmas parties of the Vietnam veterans, the Southport RSL and the South East Asian Korea and Peace Keeping Veterans Association, otherwise known as SEAKS.

I would like to commend the work that our government continues to do to improve the lives of veterans. Veterans like David are our heroes. They've protected our community and our freedoms, and it's our job to look after them. The mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and Defence Force members is an issue of national and enduring importance. I welcome the establishment of a national commissioner and a family advocate for veterans affairs. This powerful new body will tackle the very difficult area of ADF and veteran suicides. This means we'll get to the bottom of each and every case and learn lessons that can help improve the lives of our veterans and their families into the future.

This is a very complex issue, and we have a whole-of-government approach towards a zero goal on suicide, because one life is too many. Too many of our young people take their own lives—too many young Indigenous and too many of our veterans. In each of these areas—youth, Indigenous and veterans—and across the board, our government has put in practical measures. A national commissioner for veterans will look at each and every case. Immediately, there will be a comprehensive and independent review of more than 400 suicide deaths since 2001. This review will consider all risk factors and trends, including military service and veterans' postservice experience, to improve our understanding of systemic issues. Importantly, the families of serving and former members affected by suicide will be invited to share their stories and insights. A veteran family advocate will be appointed to engage with the families of veterans. The focus will be on mental health and suicide prevention and this will contribute to our understanding of risk factors that relate to the wellbeing of veterans and their families. These comprehensive measures have been developed with a very clear focus. We need to find effective and practical ways to better identify, prevent, understand and act on suicide and suicide risks among our veterans and service men and women.

The government also supports transition to civilian life for at-risk veterans. Research shows veterans under 30 who are involuntarily discharged are at higher risk of suicide than the general population. We want to ensure that they get the support they need as they navigate the range of government services on offer. A personalised career employment program will give them greater opportunity for job placement within civilian life. The Morrison government has also launched the Australian veterans card and lapel pin so veterans can be appropriately recognised by business and community.

To finish, I would like to thank every single veteran for their service to our country. It's because of you that we enjoy the freedoms we have today.
Business

Mr BRENDAW O'CONNOR (Gorton) (12:48): Mr Deputy Speaker O'Brien, I'd like to congratulate you on your elevation to Deputy Speaker of the House. Almost a year and a half ago the Prime Minister promised to create a register of the payment times of Australia's 3,000 largest companies. A transparency register would require big businesses to publish how they engage with small business when it comes to payment terms. The government also promised they would require big business to have a payment time to small business of 20 days in order to get government contracts. Nearly 18 months later, we are still yet to see anything materialise from that commitment by the Prime Minister. More importantly, the small businesses of Australia shouldn't expect to see anything soon.

According to internal documents, as reported by the media, implementation is likely to take place in late 2021—the end of next year. That is three years, at the earliest, from the announcement of the implementation by the Prime Minister. So the question that is begged is: why is this government dragging its heels to implement this fairly straightforward, uncontroversial policy? It is time for this government to stop talking and start helping small businesses. When small businesses say that say cash flow is crucial to them and that small business is the backbone of this nation, why is this not a matter of urgency for this government? Why do they continue to ignore calls from small business to start looking out for them?

Small businesses across the country are being squeezed by larger firms who seek to extend payment times. In meetings I have held with small businesses across Australia, one issue keeps coming up: cash flow. In order to maintain cash flow, these smaller businesses are encouraged to take up reverse factoring or, a more appropriate term, payday loan arrangements in order to get paid under the same terms they previously enjoyed. Fortunately, light is being shone on this insidious practice, and some of our larger companies, namely Telstra and Rio Tinto, have reversed their positions on this. I welcome the decisions of larger companies not to go down that path. That will improve payment times for small businesses.

Recently the small business ombudsman, Kate Carnell, signalled that, unless other big businesses followed, she would recommend there be legislation to compel big business to do the right thing, and I agree with the small business ombudsman. According to the ombudsman, late payments by large businesses to small businesses account for 53 per cent of all invoices—more than one in two invoices are late to businesses that really require those payments to be made on time. Fifty-three per cent equates to $115 billion paid late to small businesses—the equivalent of $7 billion of working capital to Australian small businesses, each and every year. So we say to the government: 'It is now time for you to do something in relation to this commitment that you made. You can't keep making commitments and then dragging your feet, delaying this important, vital reform that hundreds of thousands of businesses rely upon.'

We are also very concerned that Minister Cash has not come out at all—not once publicly—to criticise the inappropriate behaviour of larger businesses that apply or subvert reverse factoring to the detriment of small businesses. We would have thought that a government and a minister for small business would be defending them—being their champion—in ensuring that payments that should be made to them are made to them on time and not instead making them get a loan in order to pay the bills so they can receive what they're owed on time through a loan practice. That is not the way in which this should operate.

The government has talked big but has delivered nothing when it comes to payment to small business. These are payments that need to be made to ensure that small businesses continue—that not only their businesses survive but their businesses thrive so that they can employ more Australians. We know that there are millions of Australians—over 4½ million Australians—that are employed by small businesses across this country. Each and every one of us has thousands of small businesses in our electorates. They deserve to be treated properly, and they expect their Prime Minister, who made a commitment 18 months ago, to deliver on that commitment and not to wait, as it would appear, another 18 months for that to happen.

Pyle, Mr Bill

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (12:54): It wouldn't matter what time I got up in the morning; there would be a farmer up before me somewhere in Australia. He could be a dairy farmer, an orchardist or a cattle, sheep or pig farmer—you name it. He could be on the Murray. He could be in South Gippsland amongst my mighty dairy farmers. He could be down in Darren's electorate right now, where the farmers that have been burnt out down there are facing the most difficult of times and thinking about how they're going to replace half a million dollars worth of fencing. He could be up on the Murray, where they've got water issues that we all know about; they've been struggling with them for 20 years, and they need to be sorted out. It could be, over in the west, one of our own members, Nola, who, with her husband, is a dairy farmer. So we're connected. We're connected into our dairy
farmers. We're connected into our beef farmers. They are the food supply for this nation. They're not only our food supply; 80 per cent of what they grow and create is exported.

One of those great farmers and agripoliticians—and some would say an angry agripolitician—is a fellow named Bill Pyle. I will be launching this book, *Australia: Land of Milk and Politics*, about his history and his story, with the help of Kevin Carmody, who was a long-time ABC presenter in Gippsland and a member of my staff for quite a while. They've collaborated to tell this story about Bill, which is a story about the dairy industry in Victoria, how it evolved and how it needed restructuring and changing for the benefit of all. This guy actually stood for preselection for the seat of McMillan many years ago, and I'm rather glad that he didn't get it, because it might have changed the course of history. He was a very good politician. But his path was swayed because he didn't get that preselection. He was then drawn straight into the politics of the dairy industry. He saw there were massive problems. He saw his mates working really hard in the dairy industry. He saw them getting nowhere and he knew there needed to be a change.

This piece I'm about to read now, as part of this speech, will be my remarks tomorrow at the book launch:

Bill Pyle is a good dairy farmer. For his entire working life, he was disciplined and innovative. He was a loving husband, and is a doting father, grandfather and in more recent years great grandfather. And importantly for Australian dairy farmers and the industry he helped to restructure, he was a leader.

As a young man, Bill saw the hard work all the dairy farmers in the region were putting in and knew it himself. Despite this, the dairy farmers still were doing it tough. They weren't making enough money. Bill knew things had to change. Ask him about it now and he'll tell you it was a total basket case!

The industry needed leadership and structural change. There was unrest in the manufacturing sector, no research into farming and the prices of grain, beef and dairy had collapsed. They needed a better system. However, farmers split between organisations and in their visions of the future. They struggled to have a united voice, let alone be heard.

Bill became the uniting force. He knows farming like the back of his hand, he has a natural knack for politics, but most importantly he understands people. Even those who didn't agree with him respected him. And he was then able to persuade the community to come together. He led the necessary organisational change Victorian dairy farmers needed. He spearheaded the negotiations with the government. And he marched a group of thousands down the streets of Melbourne.

In his 9 year presidency of UDV, United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, they were able to achieve great positive changes for the industry. It's thanks to these efforts that the price of milk was deregulated. And the manufacturing processes were made more efficient and consistent through herd improvement and production standards.

Bill was able to achieve due to his resilience in testing times and incredibly supportive family who he is endlessly grateful for.

To all the friends he has made along the way, many of whom—

… thank you everyone. Of course you will get much more detail and insight in the book Bill has written. I commend it to you, *Australia: Land of milk and politics*.

I read that out, which is very unusual for me in a speech, because that was written by his granddaughter, who works for me in the office at the moment—so politics is a strain through the family. Well done to Bridget Tracy, his granddaughter, who is working up here and is at ANU. What a great nation we live in!

Question agreed to.

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Federation Chamber adjourned at 12:59