COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 18, 2015

Thursday, 26 November 2015

FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

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SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,
Hon John Kenneth Cobb MP, Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Ms Clare Ellen O’Neil, MP,
Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Ms Melissa Lee Price MP,
Dr Andrew John Southcott MP, Mr Michael Sukkar MP,
Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP
Government Whips—Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP and Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Deputy Whip—Mr George Robert Christensen MP

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
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<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
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<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katter’s Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Heriot
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>Senator Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Josh Frydenberg 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>
<td>Minister for Small Business</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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<td>Minister for Defence</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting with Digital Innovation and Startups</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Sam Dastyari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
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<td>Senator Katy Gallagher*</td>
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<tr>
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* Senator Katy Gallagher’s appointment to the Shadow Ministry is effective from 1 November 2015. Senator the Hon Jan McLucas will serve as Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Shadow Minister for Mental Health, and represent the Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, the Shadow Minister for Health, the Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, the Shadow Minister for Sport and the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs in the Senate until 31 October 2015.
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

**STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE**

Member for Wakefield

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (09:01): On indulgence, the member for Wakefield will not be here in the parliament today. Honourable members would be aware of the fires raging to the north of Adelaide, which not only are within the member for Wakefield's community but, at different points, have come quite close to his home. I am sure the thoughts and prayers of all members of parliament on both sides are with him and his community at this difficult time.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Watson, and I know all members will join with him in endorsing those remarks. Our thoughts are with those residents in South Australia.

**BILLS**

Labor 2013-14 Budget Savings (Measures No. 2) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms O’Dwyer.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms O’Dwyer (Higgins—Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer) (09:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will reintroduce, with certain modifications, a number of savings measures that were originally announced by the former government in the 2012-13 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook and the 2013-14 budget.

These are savings measures that the former government promised prior to the last election to help repair the budget; but since the election they have failed to keep their promise to the Australian people.

We are now introducing legislation to allow the former government to keep its promise to the Australian people to fix the budget. These measures will provide savings to the budget of over $2 billion over the forward estimates.

Two of the measures were removed from the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 during its passage through the Senate in March 2014, and reintroduced in the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014 on 17 July 2014. This bill has not passed the Senate.

The two other measures were introduced in the Higher Education Support Amendment (Savings and Other Measures) Bill 2013, which has also not passed the Senate.

This bill facilitates the former government keeping their election promises. That is what we are doing. We are giving them the opportunity to keep their election promises, because they
did not reverse the decision to proceed with these measures in the 2013 economic statement or in their document outlining their costings for the 2013 federal election. Since the election, they have been saying—claiming, incorrectly—that we have deepened the budget deficit.

In fact, those opposite are the ones—by their own actions—who are deepening the budget deficit by not passing these measures. There is no sense of embarrassment about it. They are just opposing what they took to the last election.

**Schedule 1—student start-up loans**

Schedule 1 to the bill replaces the current student start-up scholarship with an income-contingent loan, the student start-up loan.

The student start-up loan aims to help students with the costs of study, including the purchase of text books, computers and internet access.

This proposal will provide significant savings to government while maintaining students' access to funds to assist them with the up-front costs of study. It also recognises the financial difficulties that some students and their families may experience in undertaking education and training, and includes a number of measures to assist people financially.

Under the new arrangements, there will be a limit of two student start-up loans per year, of equivalent value to the student start-up scholarship (currently $1,025 each and to be indexed from 2017).

The loans will be available on a voluntary basis, and will be repayable under similar arrangements to Higher Education Loan Program debts.

Students will only be required to begin paying their student start-up loan after their Higher Education Loan Program debt has been repaid.

This measure will commence on 1 January 2017 (or, if royal assent occurs after 1 January 2017, the first occurring 1 January after royal assent).

This measure only applies to new recipients of youth allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY after the day it takes effect. It does not affect the entitlements of individuals currently entitled to these benefits, who will continue to be able to obtain student start-up scholarships.

**Schedule 2—efficiency dividend**

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012 to apply an efficiency dividend to Commonwealth contribution amounts in the act and loadings under the guidelines.

It will adjust these amounts for the year in which the bill receives royal assent and later years. The adjusted amount would be the amount that would have been payable in these years had the efficiency dividend applied in 2014 and 2015, consistent with the original policy announcement of the former government.

These amendments result in significant savings that have already been included in the budget bottom line, but are not expected to impact on access to, or the quality of, higher education.
Schedules 3 and 4—Removal of the upfront payment discount and voluntary repayment bonus

Schedules 3 and 4 to the bill amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003 to abolish the HECS-HELP up-front payment discount and the Higher Education Loan Program voluntary repayment bonus.

The removal of both the discount and the bonus would occur from 1 January occurring at least three months after the bill receives royal assent.

As a result, from this time, students will no longer receive a discount of 10 per cent on their student contribution for units with a later census date by paying the amount up-front, nor will they receive an additional five per cent reduction in their Higher Education Loan Program debt if they make a voluntary repayment of $500 or more.

Again, while these amendments result in significant savings that have already been included in the budget bottom line, they are not expected to impact on access to, or the quality of, higher education.

Schedule 5—Interest charge

Schedule 5 to the bill will allow for an interest charge to be applied to certain debts incurred by recipients of Austudy Payment, Fares Allowance, Youth Allowance for full-time students and apprentices, and Abstudy Living Allowance.

The interest charge will only be applied where the debtor does not have or is not honouring an acceptable repayment arrangement.

At present, current recipients of income support with debts have their payments reduced until their debts are repaid. For former recipients of income support, on the other hand, there is no incentive to repay their debts.

Debtors who are already making repayments, or who come to a repayment agreement with the Department of Human Services following implementation of the measure, will not be charged interest.

The key purpose of the interest charge is to encourage debtors to repay their debt, in a timely fashion, where they have the financial capacity to do so.

Once the interest charge is in place, debtors who have not been making repayments will have an incentive to engage with the Department of Human Services to make a repayment arrangement in order to avoid the interest charge.

The rate of the interest charge will be based upon the 90-day bank accepted bill rate, plus an additional seven per cent, as is currently applied by the Australian Taxation Office for unpaid tax debts under the Taxation Administration Act 1953. Over the last four years, this rate has averaged approximately 10.1 per cent, and currently stands at 9.15 per cent for the quarter July to September 2015.

This measure will commence on 1 January or 1 July first occurring after royal assent.

As I mentioned at the outset, this bill will reintroduce with certain modifications a number of savings measures originally announced by the former government. I ask them to support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
Crimes Legislation Amendment (Proceeds of Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Keenan.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (09:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Proceeds of Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which contains a range of measures to improve and clarify Commonwealth criminal justice arrangements.

Non-conviction based confiscation scheme

Schedule 1 of the bill contains amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act to clarify the operation of that act's non-conviction based confiscation scheme in light of recent court decisions.

The amendments clarify the principles a court should consider in granting a stay of confiscation proceedings where there are related criminal matters, and outlines the grounds on which a stay is not to be granted.

Whilst a court may still exercise its discretion to stay civil proceedings if it considers that it is in the interests of justice to do so, the amendments make it clear that it is not enough for a person to say that they, or someone else, may face charges or have to give evidence in a related criminal trial at a future date. There must be something more than that—the risk of prejudice must be explained to a court.

This bill recognises that the right to a fair trial is of paramount importance in the criminal justice system. Hence the amendments clarify the civil court procedures available in Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings to reduce the risk of prejudice to an accused in related concurrent or subsequent criminal proceedings.

The amendments also strengthen protections against disclosure and use of material related to the confiscation proceedings in subsequent criminal proceedings.

Where a person is facing both proceeds of crime and criminal proceedings, the amendments reinforce the safeguards against the risk of prejudice. The amendments clarify that where a court makes an order prohibiting the disclosure of information to an authority, the information cannot be disclosed.

In addition, the bill introduces a new provision to allow a court to order that proceedings under the act be heard, in whole or in part, in closed court if necessary to prevent interference with the administration of criminal justice.

These measures enable the court to safeguard against the risk of prejudice to an accused in any related criminal proceedings where the court considers it necessary to do so.

The bill also clarifies that any application for an exclusion order relating to a restraining order must be heard by a court and finalised prior to the hearing of a forfeiture application.
False dealing with accounting documents

Schedule 2 of the bill amends the Criminal Code to create two new offences of false dealing with accounting documents.

This measure will strengthen Australia's compliance with the OECD anti-bribery convention. Article 8 of the convention requires parties to create offences of false accounting for the purposes of foreign bribery. In 2012 the OECD working group on bribery recommended that Australia increase the maximum sanctions against legal persons for false accounting under Commonwealth legislation.

The offences will criminalise conduct where a person:
- makes, alters, destroys or conceals an accounting document, or fails to make an accounting document that the person is under a duty to make, and
- either intends or is reckless to the fact that this conduct would facilitate, conceal or disguise the offender or another person receiving or giving a benefit, or another person incurring a loss, where that benefit or loss is not legitimately due.

The offences will apply both within Australia and overseas where constitutional power permits.

Serious drug offences

The amendments in schedule 3 will make amendments to improve the clarity and efficacy of the serious drug offences. The amendments will do three things.

First, they will clarify the meaning of a number of terms in the definition of 'drug analogue' to ensure that it operates more effectively. The drug analogue clause ensures that the serious drug offences apply to substances that are structurally similar to listed controlled and border controlled drugs.

Secondly, they will clarify an ambiguity in the definition of 'drug analogue' about the circumstances in which a substance listed as a controlled drug can be a border controlled drug. Under these changes, a substance may be a drug analogue of a listed controlled drug, even if the substance is already listed as a border controlled drug (and vice versa).

Finally, the amendments in schedule 3 will clarify that a process is 'manufacturing' where it converts a substance from one form into another. This will ensure that manufacturing processes which change the state or physical form of a substance, but which do not create a new substance, are caught within the various manufacturing offences in division 305 and other associated offences.

These amendments continue to deliver on the government's commitment to tackle serious and organised crime, including serious drug offending. The amendments will make sure that the serious drug offences in the Criminal Code operate effectively and without unnecessary technicalities. They build on the recent amendments to the serious drug offences contained in the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Powers, Offences and Other Measures) Act 2015 to improve our law enforcement and prosecution agencies' ability to disrupt the supply of illicit drugs.

Stronger, clearer and more effective legal frameworks to deal with illicit drugs are an important part of reducing Australia's growing addiction to drugs like ice. These drugs are mind-eating, personality-distorting and life-ending and their supply must be stopped.
Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing

Schedule 4 of the bill will make several amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Act to remove operational constraints that have been identified by a number of law enforcement agencies.

The existing definition of 'foreign law enforcement agency' in the act will be amended to specifically include INTERPOL and Europol, and a new regulation-making power will be inserted to enable additional international bodies to be prescribed in future. This amendment will beneficially affect Australia's relations with foreign countries and international organisations by enabling timely and effective cooperation in the investigation of transnational and multi-jurisdictional crime.

Amendments will also be made to the secrecy and access provisions of the AML/CTF Act to clarify that information or documents obtained under section 49 of that act can be disclosed onward, including for investigative purposes such as applications for warrants. This will support the proper performance of investigative and law enforcement functions by providing greater legislative certainty.

Schedule 4 will also list the Independent Commission Against Corruption of South Australia as a designated agency under the AML/CTF Act. This will enable ICAC SA to access AUSTRAC financial intelligence information, which will enhance its capacity to investigate corruption in public administration and bring it into line with the abilities of similar statutory bodies in all other states.

AusCheck—Information sharing

Schedule 5 of the bill amends the AusCheck Act to enable AusCheck to directly share information with state and territory authorities and with a broader range of Commonwealth authorities.

Currently, AusCheck scheme personal information can only be shared with the Commonwealth and relevant Commonwealth authorities with functions relating to law enforcement or national security. This prevents AusCheck from sharing relevant information with other Commonwealth agencies that are not traditionally considered to be law enforcement agencies, but which may require access to the information for law enforcement or national security purposes.

AusCheck is also unable to directly share information with relevant state and territory agencies. These restrictions are at odds with the significant role these agencies play in law enforcement and national security, and the collaborative approach necessary to combat the cross-border threats of terrorism and serious crime. This causes particular challenges for agencies that undertake law enforcement and national security operations at secure airport and maritime port areas, such as state- and territory-led police taskforces targeting drug importation.

Information sharing will continue to be limited to the performance of functions relating to law enforcement or national security, and be subjected to strong safeguards. Safeguards include criminal offences in section 15 of the AusCheck Act for the unlawful disclosure of AusCheck scheme personal information, the use of privacy notices to inform applicants and acquire consent for the collection and disclosure of their personal information, memoranda of understanding with relevant authorities and the AusCheck guidelines for information sharing.
Conclusion

This bill will enhance the ability of Commonwealth agencies to investigate and prosecute criminal offences, and seeks to ensure that the Commonwealth can effectively target and confiscate proceeds of crime. It will better address law enforcement issues and national security risks through improved information sharing, and it will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of various laws relating to the administration of criminal justice.

I therefore commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr FRYDENBERG: by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent further statements on the terrorist attacks around the world being made during government business time today and on future days until completed, with each member speaking for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

BILLS

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (09:22): I rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. The government has circulated amendments this morning. I understand that the government will move these amendments later on in the debate. Everyone should remember that it has been 18 months since the 2014 budget was handed down. For the last 18 months, we have heard each and every member of the Liberal-National government try to con Australian families that cuts to family payments are both, according to the Liberals, 'fair and necessary'. For 18 months Labor has stood side by side with families in the face of some of the harshest cuts to families ever attempted by any Australian government.

Last year, the first Liberal Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, tried to cut $8.5 billion from family tax benefits. Those $8.5 billion of cuts would have made it so much harder for families to receive the support they need to help with the costs of raising their children. Labor fought these cuts and we won. This year, in what the Liberals touted as a compromise, they tried again—this time with cuts of $4.8 billion. Eighteen months and two prime ministers later, it now appears that Labor have again defeated the harshest of these cuts. Today, families will be protected once again. Because of Labor's campaigning, because we have stood side by side with families, we have defeated these cuts. Single-parent families and grandparent carers have been spared and 1.6 million families and three million children have been spared the cuts that these two prime ministers, Mr Abbott and Mr Turnbull, wanted to impose on Australian families. They have been spared from cuts to their family tax benefit supplement and from cuts to family tax benefit part B.
Today the government are admitting they cannot get these cuts through the parliament. Australian families now want to know what this Liberal government are going to do next. Are they still committed to these cuts or will they be abandoning them forever? It is time today for this Turnbull government to come clean with Australian families. Next week is the last week of the parliament before Christmas. It is time for this Prime Minister to give families the certainty that they will not be faced with another round of cuts in 2016.

If these cuts had gone through, next year a single parent with two teenage children would have lost $4,700 or $97 a week when the impact of the cuts to family payments and the schoolkids bonus were combined—$1,806 in family tax benefit A and B end-of-year supplements, $1,712 as a result of the abolition of the schoolkids bonus and $1,785 in family tax benefit part B as the base payment was to be reduced to $1,000 a year. They would have gained just $525 from their fortnightly increase to family tax benefit part A, but this would have still meant that a family like this would have ended up a total of $4,700 a year worse off. That is what this Liberal government wanted to impose on families in this country.

Yet this Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull, said in an interview with The Guardian just last month after this legislation was introduced into the parliament:

Fairer is what is it all about. Fairness has got to be the key priority …

Mr Turnbull, in this legislation, wants to see single-parent families $4,700 a year worse off, yet this Prime Minister says fairness will be the key priority. On the Prime Minister's own criteria, his proposed changes to family tax benefits fail the fairness test.

Labor will not let these vulnerable families be ripped off by yet another Liberal Prime Minister's cuts. We understand just how damaging these cuts would be to Australian families. If the government is determined to go ahead with any of these cuts, it would mean 1.5 million families would lose their family tax benefit part A supplement. That is a cut of $725 a year for every single child. Around 500,000 of these families are on family incomes of less than $50,000 a year. There are 500,000 of these families and yet this government wants to slash their family tax benefits. Also, 1.3 million families would lose their family tax benefit part B supplement. That would be a cut of $354 a year per family. Single-parent families would lose both. In total, more than 1.6 million families would be left worse off. Three million children are set to lose the support their parents need. Is this what the Prime Minister meant when he said that fairness means the burden should be borne by those most able to pay? Is that what he meant?

These cuts would hurt families. They would hurt families just like the cuts to the government's paid parental leave scheme will. They would hurt families just like the cuts to the income support bonus will and just like the harsh cuts to young people will. The government wants to leave young people with nothing to live on for a month. These are harsh cuts that would hurt families.

Of course, the minister knows this. He knows that these cuts would hurt. That is why he has repeatedly refused to release the modelling that the department has done—they have admitted they have done it—on how these cuts would hurt families. Just yesterday the department again refused to release the modelling they had done on these cuts. Why is the government refusing to allow this modelling to be released? They know that it would show the impact on families of these cuts and that it would be devastating.
The minister wants to hide all that from the Australian people. What sort of government introduces these savage cuts and then refuses to tell the Australian people how much they will be hurt? It is this government—and it is not the first time that they have done it. Remember the 2014 budget, when the former Treasurer, now gone from this place—

Ms MACKLIN: The member for Kooyong thinks the previous member for North Sydney was a good man. He was the person who wanted to take $8½ billion dollars out of the pockets of families, which, of course, the member for Kooyong voted for.

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Ms MACKLIN: Is that right? The member for Kooyong tries to say—

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Ms MACKLIN: As the government has now removed all of these cuts from the budget, the government has doubled the deficit. So we will not hear any more rubbish from the member for Kooyong!

The government says that we should cooperate with them more when these changes are in the interest of the nation. We have done that in some cases. Labor has already supported around $2 billion in changes to family tax benefits, so any argument that we are not up for sensible conversations about fair reforms is wrong. But we will not compromise on fairness. The substance of the measures in the original bill that we are debating today remains fundamentally unfair. Let me detail the particular measures contained in this 2015 budget bill.

There will be a cessation of the family tax benefit part B for dual parent families when their youngest child turns 13. There will be 136,000 single parents with children aged 13 to 16 who will have their family tax benefit part B reduced to $1,000 in 2016—a cut of around $1,700. Single parents with children aged over 16 will have their family tax benefit B cut entirely in 2016—a cut of more than $3,100. This cut will be a massive disincentive for young people to stay in school and will make life harder for those who do stay at school.

There will be a phase-out of family tax benefit A and B end-of-year supplements over two years. The family tax benefit A supplement will be reduced to $602.25 from 1 July 2016 and then to $302.95 from 1 July 2017—and abolished entirely from 1 July 2018. The family tax benefit B supplement will be reduced to $302.95 from 1 July 2016 and $153.30 from 1 July 2017 and abolished entirely from 1 July 2018. These measures are actually harsher than those in the 2014 budget.

There will also be an increase in the standard child rate of family tax benefit part A of $10 a fortnight. It is important to note that around 300,000 families will not receive this increase but will be affected by the cuts. A new rate of family tax benefit part B will be introduced for families with children under one. This last item is quite extraordinary. This decision was made as part of a bribe to the Nationals to shore up the new Prime Minister's leadership. So much for simplifying the family payments system! Do you remember the now Treasurer heralding the McClure welfare review as a blueprint for simplifying the welfare system? This legislation actually creates a new layer of family tax benefit part B and, as such, adds new complexity to the welfare system.
The government cannot say that we need to make big cuts to family tax benefits, while at the same time increasing spending to try to buy off the Nationals. The country cannot afford to be spending money on Liberal-National Party deals. Labor will not support the government’s proposed increase to family tax benefit part B for families with children under one, and that will save the budget around $380 million.

We should not forget where these cuts to family tax benefits started. It was in that 2014 budget of broken promises. On budget night 2014 we heard how this Liberal government wanted to make families $6,000 a year worse off. We heard the then Treasurer lecture us all about lifters and leaners. Labor immediately came out and said we would oppose these cuts to families—cuts that would have seen a single income family on $65,000 a year around $6,000 a year worse off. That is what every one of them over there voted for.

These cuts included the plan to remove family tax benefit part B from families when their youngest child turned six and the abolition of the schoolkids bonus—a cut of $842 for every secondary school student and a cut of $422 for every primary school student. The 2014 budget also included freezes to family tax benefit rates and thresholds. It was Labor that stood in the way of these cuts. Unfortunately, we were not able to stop the cuts to the schoolkids bonus, but we are very pleased to have secured a win for families by forcing the government to back down on the freeze to family tax benefit rates and thresholds.

The government has admitted they dropped these changes not because they thought it was the right thing to do but because they could not get them through the Senate. They did not drop these out of the goodness of their heart; they dropped them because of the political pressure exerted by the Australian Labor Party and the crossbench in the Senate. Because of this incompetent Liberal government that is completely bereft of any understanding of fairness, these new measures are no better; as I have just mentioned, some of them, in fact, are harsher.

I want to share some stories from individual people who have contacted me detailing how these cuts would affect them. Let us hear from the people who will be hurt by these cuts if the government decides to proceed: grandparent carers, single-parent families, low- and middle-income families struggling to make ends meet—people like Marleen Lamb. Marleen is a grandparent carer in the electorate of Petrie who has cared for her 12-year-old granddaughter since she was four years old, due to tragic circumstances. Marleen wrote to me asking:

How the hell will I manage if I lose $100 a fortnight because of this government’s cuts to Family Tax Benefit Part B?

Of course, this government's heartless response to the concerns that Labor raised about grandparent carers was, 'Go out and get a job.' It said these cuts are designed to encourage workforce participation.

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Ms MACKLIN: That was the message. That was the attitude of this Liberal government, the out-of-touch Minister for Social Services and the out-of-touch Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia at the table. We had the Minister for Social Services train wreck interview on Sky, when he was asked whether a grandparent carer with a 15-year-old child in their care would be $2,500 a year worse off. The minister said:

Well, that depends on their capacity to access childcare and re-enter the workforce.
Labor questioned the minister about this answer the following day in question time, and he gave a similar response. Within minutes of the Minister for Social Services putting forward this argument in the House of Representatives, Rita Beckman, a grandparent from Queensland, emailed me saying:

I am a single aged pensioner and I am the legal guardian for my 10 year old granddaughter. She has been in my care since she was 5 years of age. I am now 75 years old and am slowly being crippled with osteoarthritis and have problems with my balance.

I notice that the minister at the table is now studiously avoiding the point. Rita went on:

I will be 78 when she turns 13 and 81 when she turns 16. I do not wish to seem complaining as I love having this little girl in my life but for goodness sake how can anyone possibly think an employer would take me on. The arrogance of the Minister for Social Services is breathtaking.

Does the Minister for Social Services still think that grandparent carers should just go out and find a job?

What does the Minister to say to someone like Emma Marks, a single parent from the electorate of Flinders in Victoria? Emma works three days a week at a local hardware store. She writes:

I am a single mum and my daughter's father is, unfortunately, one of the many men who make up our tragic suicide statistics—I certainly never chose to be a single parent.

Emma fears that when her child turns 13 and she loses access to family tax benefit part B she will be pushed to the brink of homelessness. She writes:

Please do not take away from the most vulnerable members of our society what little we have that helps us to keep our heads above water.

These are real people—Marleen, Rita and Emma—real families. They are not numbers. They are not talking points. They are real people for whom these cuts would have very real consequences—real consequences for their incomes, real consequences for their standard of living and, most importantly, real consequences for the wellbeing of their children.

These new cuts to family tax benefits have rightly been condemned by key stakeholder groups such as the Australian Council of Social Service, The Parenthood and Catholic Social Services Australia. In assessing the package, Cassandra Goldie from ACOSS stated:

On our numbers a low income single parent family with 2 children will take a hit of more than $60 per week … once their youngest child turns 13, due to the reduction in Part B and the withdrawal of end of year supplements. We cannot support this.

Jo Briskey from The Parenthood has also condemned the new families package stating:

It is simply unfair of the Turnbull government to expect families who depend on FTB payments to be the ones to front the cash to fund the changes so desperately needed in childcare.

And it's clear that sole-parent families will be the ones hardest hit …

Marcelle Mogg from Catholic Social Services Australia stated:

It is not in the interests of Australian families or the Australian economy to expect low income families to do the heavy lifting when it comes to economic reform.

But that, sadly, is exactly what this Liberal government wants to do—forcing low and middle income families to do the heavy lifting. It is not right, and it is certainly not fair.
Of course, Labor welcomes the government's decision today to remove the harshest of these measures from the legislation, and, when the minister moves these amendments, we will not stand in the way of the amended bill passing the House. But the government needs to make very clear what its intention is. Is it going to proceed with these cuts in a new bill or will it abandon them? It must make this clear today. Let families go into the Christmas period knowing that they will not have to spend 2016 with the same shadow hanging over them as they have had in 2014 and 2015. It is time for the government to drop these cuts, take them out of the budget and rule out further attacks on low-income families.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (09:44): It is always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak in support of the wonderful families in our community of Forde. Just to touch on a couple of points that the shadow minister raised in her contribution to this debate, it is my understanding that the supplements were introduced as a measure to offset fluctuations in pay or reporting of pay cycles so that, at the end of each financial year, families and individuals did not finish up with a large debt, because of overpayment et cetera. As I have said previously in this House, those on that side are very good at rewriting history or gilding the lily in debates. Let us not be under the illusion that the supplements are there as a foundational principle of the family tax benefit regime. They were put in place for a very specific purpose.

The shadow minister also talked about having done deals, or legislation being done for deals, between the Liberal Party and the National Party, as part of the coalition, and the impact that has on the country. I would like to remind the shadow minister, in her absence, that in 2010 it was apparently okay for the country for Labor and Greens to do deals. They were far more disastrous not only for the country as a whole but also for families across Australia, when they were in government. That is a bit of hypocrisy, but we are getting used to that from those on the other side.

On the notion of fairness, the shadow minister seems to think it is fair for future generations to pay future bills when the socialists on that side of the chamber ran out of other people's money to pay the bills and let future generations pay the bills for their profligate spending today. On those couple of points, I wonder if it is worth those on the other side reflecting on.

It is important that we as a government do listen and do take the time to understand what the issues are that we are facing, and have a look and work through what we can reasonably put through this House. In that regard, I stand today in support of the Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This legislation will reform and restructure the family tax benefit to give families a greater capacity to fund child care for their children, which is critically important. In the six years that those opposite were in government we saw childcare fees skyrocket by some 53 per cent, hitting the family hip pockets where it hurts most.

In contrast, the coalition government is investing an additional $3.5 billion through the Jobs for Families package, which on average will leave more than 1.2 million families $30 a week better off. Unlike the previous Labor government, the coalition wants to help families find affordable child care. This is an incredibly important measure that will help parents return to the workforce.

The Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 includes a number of important measures, particularly around family tax benefit B, which is the primary one that will be
going through when the minister tables the amendments later on. In my electorate of Forde, there are currently some 15,500 families who receive family tax benefit A parent payment for a child. These families are part of the 1.2 million families in Australia who will continue to receive the support they need for their families.

In today's society, more affordable, flexible and accessible childcare system is essential, as we see many families making the decision for both parents to work. This government understands the importance of providing a quality childcare system, and I am proud to be able to tell families in the electorate of Forde that we are taking care of their childcare needs.

The overall effect of this legislation is to continue providing day-to-day financial assistance to low income families, and importantly provide families with more choice—more choice for those who wish to return to work and more choice for parents who stay at home with their children. Being a parent is tough. It is an amazing experience to raise a child, and having a good support network around you can make a tremendous difference. Our government is committed to being part of that support network by ensuring the family and childcare systems remain sustainable and effective in the long term, to provide for future generations.

In my electorate of Forde, 13,000 families receive a family tax benefit B payment. From 1 July 2016, the family tax benefit B will be reformed, so couple families eligible for family tax benefit B will receive the payment while their youngest child is aged under 13 years—increasing from the previous budget measure, which reduced the eligibility to age six. Single parent families and grandparent carers will not be disadvantaged from these changes.

These new family tax benefit measures will not only help fund the new Child Care Subsidy and measures to improve the cost, accessibility and flexibility of child care but it will also ensure low income families on a maximum rate of family tax benefit A will continue to receive assistance. Most families will continue to receive family tax benefit B until their youngest child enters secondary schooling.

While Labor criticises these important reforms, we will be using these savings to fund the Jobs for Families package. The government will continue to assist families in raising their children, over the long-term. Our childcare reforms encourage greater workforce participation, including those 165,000 families who have told us that they want to go back to work or do more hours but are restricted by the current childcare arrangements. We are providing better targeted support to those who need it most, so that we can begin some of the budget repair work on the mess left behind by Labor.

The measures in the Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will provide vital support to Australian families who need it most, while creating important savings that will fund much needed improvements to our childcare system. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (09:52): I must confess I have a bit of a soft spot for the member for Forde, but that has to be the weirdest speech he has ever made since coming into this place.

I rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. The member for Forde has just confirmed that the cuts remain, that the cuts continue. Despite the fact that those opposite pulled most of the egregious stuff out of this legislation and they will do it by amendment, the member for Forde has just confirmed the cuts are not dead, buried and cremated; they are actually there. When
MYEFO is handed down in the next few weeks we will see whether the cuts will be in their budget. Of course, they will be, because they have not ruled out bringing legislation back into this chamber containing cuts, making it tougher on families to survive financially.

Today we heard the member for Forde commending the government, saying they are doing a trade-off, with what seems to be a bit of a mythical package on childcare measures. We have not seen it yet. There is a false dichotomy. He is talking about childcare arrangements for teenagers, for 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds. In my electorate of Blair, in South-East Queensland, I do not normally see 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds in childcare facilities at Leichhardt One Mile Community Centre, or at Ipswich Family Day Care in One Mile. It is a false dichotomy, a false trade-off that these people are perpetrating and perpetuating in their allegations.

The member for Forde said, 'We want to give people more choice.' How are they giving them more choice by cutting family payments to make it tougher on them? He says, 'We know that being a parent is tough.' Well, the government wants to make it tougher and harder for families. He talks about a childcare subsidy that they are going to bring in. What additional childcare subsidy is he talking about? I am not aware that they have actually released any measure. We see it all the time, with the Minister for Social Services constantly talking about the childcare package they are bringing in. Well, release it. Show us it. Give us the details about it. How are they going to help families? The legislation before the chamber today is not about helping families.

I remind those opposite and people who may be listening that on 5 November the now Prime Minister went to the Melbourne Institute's Economic and Social Outlook Conference in the Victorian capital. The conference is billed as Australia's premier public policy event, and it certainly attracts some pretty big names. It is a big stage, and the Prime Minister was there to talk up his government's plans. As usual, he used many fine words. I think he used the word 'agility' three times and 'innovation' nine times, saying 'it will encourage us to be innovative'. He cited both the 'culture of agility' and the 'culture of innovation', risking a culture war between his two favourite words. He even slipped in a three-word slogan occasionally, channeling the member for Warringah—'work, save and invest'—just for old time's sake. But when he talked about reform, he talked about fairness. He said:

Fairness is absolutely critical. Any package of reforms which is not and is not seen as fair will not and cannot achieve the public support without which it simply will not succeed.

The legislation before the chamber will not succeed. Why? Because, like the over $8 billion in cuts to families in the 2014 budget, Labor has stood steadfast against cuts which will hurt families. We stood against those cuts in the 2014 budget, we stood against those cuts in the 2015 budget and we stand against the cuts in this legislation before the chamber today.

The only reason the coalition are bringing in amending legislation to temporarily withdraw—we know they are going to bring it back; the member for Forde said so today—the egregious and outrageous aspect of the cuts is that Labor stood firm, with the support of the crossbenchers. In the last two years, we have constantly stood up for families while this government has sacrificed a Prime Minister and a Treasurer on the altar of their attack on families. The former member for North Sydney and the Prime Minister would still be here today, I dare say, but for the attack on pensioners, on grandparents who are looking after their grandchildren and doing noble and wonderful work and on families who are struggling. But
this government continues to perpetrate and perpetuate the myth that they have this childcare package—which we have not seen—which will help families.

I note also that the crazy brave member for Forde is the only marginal seat member speaking on this legislation for the government. Why haven't they got a long list of people? They know very well that this legislation is all about an attack on families. Why aren't the members for marginal seats—like Dobell, Robertson, Solomon, Petrie, Capricornia—speaking on this legislation today? They know this legislation is about an attack on families, on family income and on the capacity of families to provide for the cost of school, electricity and fresh food.

This is a government which has a tax conversation about a 15 per cent GST on fresh food and other expenses to make it hard to families. They are going to attack with a potential increased tax, which they talk about all the time. They are the ones who raise the tax conversation, not us. They are the ones who talk about it. Their backbenchers talk about it. Here today, with legislation before the chamber which they will not say they will not reintroduce, they are attacking families.

In my electorate of Blair in South-East Queensland, based on the Ipswich and Somerset region, there are 14,715 recipients of family tax benefit part A. The bill before the chamber would have seen them lose all their family tax benefit annual supplement from 2018—a $726 cut per child. That is 14,715 people in my electorate losing all of their annual supplement—$726 per child. These families in my electorate are part of more than 1.5 million families which will lose their supplement. Around 600,000 of these are single parent families—single parent families who we should be supporting, not punishing. About half a million of these families are on the maximum rate of FTB, meaning their combined family income is less than $51,000 a year. Talk about an attack on the poorest, most vulnerable and most pressured people in our community.

As at June this year there were 13,041 recipients of family tax benefit part B in the Blair electorate. This bill will see them lose all their annual FTB part B supplement from 2018, a cut of $354 per family. There are 13,041 recipients in my electorate. These are some of the 1.3 million nationally who will lose this supplement. Families rely on these annual supplements when they are stretched to meet their budgets, to pay their school costs, to repair their cars and perhaps even to go on a holiday, if they can afford it. The explanatory memorandum in relation to this bill states that abolishing these two supplements will save $4.06 billion over the forward estimates.

This is a government which says it wants to simplify the family tax system. It says social security needs to be simplified and is forever wanting to attack welfare cheats. We are in favour of people who need social security getting it and we are in favour of clamping down on those people who do not need it and do not deserve it, who rip off the system. We are in favour of that. It is unacceptable for people who pay their taxes, who contribute to the economy and the community, to be ripped off, and for the government as well to be ripped off, by people who cheat the system. We are in favour of clamping down on that. But what the government is doing here is making the whole system more complex and more difficult.

Let's talk about the 15- and 16-year-olds who the government thinks are in child care and who there will be trade-offs for. The bill will cease family tax benefit part B payments to 76,000 two-parent families when the youngest child turns 13. It is a cut of more than $3,100
each year for the families. From 2016, 136,000 single-parent families with children aged 13 to 16 will have their family tax benefit part B payments reduced from $1,700 to $1,000. This cut will affect 3,900 grandparent carers of children aged 13 to 16. In 2016, if this bill is passed, these grandparents will also have their support reduced from $1,700 to $1,000. The government will cut family tax benefit part B payments to all single parents with children aged over 16 years, and that is a cut of $3,100. The explanatory memorandum to the bill states that these changes to family tax benefit part B will save $1.35 billion over the forward estimates.

But let's have a look at other aspects of what this government is doing. There is a curious measure in this bill which is full of cuts. There is a new rate of family tax benefit part B payment to families with children under one. This will see 140,000 families with newborns receive $1,000 extra in their family tax benefit payments, at a cost of $380 million to the budget. This is the government that cried that there was a 'debt and deficit disaster' when in opposition, a government which doubled the deficit and increased the debt by over $100 billion. Here they are, saying they can afford another $380 million to the budget. Guess what that was. It was part of an arrangement put in place in less than 24 hours when the current Prime Minister turfed out the then Prime Minister, the member for Warringah. You may recall it was part of a deal he did with the National Party to change the coalition arrangements. He supposedly made the member for New England responsible for water policy, although the shadow minister here, the member for Hunter, has pointed out the oddities of those ministerial arrangements. He was also supposed to be in charge of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

The same deal, according to the National Party—a sop, a pay-off to the National Party— included a commitment from the current Prime Minister, the member for Wentworth, to take the coalition's already announced emissions trading targets to the United Nations climate change conference later this year. So he took a whole bunch of stuff that was part of the National Party's commitment and dear to their hearts and coalition policy and said: 'I'm not going to change it. I'll be the same type of Prime Minister as Mr Abbott, the member for Warringah.' So this $380 million is a sop to the National Party. As the Sydney Morning Herald reported on 16 September 2015, one unnamed National Party MP claimed that Prime Minister Turnbull had effectively 'agreed to everything'. It leaves a very bad taste in the mouth—Australians knowing that this $380 million to increase payments to families with newborns is about politics and not about policy at all. It is hypocrisy writ large.

We reject the coalition's reckless urge to spend this $380 million. Again, this demonstrates our commitment, as we have done in the last two years, to sensible savings measures. As the member for Jagajaga has pointed out, there is $2 billion there. We have also supported $20 billion in savings proposed by the government, and in the last week or so we supported another government bill that amended a range of tax laws and other laws, saving $1.4 billion. We have committed ourselves to sensible agreements and sensible arrangements when the government has put them forward. We as an opposition have agreed many times with what the government has done. In my shadow portfolio areas of Indigenous affairs and ageing, there have been many government proposals by way of legislation, guidelines and regulation that we have agreed to. We have disagreed on a number of occasions, but we will commit ourselves to sensible savings and we will stand up for families.
One thing about the Labor Party that has been quite evident in the last two years is that our standing up for families has resulted in the turfing out of a Prime Minister and the eradication of a Treasurer from this chamber with the loss of his job. That and the changes to many ministerial positions have been a result of Labor standing up for families. We know, and in their heart of hearts those opposite know, that this legislation before the chamber is all about an attack on families. They cannot claim they are a party that supports families and family values if their idea of supporting family values is to cut the financial support families need. It is a false statement, and once again it is the Labor Party that is standing up for family values and the economic security of those families, as demonstrated by the values we have shown in the last two years. Those opposite have not stood up for families. They have not stood up for the things that enable families to meet their budgets and the values that they hold dear, and they should hang their heads in shame.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:07): I rise today to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. Our social services system is unfortunately a maze of overlapping schemes and measures which all deliver taxpayer funds to eligible recipients. It is a complex and convoluted system which sadly grew out of control under the stewardship of those opposite. The social services space is one which requires a responsible and reasonable approach. Fairness is something I think we all agree is characteristic of the Australian way of life, but fairness cuts both ways. Whilst we must ensure we have a fair social security system, we must also ensure we give taxpayers a fair go when it comes to the expenditure of their hard-earned taxes.

Australia's welfare system is one of the most comprehensive, and one of the most generous, in the world with an annual expenditure of some $145 billion, or 35 per cent of our overall expenditure. Assistance to elderly Australians came at a cost to the taxpayer of $50 billion in 2012-13, assistance to people with disabilities came in at $24 billion, assistance to the unemployed and the sick was $8.5 billion and we spent some $7 billion assisting veterans and their dependents. When it comes to assistance to families, with which this bill is directly concerned, the nation spent some 27 per cent of our social welfare expenditure on those measures, which included family tax benefit, parenting payment and child-care assistance programs, at a total cost of some $35 billion. Clearly our social security system costs a significant amount of money to run. It is a reality all governments have to face up to.

Another reality is that between 2002-03 and 2012-13 social security and welfare spending grew by a whopping 43 per cent, or 3.7 per cent annually. This exceeded corresponding GDP growth of 34 per cent over the same period. Whilst there was a significant spike around 2008-09, due principally to some of the stimulus measures taken under the previous government, the trend is clear and the trend is up. Under the Rudd government's fiscal stimulus in the form of one-off payments to households, some $20 billion was expended in 2008-09 alone. In fact we saw the social welfare spend in 2008-09 double that of the previous year. What an alarming spend that was. We saw our hard-earned fiscal stockpiles delivered inefficiently and ineffectively across the board. We can all remember the $900 cheques that fuelled little more than a mini exporters' boom for whitegoods out of Asia.

We have failed to make sustainable changes to our social welfare systems and it has fallen to this government, a coalition government, to make the responsible decisions. We have allowed our social welfare system to grow faster than our economy consistently over the past
decade. The reality is this sort of growth in our social welfare spend is unsustainable, it is untenable and it is downright unfair. On top of the structural issues we face, we have seen evidence today that some $5 billion of taxpayer funds may have been rorted from our welfare system. The reality is a simpler system is far more easily monitored. The current system is too complex and too convoluted and it lends itself to rorts. Not only is it immoral for Australian citizens to abuse our welfare system but also it is unconscionable that we allow ourselves to take from our children by allowing these structural deficiencies to be maintained. If we allow social welfare spending to outstrip economic performance we are committing a grave injustice on our children and our grandchildren. We must live within our means. That does not mean we cut unnecessarily, nor does it mean we disproportionately hurt those in need. But we must ensure that any additional expenditure is matched by commensurate savings.

We must make our system fairer and simpler, more efficient and more effective, and ultimately more sustainable. We must remove waste and use each and every dollar more wisely and in a more targeted manner. That is why the structural reform delivered in this bill is so important. It is not the complete solution but it is part of it. It is recklessly irresponsible to continue to promise more and more welfare spending without regard for the economic realities confronting our nation, as seems to be the approach of those opposite. We should not look at our social welfare system as anything other than a system that is intended to project recipients into work.

One of the biggest frustrations of the social security system, as expressed eloquently in a report by Patrick McClure entitled *A new system for better employment and social outcomes*, is that there are far too many payments and allied supplements. Comprehensive? Yes. Complex? No. The intent of a social welfare system is fundamentally to deliver assistance to those who are in need, to maximise opportunity and to unlock the full potential of our citizenry. That is a thoroughly liberal goal and I for one am proud to pursue that agenda. Yet increasingly it has become evident that the system itself is standing in the way of better outcomes for our welfare recipients—it is thoroughly counterproductive and costly to the taxpayer. This bill seeks to go some way towards remedying this problem.

Currently there are some 20 main payment types and 53 existing supplements. There were, of course, 55 but the government has already removed the senior and low-income supplements. We must continue to assist families in raising their children over the long term because it is only through strong families and through delivering opportunity to our children that we will ultimately succeed as a nation. We must fund the necessary childcare reforms this government has designed, thus enabling and encouraging greater workforce participation and national productivity. We know that funding the child care-reforms will encourage higher workforce participation. We have seen some 165,000 families tell us that they would benefit from these reforms. It is only though a strong childcare system that we can best maximise workforce participation and strengthen families and the economy more generally. Concurrently, we must continue to simplify our social welfare system more broadly and the FTB more specifically, consistent with the recommendations of the McClure review, which highlights the unworkability of a system that maintains 20 main payment types within excess of 50 categorised supplements.

This government is making progress towards a sustainable social welfare system. This bill delivers on our ever-present commitment to the Australian taxpayer to expend their precious
taxpayer funds in the most efficient and effective manner possible. We are making the system more efficient, more effective and, most importantly, more sustainable. We cannot afford to falter in our pursuit of that goal. If our children and our grandchildren are to enjoy the quality of life that we do, then we must ensure that we live within our means. We must commit to unlocking the potential of all Australians through our generous social welfare net, which, of course, is a critical component of that aspiration.

It is true that, due to the recalcitrance of those opposite, we have had to amend this bill and strip some measures from it. That stubbornness has been the norm, disappointingly, for those opposite since I came to this place. It is a shame that they have played politics once again with our social welfare system and its sustainability. A system which has, as they know, grown uncontrollably through measures enacted by them in government.

This government, in the face of obstructionism from those opposite—including my good friend the member for Hunter, who is in the chamber this morning—remains committed to a social welfare system that is comprehensive, sustainable, effective and affordable, and this bill is part of that endeavour. This bill is one step on the road to a fiscally-responsible budget position. Another mile on that road which, sadly it would seem, the coalition government will be walking alone. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (10:17): I rise to join this debate on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. We have heard this morning that the government has removed from the family payments bill all the measures that Labor opposed. And we have heard from those opposite, and we have just heard, that this is perceived by those opposite as demonstrating that we on this side of the House are recalcitrant and stubborn—I wear both with pride in this chamber today. We have heard that we have been playing politics with the social security net—we are not playing politics; these are people's lives.

My stubbornness in the face of the changes those opposite sought to bring to the family tax benefit regime are motivated by care for my community and the 21,000 families in my community who were set to lose up to just under $5,000 a year and for what that would mean for our local economy with the cumulative impacts as that came through. So, far from being obstructionist, we on this side have stood up for our communities and stood up for families across this country. We stood up for families in Lalor, in Chifley and in Holt, and we stood up for families across the Hunter, and we are proud to have done so.

The only measure that now remains in this bill is one that Labor does not oppose. Today this government has admitted that, because of our hard work, they cannot get these changes through the parliament. We have stood shoulder to shoulder with families since the night of 2014 budget to tell this government and to tell those opposite, as clearly as we could, that fairness matters in this country, that trickle-down economics will not bring us prosperity, and that changing the way this country operates, increasing inequity, will not bring us the better future we all want.

I have said many times in this chamber that when it comes to these changes the community in the electorate of Lalor would be the hardest hit. I have said many times that it is not because people in Lalor are not working—these changes were going to hit hard-working families on combined incomes of $56,000 a year. These changes were not aimed specifically at people to get them to work. Most of the people this change would have impacted on in
Lalor are working families. I think getting this straight in the chamber and through the media has been some of the best work that my colleagues and I have done since the 2014 budget.

The first Liberal Prime Minister tried to cut $8.5 billion from family tax benefits in the 2014 budget. Then, this year, in what they touted as a compromise, they tried again, this time with $4.8 billion worth of cuts, and they tied it to changes to early child care and education.

Of course, we all know that the word education has gone missing in all of the rhetoric on that side around any kind of child care arrangements, but on this side it is still important because in electorates like mine it is the education element of early child care and education that is so critical to future prosperity. It is early education and people's access to it that is going to make a significant difference in electorates like mine. Tying the two together—a favourite trick that we have seen several times—was a way of obfuscating what they were actually trying to do, obfuscating the impact it was actually going to have on families and on economies across the country. The tens of thousands of people in my electorate that were set to lose thousands of dollars did not see this second tranche as a compromise. They saw it as a continuation of the first attack. They saw it for what it was.

Labor fought those cuts, and today we can stand here proudly and say that we have protected families across this country. Because of our campaigning, because we worked side-by-side with those families, those cuts are now not before this chamber. Eighteen months and two prime ministers later, it appears that Labor have defeated the harshest of these cuts.

As I said, I represent hardworking, low-income families, and the up to $4,700 less that there could have been in the budgets of 21,000 families in my electorate would have had an extraordinary impact. That is a third of the families that live in a community of over 200,000—a third of the families. We on this side of the chamber understand that those measures were an attack on families across mainstream Australia. They were wrapped in rhetoric about fairness, and we have asked a thousand times: fair to whom? To those in the most vulnerable position?

Those opposite continue to talk about fairness. I heard it today on my way to the chamber. Being 'fair to taxpayers' is how it is phrased. In this country we have a goods and services tax: we are all taxpayers. Everyone is making a contribution to the taxation system in this country. I find it offensive when people try and separate those who are receiving support while they are raising their families and working hard, and those who are taxpayers. We are all taxpayers.

Today we are talking about a win for Labor, really, in getting this legislation amended. Single-parent families and grandparent carers have been spared. Across the country, 1.6 million families and three million children have been spared. They have been spared from cuts to their family tax benefit supplements, cuts to family tax benefit B. Unfortunately, I cannot say that everything has been saved, because the schoolkids bonus cuts are still there, waiting to come into the system, and we still do not know what is happening around early childhood education and care. We still do not have clarity about what this government intends to do in that space. But the schoolkids bonus will go in the middle of next year, and this will be felt by families with children heading to school in 2017. For Lalor, the total amount of schoolkids bonus paid to local families is $17 million. That is $17 million that will not be spent in our local economy. So there are still hard things for people to face. This will still hit families hard.
So, while we are discussing this legislation, I call on Prime Minister Turnbull and the Minister for Social Services to come clean on what their future plans for families are. Are you still committed to those measures? It is not too late. You could still reverse that, continue with the schoolkids bonus. You could still do that. And will this be the end of it, or will we see these come back in another budget? If the government is committed to these cuts further down the track, then families deserve to know. It is time this government came clean with families—completely clean—on what its intentions are.

We have been having this conversation over the last few weeks in this place. In my electorate, the conversation we have been having is about our local economy. We have been in a two-year conversation about the measures in the 2014 budget and whether they are gone or whether they will come back in another form. We are still waiting for the failed GP tax to come through in the indexation freeze; we are still watching that work its way through the system and measuring the impact that that is having on our local economy.

The rhetoric that this government uses around 'lifters' and 'leaners' is another thing that needs to be discussed in this place. I have an email with me that I received during question time a few weeks ago, after the family tax benefit cuts became clear, and I think it sums up the impact of these cuts to people. It reads:

Dear Ms Ryan
Firstly, I am a single parent of 2 teenagers 15 and 13. Secondly I study a course full time, work 2 part time jobs and also studying another course part time. I volunteer at church and struggle to make ends meet.

I rely on my family and friends to assist with driving my children around to school and various activities.

I also got caught in the last lot of activity changes by the government and in the last 3 months have applied for over 150 jobs and wasted numerous hours sitting in my job agency. I have no idea how I can fit anything else in my life, yet am easily targeted as a welfare bludger. I am baffled by how out of touch Mr Porter and the government is about single parent families.

It is highly offensive, that the government continually targets single parents as easy targets. The society assumption that single parents don't want to work and sit and watch soapies all day is continually being perpetuated by the government.

I for one would so love not to receive any money from the government, however in reality there is one of me.

My fear is that in 10-15 years I will be totally burnt out and not able to do anything at all. (I might add I have private health insurance). What good will I be to society then? Ask it is my children are already saying they hardly see me, the guilt I feel leaving them home alone while I work is hard, but what other options I have. With school fees at a public school costing over $1k each and the government taking away the school kids bonus and now trying to take another $2.5k a year off me. The future is bleak.

I say today to the person who sent me that email that I proudly stand here as a member of an effective opposition holding this government to account. I proudly stand here as a member of an effective opposition, led in the area of families and social services by the member for Jagajaga. I am proud to stand here and thank her for her email because it is emails like this that make it easy to get up every day and do what needs to be done in this job—to come into this chamber and defend families across this country. It is emails like this that remind everyone in this chamber who it is we are talking about. These are not numbers. This is not
about playing politics. This is about people's lives. It is really important that those opposite come to understand the nature and shape of electorates like mine. They are the epitome of mainstream Australia: families working hard every day to raise their children. The family tax benefits are about supporting those families to ensure that they can get the things they need while they raise their children. It is incumbent on every member of this place to understand that, when they sit in committee hearings and look at numbers, at the end of those numbers are families—people working hard every day to ensure a future for their children. It is about families who are looking to us to provide the levers that are going to ensure that their children get the education they need, the skills they need and the agility of mind they need. It is incumbent on us in this place to be agile of mind, but it is also incumbent upon us to be empathetic and to seek to understand how people on the ground live their lives.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (10:31): I, too, rise today to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. It is marvellous how you can get a debate in this place when everyone is actually agreeing on a bill. Anyway, that is the nature of what happens here. I have been listening to some of the contributions from members of the opposition this morning. I was in my office, tolerating the member for Blair's contribution in the background. He was suggesting that the members of the National Party should have no influence on what policy comes into this place and that anything that is of benefit to the people that they represent is somehow a sop to the parliament. I might just remind the member for Blair that the 'scandalous indulgences' that we agreed upon, with the change of Prime Minister, were such shocking things as a commitment to help students get tertiary education, a railway line from Melbourne to Brisbane, more funds for parents who want to stay at home with their children in their first year of life and a telecommunications fund so that people actually had a phone that worked—all those scandalous things that those in the National Party seem to think the Australian people have the hide to actually expect that they should have and which the electorates that they represent take for granted. So I have had about enough of the lectures from the Labor Party on empathy and fairness this morning.

I admire the member for Lalor's contribution and her commitment to the people in her electorate, but we should not forget the underlying reason that this legislation was brought in in the first place—and, quite frankly, a lot of the original changes in it were taken out, and, today, we have the proposed legislation that both sides of the House agree on. It was not so that the coalition could be complete and utter mongrels and create harm, pestilence and unwellness for people in Australia. It was all about conserving our future. The member for Lalor gave a good example of a young mum with two kids and the importance of the schoolkids bonus. But it is important to note that the schoolkids bonus is money that is borrowed from overseas. We are borrowing money to pay the interest on last year's schoolkids bonus and the one from the year before. We are still paying that off and the interest—and the $900 cash handouts that Kevin Rudd put out willy-nilly. One of the RSL clubs in my town had a $50,000 bonus put through the pokies that week. All those things are on borrowed money. If we had money in the bank, we could afford to be more generous to the Australian people. But this is a time in our history where we need to reset our country so that we are sustainable. The greatest disservice we could do to those two boys that the member for Lalor spoke about would be to impact on their future so that, as adults, they were still paying for the programs that we put in place and that they had no say in. We need to come back to a
point where we are sustainable. You could mount an argument that nearly every dollar spent by the government is worthwhile, but we never hear from the Labor Party how they are ever going to pay for anything. It is the magic pudding that seems to keep on giving that they can afford to be so generous with. But we need to make some adjustments, and we are now at a point where I think nearly half of our population are actually net noncontributors—that is, on payments from the government or welfare payments.

This bill is one of the first steps towards that sustainability and what we have an obligation to do. My electorate of Parkes has one of the lowest per capita incomes of all the electorates in Australia. No-one knows about the impacts on low-income families more than I do, but what we need to do is have a vibrant economy so that when young people like those which the member for Lalor was talking about leave school there is a worthwhile job for them to go to. This is so that when their parents need care in years to come, when the baby boomers need care, we have the strength in our economy to handle the challenges that are coming our way.

The government has proposed amendments to this bill to remove measures that do not have Labor support, and we have just talked about that. The government wants to help families find affordable child care, and this bill goes towards helping to find the funds for that. I will not go over what other speakers have said, but one of the programs that the government is supporting through these changes is the Nanny Pilot Program. I have heard the mockery from members of the opposition about this program, but this is a very well-received program. There is a lot of interest in this program in my part of the world. A lot of people who work in occupations that are not regular nine-to-five jobs—police officers, healthcare workers, aged care workers and abattoir workers; people like that who work irregular shifts—are looking for an opportunity to find care for their children that fits in with their work programs. This measure would help them overcome the difficulties they have now. The other group of people who are also excited about the nanny pilot are those who live out of town and are concerned that in many cases their children are spending up to 100 kilometres a day in a baby seat. Mostly, the mother is driving them to and from a day care centre in a country town. The parent then goes to work and then they all drive home. Not only is there an inherent danger in doing that on a daily basis; it is incredibly wearing on children to be involved in that amount of travelling. For people who live and work in more isolated areas to have access to child care that fits their needs is a very welcome step.

I do support this bill. I will not be made to feel guilty for the decisions that I make in this place by those sitting on the opposition benches. This is not a job that I come to where no tough decisions are made. This is a job that comes with great responsibility. This is a job that comes with an eye to the future. Every parent wants to have a country that is a better place for their children to grow up in than what they had. As a baby boomer, I am a member of the most privileged generation that Australia has ever seen, and I want to make sure that my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have an opportunity to have the same things in life that my generation has been able to take for granted. Unless we take stock of where we are going with our economy and make some tough decisions now, we will look like the countries that some of our European friends have at the moment, with some of the shocking difficulties they are facing because tough decisions and correct and courageous decisions were not taken when they needed to be taken. I support this bill.
Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (10:41): In following the contribution made by member for Parkes on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015, I have some very interesting observations to make. I think they will give an insight into the reason why every time the Turnbull-Abbott government want to make a saving they attack the most vulnerable. They look to the social security system to make savings, or they look to the health system to make savings. What they do is target those people who they think are the most vulnerable. One of the comments made by the member for Parkes that I found highly, highly offensive gave me an insight into the way he thinks about this issue. He talked about the time when people in his electorate received the $900 payment during the financial crisis. He said that poker machine revenue rose. This shows that he believes people who receive family tax benefits or who are pensioners just squander and waste the money that they receive. He does not get it. He just does not get the fact that people rely on their family tax benefit and the support that they receive through Centrelink to be able to live a decent life.

He said that he wants his children and grandchildren to be able to enjoy the same lifestyle that he has enjoyed. I do not think it would be a shock to say that any member in this House knows that they will—they absolutely will, because he comes from an advantaged, privileged background. Similarly, my children will have had the benefit of a good education and support, and they will be able to look towards a very comfortable future. But there is a role for government to provide support for those families who look to government to provide them with support. That is what I find so disappointing. Every time when those on the other side want to make savings, they attack the most vulnerable. They do nothing about the issue of high-end superannuation or any other areas. They could have asked people who are a little better off to make some contribution to the savings.

After that, I would like to congratulate the government on adopting the amendments that they have here today. They are sensible changes. That was the position that Labor took at the time that this bill was introduced into parliament. It has taken the government some time to realise that they will not have the support to get these draconian changes through the parliament. They do not for one minute think that these are draconian changes, but in reality they are changes that really would have an enormous impact on families.

In the Shortland electorate, I have worked closely with a number of grandparent carers. They tell me their stories. I go along to grandparent groups. A grandparent group was being funded and provided support for grandparents who care for their grandchildren—usually, the children were quite traumatised—but, unfortunately, the Abbott-Turnbull government took away the funding for grandparents in these groups. Thanks to local churches and the Samaritans, the group is still going, but they are not properly funded. These grandparent groups struggle from day to day. They do not have enough information and they rely on any assistance they can get from Centrelink, but those on the other side of this House want to make it harder for those grandparents. Those on the other side of this House want to make it harder for single parents. Those on the other side of this House just do not understand. They do not understand how hard it is for people. They do not understand how people rely so very much on their family tax benefit.

The Senate conducted an inquiry into this matter and, overwhelmingly, senators heard how important this is to families. Even The Australian newspaper, which tends to be quite
supportive of government policies, highlighted the fact that there would be almost 140,000 single parents and 76,000 couples who would lose their family tax benefit part A. We on this side of the parliament are supportive of couples ceasing to receive family tax benefit part B when their children reach 13 years of age. That is one aspect of this bill that we are supporting. What the government are seeking to inflict on families is unconscionable.

The Sydney Morning Herald sent a little message out on 11 November that the government were looking at breaking up the family tax benefit legislation so they could get some of it through parliament. The opposition and the crossbench knew how unfair this legislation was and we were originally opposed to it. They decided that they would split the bill up and that is why we are supporting the changes today. In saying that, we have to look at the motivation of this bill. The government are splitting it up to get some of the savings through parliament. What guarantee is there that these draconian measures will not be brought back to this parliament in another form? The government will be working to try to get support for those changes and the government will get them through. They are changes that will hurt Australian families, they are changes that will hurt single parents and they are changes that are totally unacceptable. The changes that we support would save the budget $1.4 billion over four years.

Once again, I highlight the fact that this government only ever looks for changes in the areas of social security—areas that are going to hurt pensioners, families and carers. They look at supporting those people as a budget burden rather than looking at it as an obligation and a role that government plays. There is an expectation that, when somebody is doing it a little bit harder, they can look to government for support. If somebody has a disability, they look to government for support. When somebody has children, we support the family during the time the children are growing up. The reason we support families is that we know that, if families have the financial resources to enable their children to attend school, get a good education and be properly cared for, Australia as a nation will benefit into the future. It is not about handouts; it is about ensuring that, as a country, we have a sound future. If we have families, single parents and grandparents looking after children, we need to make sure that they have the resources to deliver what I was just talking about. Their children will be able to go to school and will be able to learn; they will not go without and live in poverty. The children will be able to get the education that they need and then be real assets to Australia.

As I said, we are supporting the change to the family tax benefit part B. That will save $1.4 billion over four years. Now I ask the government if they can go back and see if they can come up with some savings by looking at the high end in superannuation. It is not only The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian or The Canberra Times that have highlighted the unfairness of this. ACOSs has described the bill that has been amended as unfair and it has called for packages that include an indexation payment for wage movements and new payments benchmarked for children. ACOSs knew that these changes were going to hurt the most vulnerable in Australia. ACOSs also highlighted the fact that family payments play a vital role in combating poverty.

I have to say that it appears to me that those people on the other side of this parliament just do not understand that. I know. I have families come to visit me in my electorate office. I listen. I listen to what they are saying. I know how they struggle with the costs of living. I know that, if this government imposes a GST on fresh food, health and education or increases
the base rate of the GST, those struggling families will really find it hard to make ends meet. This is a government that is absolutely focused on removing any support that is given through government to families and is moving away from its responsibility to support those in need. It is a disgrace that any minister or any government could have even thought of bringing in the legislation that was before this parliament to the House. It shows just how out of touch this government is, how unfeeling it is and how it has a total disregard for the needs of families.

I am pleased that the government have come to their senses in amending the legislation. I congratulate the shadow minister, Jenny Macklin, for the work that she has done in this area. She highlighted the unfairness of it. In conclusion, I would like to say that we have won this battle but I am very worried about the war. I am very worried that this government will try some sneaky little trick to bring back this legislation and will be out there negotiating with the crossbenchers in order to try to get it through the parliament in a different form in 2016.

Ms Collins (Franklin) (10:56): I rise to speak on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. The original bill that was introduced was designed to do several things. It was designed to introduce a new rate of payment for family tax benefit part B for families with children under one. It was designed to cease the family tax benefit part B to dual-parent families when the youngest child turned 13. It was designed to reduce the FTB part B to single-parent and grandparent FTB part B families with children between the ages of 13 and 16. It was designed to include the cessation of FTB part B for sole-parent and grandparent carers whose youngest child is 17 to 19 and in full-time secondary school. It was designed to phase out the family tax benefit A and B end-of-year supplements over two years, doing that in two stages. The family tax benefit A supplement would be reduced to $602.25 from 1 July 2016 and then down to $302.95 from 1 July 2017 and then abolished entirely from 1 July 2018. It was designed to end the family tax benefit B supplement over two years, first being reduced to $302.95 from 1 July 2016 and then to $153.30 from 1 July 2017 and then abolished entirely from 1 July 2018. The final measure in the bill was to increase the standard rate of FTB part A by $10 per fortnight for all families receiving more than just the base rate of FTB part A.

All of these measures impact on individuals. They impact on real people and families out there that are dealing with their family budgets, paying their bills, getting their groceries and filling up their cars every week. They are not just statistics and numbers that we are talking about. We have heard from the government plenty of times that these are savings, but they actually impact on families.

There are 140,000 families with children under one that would receive an increase of $1,000. This is essentially bringing back the baby bonus that Labor abolished when we were in office. We put the baby bonus payment into paid parental leave because we thought that was a better spend of funds. So it is ironic that in a savings measure we have a spending measure bringing back the baby bonus.

There are 76,000 couples with children over 13 who will have their FTB B cut entirely in 2016. There are 136,000 single parents with children aged 13 to 16 who would have their FTB B reduced to $1,000 in 2016. There are 3,900 grandparent carers with children over 13 who would have their FTB B reduced to $1,000 in 2016. Single parents with children over the age of 16 would have their FTB B cut entirely in 2016. While 1.2 million families in Australia
would receive a small increase of $10 a fortnight, 1.5 million families would lose their FTB A supplements of $726 per child.

This bill would have impacted families and individuals right around the country if it had gone ahead in the way that it was designed. Of those families, 650,000 of them are single parents. Around 500,000 of these families are on the maximum rate—that is, they have a combined income of less than $51,000. So we are not talking about high-income families here. We are talking about 500,000 of these families on $51,000 a year or less that are currently receiving this family tax benefit supplement.

The government today has introduced amendments to this bill. We are really pleased to see that the government is amending the bill. We have been fighting cuts to family tax benefits now for more than 18 months, since the Abbott budget in 2014. This is the second lot of family tax cuts that have come to the parliament, and we are pleased to see the government has amended the bill. But we remain really concerned, because these cuts were linked, allegedly, to a child care package that we have not seen. What the government was proposing to do was take money away from some poor families and give some money back to some other poor families, but they would not release the details of the accompanying child care package that is supposed to be related to this. I am not quite sure why it wanted to relate it to it. Obviously they wanted to try to convince some families that they would be better off, but we know that so many families are getting cuts to their family payment. So it will be interesting to see, given that the government had this proposal and was trying to link the packages, what the government is planning to do now. Is the government going to make a third attempt at family tax cuts that will impact families right across Australia? We do not know if that is the case.

We fought family tax cuts because they were fundamentally unfair. We hear a lot from the new Prime Minister about fairness, how things need to be fair and all that sort of stuff, but, clearly, taking money off families who are earning less than $51,000 a year is not fair. These families are relying on these funds to pay their bills and groceries and to fill up their cars. As I said earlier, we are pleased to see that the government has backed down on some of these cuts, but we remain really concerned about what that will mean into the future and down the line. These cuts would have seen families thousands of dollars a year worse off and, in some scenarios, up to $4,000 a year worse off. I have not heard from the government how they expected these families to make up that difference or what they expected these families to do to cut their expenditure. There has been no inkling from the government about how they would have compensated these families.

Interestingly, in the fairness debate that we have been hearing from the Prime Minister of late, we have the GST issue being raised, and they have been saying that they would not increase a GST without compensation for families. Before the parliament we have a bill to cut family tax benefits while the Prime Minister is talking about a GST and compensation. One could expect that what they were trying to do was cut family tax benefits, introduce a GST, then compensate families and try to tell families that they were no worse off. But we know the families were worse off because they already had the cuts. I think that that is what the government was planning to do. I think it was all a bit of trickery and a little bit of accounting to try and say to people, 'We will cut the payments now and then we can give you some compensation later' and then go out and say, 'You are no worse off.' But they would be worse
off. They would be worse off if you increase the GST or broaden it, and they would be worse off because they are getting a cut to family tax benefits.

The government will need to explain to families, particularly low-income families, in the lead up to Christmas what they intend to do with the family tax benefit cuts. We now have families doing their budgets, trying to work out Christmas presents and what they can afford to spend on their children and their families into the future, and they do not know what next year is going to bring in terms of their family tax payments. I hope that the government, in coming in here and moving amendments today, will tell people what its future plan is for family tax cuts. This money, as I indicated earlier, is really important to these families. It is really important, particularly to low-income families. It will make a massive difference to them on how much they can spend on things like Christmas presents, because Christmas presents are one of the few discretionary items that some of these families have.

We are one parliamentary week away from Christmas. I hope in that time that the government has the guts to stand up here and explain to families what its future plan is for family tax cuts. Perhaps they would also like to tell us the details of their childcare proposal, which they have also been keeping under wraps and which they keep trying to link to these family tax cuts, although I am still not convinced about why they need to link them and why they intend to take money off some poor families and then try to give it to other poor families. It does not seem to add up at all.

We have had some criticism from those opposite during speeches in the chamber today that spending is out of control in terms of government support payments. These are vulnerable people. They are vulnerable people who get government support payments because all Australians think that people in this country deserve a fair go and that those people that are doing it tough should get support. When we are talking about 1.2 million families, with half a million of those families on incomes of $51,000, we are not talking about wealthy families here. We are talking about families that are really doing it tough—and I think the government needs to go back and have another look at this.

The government cannot say that Labor has not been prepared to support some really tough measures, because we have. To date we have supported around $2 billion in cuts to family tax payments. We have supported the FTB A large families supplement changes. We have supported the lowering of the FTB B income threshold, the removal of the FBT A per child add-on and the ending of the large family supplement. That is $2 billion in savings that Labor have already agreed to. We have said that we will agree to the one change that will still be in the bill after the amendments on this bill are moved later today. We have said that we will reluctantly support that. So we are prepared to have a discussion, as the shadow minister said, about reforms. We are prepared to talk about some changes. But we are not going to sit around and allow the government to attack vulnerable low-income families, because that is what it is doing. If it wants to stand up, talk about fairness and say it will not do anything that will affect low-income people, it needs to understand that these cuts do exactly that.

Today, we are pleased to see these changes, but those opposite still need to explain to families what their future plans are, because, as I said, families are out there making decisions in the lead-up to Christmas about what they are going to be spending on the families in a tough time when they do not know what government's plans for their future payments are. I think that the government really needs to come clean with families now that it has made these
changes, which we are really pleased to see, and tell families what its future plans are. At the same time, perhaps, it should unveil some of its childcare package, which it keeps talking about. The government keeps saying that some families will not be worse off because, while the government takes some family payment off them, it will make it up in child care. It is a bit hard for us to judge that when we have never seen the details of the package. The package has been talked about for several months now, and we still have not seen the detail of it. We have seen some of it leaked to a newspaper, but we have not been provided with any detail on it. The government really needs to explain to the parliament and to the people of Australia what its future plan is when it comes to families and supporting low-income and vulnerable families in our community.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:09): The Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015 started its life with the 2014 budget decision to slash family payments to vulnerable families in communities like mine and, I suspect, in communities like yours, Deputy Speaker Kelly. Since the 2014 budget, Labor has been fighting hard against the Liberal coalition plans to cut family payments and other payments. These plans are falling upon the most vulnerable in our community. Labor has fought these changes because they were fundamentally unfair. They would have seen low- and middle-income families lose thousands of dollars every year. That is money that is supposed help them and money that is relied upon—particularly at this time of year when the bills are coming in, the expenses are mounting and people are wondering about whether they will have enough money left over to buy a few modest presents for their kids and for family members at Christmas time. So this is important legislation and it is important that Labor does its job of holding the government to account and ensuring that they do not succeed with these devastating cuts.

The member for Franklin made this point, and it is worth repeating: over a week ago the Prime Minister stood at that dispatch box and said in relation to his plan to introduce a new GST that no government in their right mind would introduce a GST that would harm families and low-income Australians without putting in place compensation. That makes sense, but the compensation that he was talking about would have to be compensation such as that which is provided through family tax benefit parts A and B. Is there any wonder that Australians do not trust this government, this Prime Minister and this Treasurer when they propose to provide compensation to families and compensation to low-income earners when they introduce their GST? Is it any wonder Australians do not trust them when they see legislation such as this, the flipping and the flopping, and the constant changes between one Prime Minister and another? Legislation such as this is designed to rip family payments and benefits away from some of the most vulnerable Australians, who rely upon them.

I know a fair bit about this because in my electorate there are lots of vulnerable families who rely on their family tax benefits to help them meet their household expenses. In fact, there are over 10,500 people who receive family tax benefit part A and another 9,400 families in my electorate who are relying on family tax benefit part B. So we are relieved on their behalf that, at the very last moment, the government has pulled away from this reckless proposal to rip thousands of dollars from the pockets of families such as these in my electorate. These are the communities who are at risk and actually relying on government to reach out, understand and provide them with a little bit of support at this time of the year.
In July this year we saw two high-profile studies. You may have seen these, Deputy Speaker Kelly, because they touch on electorates like yours and mine. The studies confirmed what many of us already knew—that disadvantage remains a real and ongoing challenge for many in our community. The studies have told us that the coalition's first and second budgets have hit low- and middle-income earners the hardest. The NATSEM report which I alluded to recognised that those households worst hit by the coalition's first two budgets were those that could least afford it. NATSEM found that families on the lowest incomes with children were bearing the highest brunt of the federal government's budget cuts. What about high-income families? That same independent report found that they will be actually seeing their disposable incomes increase, albeit slightly, over the next four years. What this means is that this government is addicted to regressive budget measures. Whether it is its plan for the GST, its plan for slashing family benefits or its plan for slashing income support for people who are looking for a job, it is addicted to regressive measures.

The second budget was supposed to be a little gentler on people who reside in electorates such as mine, but it was all a ruse. The authors of the NATSEM report found that the last budget did little to reverse the unfair redistribution of its first budget. In my own electorate, the worst hit areas—like Berkeley, Warrawong, Warralong, Windang and Warilla—are the households where average householders would lose between $500 and $550 in the period between 2018 and 2019. These are not high income households. These are households that rely on modest support from the federal government. These are households and the suburbs that have been hardest hit by these regressive measures.

The report I referred to was followed by a second report. I note there are many in the coalition parties who are very critical of the NATSEM report. They suggested this independent academic body is somehow a tricked-up branch of the Labor Party research. They find it very difficult to make those same claims about the report that was produced by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia. That report—you may have read it—was titled Dropping off the edge 2015. It was just as damning. Those opposite should pay careful attention to this: it found that entrenched locational disadvantage is actually getting worse, not better. The poorest communities are not catching up. In fact, many families are falling further and further behind, and they are suffering under real pressure. Nothing that this government has proposed in its first, second and, I warrant, its third budget has anything to provide any relief to those households and those families.

The Dropping off the edge 2015 report was particularly alarming for MPs who represent electorates like mine. That is because in my electorate of Throsby, as it currently stands, suburbs like Warrawong, Port Kembla and Berkeley are listed some of the most disadvantaged in the state. In fact, they are in the top five per cent of disadvantaged postcodes. This includes rates of criminal convictions, unemployment, domestic violence and lack of internet services—the basic services that people in electorates like the Prime Minister's take for granted. These are things they can only dream of in some of the suburbs I am referring to.

The suburb of Warrawong, in particular, has a high proportion of people on Newstart, looking for work. It has lots of students not meeting the minimum maths and reading standards and large numbers of residents who regrettably have left school before the age of 15. These are the households, areas and schools that need intensive support, and they are just
not getting it. Is it any wonder that they have got some of the highest rates of psychiatric hospital admissions and some of the highest rates of chronic diseases and other preventable diseases? There are households on less than $600 a week, and a high proportion of residents in these areas are struggling on Disability Support Pensions. These are the areas that this government does not have the slightest clue about; otherwise, they would not have proposed the sort of measures that we have seen in the bill being debated before the house today.

We call upon all of those opposite to make their plans clear. This flipping and flopping over cuts to family tax benefits is not good enough. Households need some certainty. They want to be able to budget for the year ahead. They want to know as they are going into the Christmas break that they are going to be able to afford the bills that they know are going to be coming in next year. They take no relief from the fact that the Prime Minister wants to have this broad ranging debate about tax reforms and introducing a GST, offset by compensation, when they see initiatives such as this in the last budget, and the budget before that, which are ripping out payments to those who can least afford it.

Labor opposes the coalition's plans to cut family benefits, because, just like the 2014 measures, they fail the fairness test—that is what it has to be all about. That should be the touchstone of all of us in this House: is it fair and is it sustainable for those households? Clearly, the answer that to that must be no.

With those comments, we look forward to hearing more details of what the government's plans are actually going to be. We see that, as we draw towards the close of the parliamentary year, the legislative agenda is as haphazard at the closure of the year as it was at the beginning. We see bills put on the agenda only to be withdrawn. We see a legislative agenda that that is absolutely barren for weeks, and weeks, and weeks on end. We have the Senate up there virtually twiddling their thumbs because the government has not made its mind up about what it wants to do. But when it does make its mind up about what it wants to do, it changes its mind again.

It seems that the changes they have had in the leadership in last few months has done absolutely nothing to put any more certainty in either the legislative agenda or the conditions that families, in electorates like mine, are struggling under. I call upon all of those members opposite to do some deep reflection over the Christmas break to ensure that measures such as this never see the light of a legislative day again.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (11:20): I rise to add a few thoughts about the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015 and to put on the record my disappointment that Labor has chosen, in its so-called year of big ideas, to oppose a very important reform package—a range of measures that seek to support families, to support and underwrite early childhood support and to give families the best prospect to be their best selves, by providing targeted assistance and encouragement to take advantage of opportunities that may be within their reach. This is what the bill is all about. You have heard the Labor members in the year of big ideas not able to produce one idea about the important public policy area that we are discussing. This is about families, child care, ambitions for the future and getting the policy settings and programs in place so that they can pursue their goals, improve their circumstances and know that there is predictable and reliable support to accompany them on their way as the government also
seeks to repair the budget damage and hardship that Labor inflicted on this government. It seeks to do that in a number of ways, and I will come back to the specific parts in a moment.

You would remember, notwithstanding what an absolute standout the small business package was in the budget and how well that was received, another key part of the budget was the Jobs for Families childcare package. Senior figures from Labor, including Jenny Macklin and others that have thought about child care and advocated on it for some time, mouth welcome words about the need for reform of child care. We know the former Minister for Early Childhood, Childcare and Youth, who is at the table, had money to encourage union recruitment through United Voice, and that was a poor substitute for childcare reform. It did not do anything for families.

It is well understood that there is a need to bring about change. To bring about change is to provide the right financial incentives and support for people to be able to access child care as they pursue employment opportunities. They improve their own skills through training and the like. It is understood that this is an area that needs to be fixed. Like other members in this place, I constantly hear people describing how bewildered they are about the current childcare support arrangements and how those arrangements can vary, depending on where people enter the system and what their incomes are and the like.

Ms Kate Ellis: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. The member needs to talk about the legislation which is before the House. The government has not produced any childcare legislation. This is about family tax—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): There is no point of order. This is a very broad bill on tax. The member for Dunkley has the call.

Mr BILLSON: I understand there are some sensitivities about highlighting why we are having this discussion and how it fits together as part of a coordinated strategy to support families to be their best selves and work towards better opportunities for themselves and their children into the future. This is what this bill is about. It is not only about the ambition and the need and the public policy goals that even Labor luminaries articulate; it is about assembling the means, the resources and the funding to do that in a way that is sustainable. That is the second part of it. You need to be clear what it is you are trying to achieve and set out those objectives and the public policy initiatives that enable you to achieve those goals, and then you need to find the funding. Part of the funding is what we are talking about today, if I can help the former childcare minister understand it. It is not just about spending money. I know Labor are spectacular and world champions at that, but you actually need to raise the money as well. I know it is a novel idea and that it did not trouble the former Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government too often. They were happy to just keep spending it. They never had to worry about where to raise it. Well, this is the other side of the agenda. This is the other side of the profit and loss. You have to raise revenue and find the resources to be able to spend it, former Minister. It is not that complicated. You need to raise the resources to be able to deploy them, and that is what this discussion is about. It is about prioritising key areas of expenditure to support families as they seek to improve their circumstances. It is about having a Jobs for Families childcare package that encourages people—

Ms Kate Ellis: Where is it?
Mr BILLSON: Isn't it interesting—the former minister has so much to say about these things now but she had so little to do when she actually had the responsibility. She knows the package, she knows the changes and she knows how there is better targeting of support. I could spend more time talking on that, but I imagine she would jump up and say, 'That's not what the bill's about.' It is the motive of this bill; it is the purpose; it is the goal, and the bill seeks to bring about some of the resources to achieve those goals.

What is troubling is that the original proposition the government brought forward was a crucial $4.7 billion down payment on that Jobs for Families childcare package. It was an enormous commitment, a reprioritisation of resources, all aimed at increasing the overall support that was there for families but also aligning it with families that seek to improve their own circumstances and to have the policy settings in place to do that.

We are having to amend that bill, so when you hear Labor saying, 'What are they talking about?' we are here today because Labor are standing in the road of measures that would fund the Jobs for Families childcare package. We are here today because they have refused to support certain changes, and they are the same side of politics who unilaterally decided single parents should go off those payments and onto Newstart. This is Labor's formula, with very little support to assist the transition—and they have the hide to come in here and attack the government for very sensibly and in a measured way trying to put in place the support that families are looking for so that tens of thousands of family members—often women—who want to go and engage in the economy, to raise revenue and income for their families and to provide a wonderful statement about the capacity of family members to participate in the economy can do so. It is a great single signal to children, who would then see that investing time and energy in the economy, pursuing livelihoods and improving oneself through training and education are things that are valued and important in that family environment.

Why is that important? I know from my own community, where there are intergenerational issues about unemployment, that often it is about breaking that cycle. It is about putting before people new incentives and new support, such as the Jobs for Families childcare package, so that those in the family think: 'I can take some steps in my life and improve my circumstances and improve my prospects for higher levels of income in my family. I can model the kind of behaviour that I hope for from my children.' That is fantastic. It is transformational. That is the way in which you can inject new possibilities into families that might have been challenged by intergenerational unemployment. That is what the public policy goal is. And what is Labor's response to that? 'Yes, there need to be changes, but you have to pay for it.' That was the member for Jagajaga's contribution: 'Yes, these reforms are needed, but you need to pay for it.' Two things are relevant here. What is Labor's childcare package? They have got none. In the year of big ideas, they have come up with three new taxes.

Ms Kate Ellis: You haven't got one, and you are in government!

Mr BILLSON: The member for Adelaide has been so distracted not to know that this is all articulated in the budget. I can make sure the responsible minister can share that material with her if she is looking for a briefing. If she is so detached from the subject that she has not caught up with what is in the budget, I will personally ask the minister to give the member for Adelaide a briefing—that is how helpful and collaborative I am. But the point is that Labor have no policy, just obstruction, in this year of ideas.
Not only do we have the forward agenda and the improved policy settings; we have mapped out how we plan to fund it, because today we as a country are going to borrow another $120 million. And you know what? We are going to do that tomorrow as well and we are going to do that for at least a couple of years. That is off the back of borrowing of around the same order for about the last five years. This month we as a nation will spend $1 billion on debt servicing, just to pay for this constant borrowing, because we have not shown the wit to be able to pursue important policy objectives and live within our means.

This bill aimed to do both—put in place a better policy setting and a better arrangement for families looking for support, encouragement, incentives and certainty about the help and the financial assistance that they would get from a childcare package people could actually understand. You did not need a PhD in government program feng shui to work out what it is you were entitled to. You could plan with predictability about what the support is. That is what the goal is and we needed to fund it. What we were doing was better targeting family assistance payments as part of that goal, so that when children are of an age where they are probably pursuing goals of their own—I know when I was around 13 I would be out every night playing tennis or getting involved in sport or other activities—there is an opportunity for the level of direct care from a parent to take on a different shape. You know this yourself, Deputy Speaker Kelly. It is a chance for those parents to have a clear run to achieve their goals and their ambitions, with support.

Originally this package was around $4½ billion, as a reprioritisation and an increase in the total amount of support going to families. It refocused that. Labor took single parents off their payment and onto Newstart, unilaterally, with no support during the transition, with no thought to the impact on households and no idea of opening up new opportunities so that people could pursue goals themselves. We have not done that. It is a cooperative package, but we needed to fund it. Labor has decided that, of that total funding package of $4.7 billion, it will agree with $500 million. As that great philosopher Maxwell Smart would say: 'Missed it by that much.' It agreed to $500 million when we needed $4.7 billion to fund a clear plan designed to give tens of thousands of people, mainly women, an opportunity for full engagement in the economy, opportunities to improve their prospects and their income, opportunities for their families, opportunities to invest in themselves with training. It would have child care seen not as a welfare measure but as an economic and personal achievement and ambition measure. It would properly align that, and the funding was there, but no.

Labor not only have no plan for it; they have no other suggestion on how you would fund it. So they are just going to stand in the road of $4.3 billion of funding. That is standing in the road of increased payments going to a family with one child, with one parent working full time and the other part time, with a three-year-old daughter. These are called cameos; they are examples of real households. One parent works full time and earns around $85,000 a year and the other parent works three days a week and earns $51,000 a year. The child attends the local day care centre on the days when mum is at work. Under our comprehensive package, which Labor seems not to know about because they have been too busy—I do not know what they have been doing but they have been not doing being doing but they have not been doing policy work in the 'year of ideas'—that family will be $43 better off a fortnight in 2018-19, if the full package is implemented.

There are other case studies: a single parent—a single mum, if you will—working two days a week with a three-year-old son. The child is in long day care those days. Mum earns
This is the package that Labor is standing in the road of, in the name of some concocted idea about fairness. Fairness is about enabling everybody to achieve their full potential. Isn't that a picture of fairness? Isn't that the story of our country? We are here to support everybody to achieve their ambitions and aspirations and their full potential. It is unfair to stand in the road of the machinery and the tools that help people achieve that. In that cameo, that single mum would be $38 a week better off. A family with two children—a newborn, three months old, and a two-year-old—where one parent stays at home while the other works full time and earns $51,000 a year, a modest income, under this package would be $60 per fortnight better off.

What is going on here? It is some parallel universe where there is $4.7 billion of additional and reallocated funding to go into a most visionary program of reform, to have child care support jobs, family ambition and higher incomes, and Labor comes in and say, 'No, we're not going to let you fund that.' And then they have the hide to say, 'Well, what's your plan?' We have a plan and we want to get on with it. The tens of thousands of families who would like a fuller engagement in the economy and every opportunity to achieve their best selves want us to get on with it as well. But to do that we need the whole package to pass. Instead of what we were hoping for, $4.7 billion, Labor has agreed to a $525 million down payment. That sounds unfair to me.

I would like my families to have the opportunity to be their best selves. Your postcode does not determine your potential, but some of these policy settings can inhibit you achieving that goal. We wanted to fix that. That is what we are trying to do here, and Labor is playing cheap politics, with no ideas in this 'year of ideas'. Why stand in the road of what this government wants to do? It is so meaningful. It is so thoughtful. It can be done and it can be funded. Why not do that?

Mr Whiteley (Braddon—Government Whip) (11:35): I rise to continue the argument for the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. What a tremendous contribution the member for Dunkley has just made. He succinctly put the case for this measure but he also cast our minds back to the reason we find ourselves in this position. The member for Adelaide had a little bit to say in her contribution, but oh how the memories of those on the other side of this parliamentary chamber have become so short. The government has proposed amendments to the bill to remove measures that do not have Labor support, but we are still here fighting the good fight for a good cause—finding the savings that are required to enable us to invest in much-needed reform for our child-care sector for the 21st century. Labor has turned a $4.7 billion package covering child care into a $525 million down payment. To steal the words of the member for Dunkley, they 'missed by just that much'. We should not be surprised by that, because we had six years of a government that missed by just that much.

Those who are listening and watching need to understand that every morning when your alarm clock rings and you wake up for another great day—any day you are breathing is a great day—the taxpayers of Australia will have to find $100 million just to pay the interest on the debt left by the previous Labor government. And they missed by just that much—$100 million is an extraordinary amount of money that we have to find every day just to pay the interest. I continue to say to the Australian people, focus on that. You elected a government to bring the finances of your country back into line so that we can leave things in a better state.
for our children and grandchildren than is currently in prospect at the moment. We were
elected with a mandate to do that, and it is fair to say that at pretty much every turn in the last
two years of this democratically elected government we have found ourselves continually
bashing our fiscal head up against the wall.

We hear a lot in this place about fairness; we hear a lot about being equitable. I ask those
opposite what is fair about loading up my children, the grandchildren I do not yet have and
everybody else's families with massive debt? We would not tolerate it in our own family but
we think that this democratically elected government should tolerate it forever and that we
should continue to put our expenditure on a massive trajectory. Maybe Labor just want us to
ratchet up taxes to pay for it. No, we need to make sure that this country remains productive
and competitive. Continuing to raise taxes just to pay for undisciplined, out of control
expenditure is not acceptable in anybody's language—certainly not the language that we on
this side of the House speak. We hear a lot about being equitable. What is equitable about an
opposition, a Labor Party, that claims to be the alternative government running a protection
racket each and every day for militant unions at the expense of the remaining 85 per cent of
the non-public service workforce who have to pick up the tab? I do not see much of a
protection racket being run by those opposite for the farmers and the small businesses. They
have their favourites—they continue to pander to and reward those favourites but it is at the
expense of those people who are the ultimate economic contributors and wealth makers of this
country.

The government wants to help families find affordable child care. I am sure that sentence
will resonate with most of the hardworking families of this country. They need us to help
them find affordable child care. This is an extremely important productivity measure that will
boost female workforce participation, that will be an economic enabler across our nation. We
as a government stand ready to invest almost $40 billion over the next four years into child
care. This includes the extra $3.5 million for the Jobs for Families package, to make child
care simpler, more flexible and more accessible. The government is committed to supporting
parents raising children. We are also committed to ensuring the family and childcare systems
remain targeted, sustainable and effective into the long-term by reforming the family tax
benefit system.

We on this side of the House spend a great deal of time looking beyond today. That is what
we are elected do. It is not about political survival, it is not about my political tenure as the
local member for Braddon, it is not even about the Liberal or National parties. I thought that
we were all elected to do what was best for the country, to ensure that this nation's prosperity
is sustainable and effective. We cannot continue to be either sustainable or effective with
massive debt over our head and an undisciplined approach to expenditure which will
ultimately lead to ongoing deficits—every budget spending more than we earn. Any person
with a modicum of common sense would know that that is unsustainable. I accept that in any
change of government policy there will be people across the nation who are impacted more
than others, but I have not been elected, the government has not been elected, to develop
policy for individuals. The government is elected to develop policies for the prosperity and
the betterment of the nation as a whole.

That is what this bill is about. It is about taking advantage of the need to find funds for a
childcare system that is absolutely in need of reform. Our welfare system is growing beyond
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the reasonable capacity of taxpayers to pay for it. Again, to those watching or listening, hear this: the taxes paid by eight out of every 10 persons who takes home a pay cheque this week or this fortnight go to pay the welfare bill of the nation. The taxes of eight out of every 10 hardworking taxpayers taxes go to pay just the welfare bill of the country.

The welfare system in this country should be a safety net—that is what it is about. Any fair-minded Australians would agree that their taxes should and can be used with their blessing to protect the vulnerable. This country is great like that—they get that. But, what they do not get, is their hard-earned taxes sustaining a system that is inherently not there as a safety net but has become some system of, shall I say, support that some people think just now is to be expected each and every day.

Under this bill, from 1 July 2016 couple families eligible for FTB B, other than grandparents, will receive the payment only while the youngest child is aged under 13 years. This replaces the 2014-15 budget measure, which reduced payment eligibility to the age of six. The government will continue to provide vulnerable families, such as single parents and grandparent carers, with FTB B assistance, until the youngest child turns 13. These changes will enable us to invest more heavily into giving Australian children the best start in life.

As a result of the new childcare package that we have spoken about, families using childcare services from July 2017, and with incomes of between $65,000 and $170,000, will be on average $30 a week better off. The Jobs for Families package has several components, including a two-year national nanny pilot program to support around 10,000 children in families finding it difficult to access standard childcare services.

As the elected member for Braddon, I know that some in my electorate—not the majority but a significant part of my electorate—are in geographical locations that make it very difficult for them to access child care. The member for Adelaide obviously knows my electorate better than me, by the look of the squint I just got from her across the chamber, but I think I know my electorate. Can I say that the nanny pilot program, which is designed to provide care to 10,000 children, will be warmly welcomed in my electorate. It will open up possibilities that do not currently exist for mums and dads across my electorate.

The government wants to provide creative choices for people to find the childcare system that works for them. The Child Care Subsidy will simplify what is currently a very complicated system by replacing three payments: the Child Care Benefit, the Child Care Rebate, and the Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance. The Child Care Safety Net will provide targeted support to vulnerable families and childcare services in disadvantaged communities. There will be stricter immunisation requirements for receiving childcare subsidies and support, under the Australian government's No Jab, No Pay policy.

As I wrap this up, can I just say that the government is absolutely committed over the long term to continuing to assist families to raise their children. But can I stress 'long term', because I want to go back to a point I made earlier. Good government policy has an eye to the future. It is not about our political fortunes today. It is not a Band-Aid fix that we are looking at. We are looking at generational change to a policy that is currently out of date, far too complicated and does need some serious reform. But we are committed to families in the long term. I say to the people of Braddon: if you want a sustainable welfare system that is there as a safety net, if you desire effective child care, for not only your own children but shortly, probably, your grandchildren, it has to be affordable. The nation's finances have to be in order.
and sometimes governments need to make decisions that will be taken advantage of by our political opponents.

I think the Australian people—and certainly the electorate that I represent, and I am sure the other 149 electorates are exactly the same—seriously understand the need for this government to get the finances of the country under control. They have a view that they are prepared to do what is in the best interests of the country, if we explain it and if we find a national fairness about it. But it is not helped by the deceit and the militant action of some, who just seek to destroy the future of our country. I say to those opposite: get with the program, stop thinking about today and start thinking about tomorrow.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (11:50): I thank all the members for their contributions on the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2015. Perhaps the most useful way to commence in this particular summation of the contributions is to note some points of procedure and the path in which the government is going to approach the present bill, in regard to the position of the opposition. That is, essentially—and there are amendments before the House that will be dealt with shortly—that there is a single portion of the bill that is agreed to by members opposite. The bill does several things and what is agreed to by members opposite is merely one thing and one part of an overall suite of measures. What will occur is that we will amend the existing bill down to simply that portion with which the opposition agrees.

I must note for the record and for the House that the remainder of the issues that are dealt with in the bill as it presently stands, prior to any amendment, will in their substance be brought back before the House. They maintain their status as general policy of the government, and the position will be put that they represent appropriate savings that the family tax benefit system can garner in the context of a necessity to pay for very substantial reforms to the childcare sector.

By way of summary of what is presently in the bill—so that exactly what members opposite are agreeing to and, therefore, what this bill will be amended down to can be delineated—I note that there are, I think, three issues that need to be raised by matter of description.

The first is that there is a major saving in the bill which revolves around the reform of family tax benefit part B rates. In essence, the bill proposes that FTB part B payments, which are per family, should cease when the youngest child of a family in the FTB B system turns 13, but with some mitigatory and compensatory spends attached to that policy, which are twofold—first, that there should be an additional $1,000 paid for the youngest child aged under 12 months in an FTB B family; and, second, that there should be a compensatory payment to two groups of FTB B families, those being single-parent families and families where there are grandparent carers of a child at and then over the age of 13, and that amount is also $1,000. Overall, in fiscal terms, those proposed changes to family tax benefit part B rates would be about $1.4 billion over four years.

The second group of measures and the largest proportion of the expenditure restraint in this bill is the phasing-out of FTB end-of-year supplements, both in FTB A and FTB B, such that the supplement in part A would be reduced from its present amount to $600, then down to $300 and then, in the third year, extinguished and no longer payable; and the part B
supplement would be reduced to $300, then to $150 and then down to zero and no longer payable.

The third area is actually an area of spend—and again it is meant to be a compensatory and mitigatory measure in the overall savings package—whereby we would increase the rate of FTB part A and youth payment fortnightly rates by the amount of $10.08 a fortnight. That would involve, over the relevant period of spend, about $585 million. So the major saving in the bill comes from the ending of end-of-year supplements, and that is a matter I will return to shortly. That would achieve a saving of about $4.1 billion.

What members opposite have indicated publicly that they are agreeable to is ceasing family tax benefit part B for families when the youngest child turns 13, but not for all families. Members opposite would not agree to ending that payment for grandparent-carer families or single-parent families, but they did agree to ending the FTB B payment to couple families when the youngest child turns 13.

As is appropriately and properly the case, these debates revolve around notions of fairness. We on the government benches would argue that fairness is always a matter to be considered in context. There are two important contexts in which to consider fairness in this instance. The first is that the approach we are taking is to link, in a practical sense, the savings reforms contained in this bill to a very significant expenditure which would very significantly reform child care in Australia. Indeed, the expenditure on the reforms to child care would amount to $3.5 billion. So this would adequately pay for that and allow for some budget repair along the way. But, as has been noted, only one portion of the bill and one aspect of the savings elements of the bill has been agreed to by members opposite. The second context in which we say fairness needs to be taken into account is that the savings that we propose would not merely pay for sweeping reforms in child care; they would also allow a modest contribution to budget repair and assist the nation to return to surplus.

Again on the context of fairness, I raise this point: when a nation is in both debt and deficit, which is the situation that our government undeniably inherited, any expenditure that cannot be restrained today or avoided today is effectively paid for by borrowings. So we are talking here about savings which, if denied by members opposite, will be paid for with borrowed money. That is a very important context in which to consider fairness. That is because, in any family that might by virtue of this legislation be subject to a reduction in FTB B when their oldest child turns 13, that child will in a very fulsome sense very quickly enter the tax system and, because we are presently borrowing money to pay for a welfare system in terms of incremental spending that we cannot avoid today, that child's taxes will be required to not only contribute to and pay for the welfare system of their own day but retrospectively pay for the welfare system that we maintain today. As a matter of intergenerational equity, there can be no characterisation of that as a fair situation.

We argue strongly that any issue of fairness has to be considered in the context of the deficit that we inherited and the debt that we inherited that require any responsible government to engage in expenditure restraint, because expenditure that cannot be restrained today is paid for in borrowings, which effectively means it is being paid for by taxes that have not yet been paid by young people that have not yet reached their fulsome contribution to the personal income tax system and other taxes.
It is worth analysing at least briefly, I think, what members opposite argue is fair and have agreed to as a proportion of the savings measures in this bill, whilst they argue that other portions are unfair. What members opposite are essentially agreeing is that it is fair to end family tax benefit B for couple families when their youngest child turns 13. We would say that that is fair in the context of deficit, issues of intergenerational equity and what we wish to apply the savings to, which is sweeping reform of the childcare sector.

It is interesting to analyse an argument that it is fair to remove family tax benefit B from couple families but unfair—as is proposed by members opposite—to remove it from grandparent carers or from single-parent families. If you compare the pair, so to speak, the reality is that grandparent carers are much younger than their name would suggest. You can well have a situation where there is a grandparent carer couple in their mid-50s on a particular income whom the opposition say it is unfair to have family tax benefit B removed from, but in the case of a comparable couple who are simply a couple family with children in their mid-50s, on exactly the same income, members opposite now agree that it is fair for their FTB B to end when their youngest child turns 13. There may be no material difference between the two families in income or any other economic measure, but members opposite are tacitly agreeing that it is fair for the FTB B payment to end in one circumstance—for the couple family—but not fair in the other circumstance, for the grandparent carer family.

Similarly with a single-parent family: a single parent may be in exactly the same economic circumstances as a couple family. Members opposite are agreeing to the removal of the FTB B from the couple family but not from the single-parent family. While, in context, the savings in this package in their entirety could be argued to be fair, with what members opposite have agreed to, couple families now face a situation where their family tax benefit B will end when their youngest child turns 13—but where other families, who may well be in similar or precisely the same circumstances economically, will not have to make a similar contribution. I think this simply goes to the point that judging fairness, at certain points in time in certain arguments, particularly from members opposite, becomes a situation where the goalposts move very rapidly indeed. Those couple families might ask themselves why it is fair for them to lose a payment but not fair for other families to lose it.

When we look at the other measures in this bill, some further things are worth noting. The childcare reforms, which the savings in this bill are intended to pay for, will replace three separate payments with a single payment. There will be hourly caps on the provider, which will ease some of the inflationary drivers that exist in the present system. There will be a very generous activity test. As a whole, those childcare reforms will provide very significant economic benefits to families engaged in child care or desiring child care, and they will drive participation. It is also interesting to note that the overwhelming majority of the savings in this bill which are not agreed to by members opposite arise from ending FTB end-of-year supplements. That is the major saving in this bill which is not agreed to by members opposite. It will be brought back to this place in a separate bill.

The McClure report noted that the Australian welfare system has 20 different categories of welfare, with up to 55 different types of supplements, subpayments, bonuses and add-ons, creating an excruciatingly complicated system. These end-of-year supplements which we suggest should be removed—and which would be removed if this bill were supported in its entirety—came into being in 2004 during the time of the Howard-Costello government.
The official reason for introducing these supplements in 2004 was to mitigate the risk of debt at end-of-year reconciliation. In the years prior to 2004, in some instances families who were receiving fortnightly payments, particularly under FTB A, were incurring debts at the end of the year because of understating or underestimating their income. In the years preceding the introduction of these supplements in 2004 there were higher numbers of people who had incurred those debts. Those levels of indebted recipients stabilised and they are now much lower than they were during the period up to 2004.

The supplements were introduced at a time when there was an estimated $13½ billion dollar surplus. They were specifically designed to mitigate the risk of debt, which was higher then than it is now—and we believe that, with the advent of the single-touch payroll system that will be rolled out in three years time, the risk of debt can be very substantially reduced. If, in a situation of debt and deficit, we are unable to avoid the expense of FTB end-of-year supplements, we are in effect borrowing money to pay for supplements to mitigate debts that the overwhelming number of recipients do not in fact have and which will be substantially eliminated in the very near future by a technological solution being developed by government. That has to be considered in light of fairness and issues of intergenerational equity—whether it is wise to borrow that money and expect a future generation of taxpayers to pay it back while also paying for the welfare system of their time. If we as a House cannot agree to phasing out supplements that are no longer fit for purpose, that were brought into being during a period of massive budget surplus and that were designed to mitigate debts that no longer exist, then we clearly have a very difficult problem. Nevertheless, there will be amendments and we would hope to progress them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [12:10]
(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Broadbent)

Ayes ..................... 79
Noes ..................... 51
Majority ............... 28

AYES
Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hutchinson, ER

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ

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### AYES

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**CHAMBER**
Question agreed to.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (12:17): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill. I further seek leave of the House to move government amendments (1) to (10) as circulated together.

Leave granted.

Mr PORTER: I move government amendments (1) to (10) as circulated together.

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): The question now is that this bill, as amended, be agreed to.

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there are fewer than five members on the side for the noes, I declare the question resolved in the affirmative in accordance with standing order 127. The names of those members who are in the minority will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Question agreed to, Mr Bandt and Mr Wilkie voting no.

Third Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (12:20): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (12:21): The Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 is an uncontroversial bill which simply consolidates four pieces of legislation which govern export quotas and allows for quota certification arrangements for agriculture to be carried out under one set of powers.

Australia, of course, is a great producer of food and fibre product. We are so despite the fact that we have many challenges as a food-producing nation. We are challenged by water scarcity. We have less than optimal soil quality despite public perceptions. Certainly we do have some very rich soils in certain locations but, because of our geographical history, on
average, our soils are poor compared to some of our competitors. And, of course, we have vast distances between the farm gate and our markets, both our domestic markets and our export markets. Yet despite all of that, the value of our farm output for an island nation of only 23 million or 24 million people is more than $50 billion annually and our exports are more than $30 billion—in other words, we export around two-thirds of the food product we produce.

While we should always be cautious and alert to our food security issues, it is the reason that chatter about food security in this country, while certainly a global issue, is rather silly because it is not one of our challenges in food production, which is made clear by the fact that we export two-thirds of everything we produce. It is also why much of the debate around foreign ownership is so silly; rather, if we are to grow our agricultural opportunities, we will need a lot of investment in agriculture over the coming decades. With a small population and with a limited savings capacity, by necessity, much of that investment will need to come from other sources, as it always has done in all of our history as a country and, indeed, as a colony.

There are many things that will determine the extent of our success in agriculture over the coming decades. They go to the key issues that the bill today will help to govern. It is not an exhaustive list but I have just written down many of them. The first is the extent to which government is willing and able to provide leadership and strategic guidance in this increasingly globally competitive market—that will be critical. Second is the effectiveness of the management of our limited natural resources, most importantly our water and soil resources. The question in the future will be: how do we do more with ever-depleting water and soil resources? We are already the driest continent on earth. While I would be happy on another occasion to debate the reasons, it is clear that our water challenges are becoming greater. Australia is becoming a drier continent. Our droughts are becoming more protracted and we are entering into another El Nino period, which means that those challenges are going to become greater. Of course we need more focus on how we better manage our soils, including our capacity to retain water in our soils. Everything we do in agricultural planning has to take into account sustainability—how we ensure those resources are available to us for many decades to come.

The third is our performance in research and development, extension and our embrace of biotechnology, which will be critical to our future success. The fourth is our willingness to accept more consolidation and corporatisation in the sector. This is of some concern to some who are committed to concept of a family farm. Family farms will continue to play a critical role in the decades ahead. In fact, much of our innovation typically comes from the family farm but it is a reality of the sector that further consolidation will be necessary. The skills, networks and investment that further corporatisation brings will be critical. The fifth is the extent to which we are able to lift productivity and our cost competitiveness—that comment speaks for itself. The sixth is our efforts to do with our workforce challenges. We have an ageing population generally, we have an ageing workforce generally but, in particular, these are very significant challenges in Australian agriculture. As I often say, people ask me: how do we bring young people back to the farm? My simple answer is: they will come back to the farm when there is good money to be made—it is as simple as that for younger generations. The seventh is our success in securing and growing export markets, which is obvious.
The eighth is the extent to which we are successful in our attempts to move our food and fibre products up the value chain. In other words, for a country like Australia, which is a net exporter, a country with limited natural resources and limited population, our real future will not be so much in volume—as important as that will be—but in value—in other words, the margins we receive on each of our food and fibre products, the extent to which we are able to profit. We are seeing that already with, for example, dairy products into Asia, where the growing middle-classes are prepared to pay big dollars for something we make at a relatively low price. Of course it is also occurring with other major products like beef, where wagyu products, which might have marbling, or products containing a low fat content are the things that the middle-class of Asia, for example, will pay big dollars for and they are the areas in which we will get a premium. There are myriad other examples such as udon noodles out of our grains industry—again, a premium will be paid for specific varieties of our wheat. So pushing up the value chain will be absolutely critical.

That brings me back to the bill because there has been a lot of talk recently about the opportunities presented to us by various free-trade agreements, obviously the most recent ones being with South Korea, Japan and China.

These are not free-trade agreements; they are preferential trade agreements. All of us in this place, I am sure, are united in that we would like to see more multilateral agreements rather than bilateral agreements. Bilateral agreements are only a fight between nation-states about who gets access at what price. What ChAFTA and the Korean and Japanese agreements are really about is making sure that we have access on the same level playing field as our major competitors—in other words, that it does not cost us any more to get our product into China, for example, than it does our competitors in North America or South America: the quota that we have put on our product is no greater than those of our competitors. This is of critical importance.

The challenge for us does not end there. As we all know, it is not just about the tariff barriers; it is also about the non-tariff barriers and all of the technical aspects that go with our attempts to export to other markets. We have dealt with these issues for many years and hopefully we are getting better at this game. But the reality is we will not benefit from ChAFTA and those other free trade agreements until we have dealt with all of those non-tariff barriers. Everyone in this place has ownership of those agreements. The former Labor government spent six years moving toward a final outcome for each of those free trade agreements. We now need to work together to overcome the technical barriers. To simplify it, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has done its work in gaining the access by getting arrangements on the quotas. But now the department of agriculture and the agriculture minister have much work to do to secure the relevant protocols that are required to overcome those non-technical barriers.

It concerns me that this work appears to be taking place very slowly. It is all right for the agriculture minister to get up during question time and claim that all of these wonderful things are happening as a result of the signing of ChAFTA and the other agreements. Some good things are happening. But many other commodities are still locked out of China, South Korea and Japan because technical barriers to export have not been overcome. I have a table with me which was produced by peak industry body AUSVEG, representing Australian vegetable growers. It shows each of our exporting nations and provides a breakdown for each of the
vegetable commodities—carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, beans and so on, right through to potatoes. The alarming thing about this chart is that for the China market, for example, there are 12 commodities, but not one of those commodities is shaded green. Green indicates that effective phytosanitary protocols now exist. In other words, of 12 vegetable commodities, still not one has access to the China market. Two are shaded yellow, indicating that restrictive phytosanitary protocols exist, but the rest are shaded red. Nothing could more clearly indicate than this table that we have a long way to go yet before the full benefits can be realised from these agreements we have secured with these other nation-states. So the real tests for this minister and this government will now be the speed at which those protocols can be negotiated and the effectiveness of those protocols. The effectiveness is just as important as the lowering of the tariff barriers and indeed what the associated quotas are and can be.

The other question is the cost of doing business. The reality of exporting is that there are associated costs. There are substantial associated costs which go beyond the obvious costs like transport. In this country—and there is a good system—much of the work around things like phytosanitary protocols are done by government. The cost of doing that work is recovered from industry. That is a reasonable arrangement and a very effective arrangement. But government has to continue to strive to ensure that those costs are as low as possible. Already in this country, we have some difficulty in being cost competitive because of our geography, our population and the high standard that we rightly put on the contribution of our workforce, in terms of both remuneration and safety. I am really concerned that recently the government has decided to review some of these costs. I was astounded to learn that, post that review, some of those costs have doubled for Australian exporters. I am delighted that the minister has now recognised we have a problem here. Extraordinarily, he has now sought an independent review of the review—a process that I do not think would leave the Australian taxpayer particularly impressed. It should be a concern to all of us that the minister should allow the department to review the cost, sign off on the new cost regime and then immediately seek to contract out a review of the review. This is not something which instils confidence in those seeking new export opportunities and seeking to grow export opportunities in other markets around the world.

The role here for the government will be a very substantial one. It starts with the first point I made about what will determine the extent of our success—leadership and strategic direction from government. This is something that was lacking in the relatively recent agriculture white paper—a white paper that should have taken a big-picture approach, should have sent messages about where the government wanted to take agriculture into the future, should have sent messages about where it was prepared to provide the path of least resistance and how it would attract investment in the most relevant sectors and make sure we had an efficient allocation of our limited natural resources in this country. All these things were missing.

It is all right for the agriculture minister to stand at the dispatch box during question time and claim credit for things that happened 20 years ago—airports that were privately built and that he can claim no credit for, drought-induced cattle prices—but agriculture needs far more than that. It needs strategic guidance from government. It needs sound planning. What it does not need is a government sending a signal in a very competitive market that foreign capital is not welcome in this country. That is what it has been determined to do in recent months. It is
playing to the crowd. It is playing on fear in our community that somehow Asian investment in agriculture is not good for this country.

Rather, the government should be showing leadership. It should be going out there and saying, 'We need this investment, and we're in competition with others for it.' Without that investment we cannot be internationally competitive and we will not be exporting more. We will not be pushing our agriculture products up the value curve. And do not fear, because we export two thirds of everything we grow, and they cannot pick the land up and take it with them—which is exactly the point Minister Robb made last week in response to the government's decision on the landholdings of S. Kidman and Co.

We should be working together in this place to send a very clear message to the Australian community that they should not fear foreign investment in our agricultural land or our agribusinesses in this country. Indeed, we desperately need that investment. Without it we will fall further behind. I understand Minister Robb's expression of concern about the Kidman decision, and I have said publicly that if the Kidman decision was based on concerns about national security—for example, the proximity of some of the landholdings to some of our more sensitive defence facilities—then I accept that absolutely. As a former defence minister and a member of the National Security Committee of the cabinet, I understand that better than do most in this place. But I fear that the decision was about more than that. I fear it was also about this government's determination to build its political popularity in the region by sending the message that Australian agriculture is not open for business, particularly to Asian investment. For the first time in our history, we have a discriminatory foreign investment review regime in this country—one rule for our historic Western partners and another for those investing from Asia.

I want to remind the House of one very significant point. It does not matter what the screening threshold is for the Foreign Investment Review Board; the Treasurer has the power to review any investment proposal that he cares to review. He does not need a threshold. He does not need a trigger. Indeed, he does not need the Foreign Investment Review Board. Yes, he should look to the Foreign Investment Review Board for advice, and to the experts who sit on the board—and behind it, within Treasury. But there is nothing to stop the Treasurer from reviewing or vetoing any proposal that comes before the board. The lowering of the threshold to $15 million for agricultural land will clog the system and increase costs for investors. That will cause investors to go elsewhere, where the returns are just as good but the pathway is easier because the government there is more inviting of that investment.

So, I once again appeal to this government to give up this folly, to stop seeking this political outcome, to stop playing to the crowd and to recognise, as the member for Hume did in his seminal document *Greener pastures*, that to meet all of our aspirations in agriculture we will need $600 billion of investment in this country by 2050. And it is not going to come from within, even if all our super funds decided tomorrow to put all their money into agriculture. By necessity, it will come from foreign sources. We are in competition with others, and we need to be inviting of it—discerning of it, absolutely, but inviting of it.

This bill represents one of the many things that will go to our attractiveness as an export destination and as an investment destination and in terms of our cost competitiveness on international markets, but it is only a very small part of it. Minister Joyce has to stop claiming credit for things he has not done. He needs to get out of the way and let Australian agriculture
grow and let foreign investment play its role. The opposition supports the bill before the House.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (12:42): It is a pleasure to follow the shadow minister for agriculture after his considered contribution to this debate on the Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 in the year of big ideas. It is wonderful to see another policy statement tabled here this morning on Labor's position to abolish the agri threshold as we go to the next election. I think that is a fundamentally flawed position. Nevertheless, that is the policy you will take to the election. It is completely within the rights of those who sit on the other side of the House in the year of the big ideas.

I do accept that this is not a controversial bill, and my intention is to give a brief outline of the intent of the bill and then address how it flows into our red-tape reduction overview and the policy we took to the last election. I want to touch on how this bill affects growers, processors, farmers and those who have capacity to reach out to those newer markets in the export sector. And I want to acknowledge the contribution of the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, who by all accounts has done an outstanding job in pulling these efficiencies together, along with the Minister for Trade and Investment, helping to secure these free trade agreements that will unleash a world of new opportunities in beef, horticulture, investment services et cetera in my electorate.

The Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 consolidates four acts that govern tariff rates. When we enter trade negotiations with countries, we will say, 'Allow us to send 1,000 widgets to your country.' But once we hit that quota and go over that 1,000 widgets, a tariff may be introduced. The intent of the bill is to introduce a schedule. The act currently has four different parts to it: dairy, beef et cetera. This amending legislation seeks to consolidate those into one act that is more user-friendly. From a compliance perspective, it makes us nimble, and nimbleness from the department creates efficiencies. Earlier, we spoke about a value figure that we can attribute to that. That value figure potentially gets passed down to our growers and makes us more competitive globally. The import countries usually manage the quotas, but, by simplifying and making our system nimble, we are flagging that we would like to manage the quotas by centralising them. The savings that will come by our managing the quotas give us the capacity to be more acutely aware of what our trade relationships are and where we are with particular volumes on line items. Where export tariff rate quotas are established by trade agreements, Australia seeks to manage the quotas in order to offer exporters the maximum concession possible on agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources currently administers up to 33 quotas that save exporters millions of dollars of tariffs in each year. It will continue to do that and look for new markets. For example, there are eight new quotas which have been introduced under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, saving exporters approximately $3 million in tariffs between January and May 2015 alone. Quotas to the EU and the United States have saved Australian exporters between 20 and 100 per cent in applicable tariffs, which is a considerable amount. Based on the consultations by the department, both internally and externally, with stakeholders, there has been an overwhelming push by the industries involved to reduce the burden of red tape.

This is completely in line with the government's position to reduce the burden of red tape and green tape on our small business sector and on large businesses in Australia. These are
the issues that we took to the last federal campaign and said that we would fight on. I can inform the House that, to date, this coalition government has reduced regulation by no fewer than 50,000 pages. We have dedicated a day to red-tape reduction in the parliament once a year. We have set a target of approximately $1 billion in savings each and every year that we are in government. By all accounts, we are exceeding those expectations.

The real benefits of reducing red tape in this particular bill will flow on to businesses. It allows them to spend less time sitting out the back of their shops or in their offices and, instead, spend more time at the front line with their customers or, in this case, with their animals or with their product in the paddock. They can make sure that they get the best possible outcome for their product and the best possible value for their product. We fundamentally believe in less government. We fundamentally believe in fewer taxes. This bill demonstrates, along with many of the others that we have introduced, that government needs to get out of the way of business and, instead, support and partner with business to provide a framework of administration that allows them to maximise their profits.

The current legislation schemes for quotas are specifically for meat and dairy products and are not sufficient to address the range of quotas arising under the recent free trade agreements. For example, the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement introduced quotas for honey and juices. What that predominantly speaks to is that honey and juices were in one of the acts that have been consolidated. Dairy and beef were in other acts that have been consolidated under this amending legislation. It is quite a simple process. As I said in my opening comments, it is not a contentious issue. I have spoken at some considerable length about the overwhelming intention of the peak bodies to embrace the ideology of this bill.

The benefits of a comprehensive general quota legislative regime are that they will enable a more secure and flexible legal framework for the implementation of existing and further quotas negotiated in pursuit of export opportunities under the Agricultural competitiveness white paper and free trade agreements. In addition, in my electorate there are an enormous number of people such as growers, beef producers, saleyard operators and the value-added chain—Dinmore meatworks, operated by Swift just on my electorate's northern boundary, and the Teys meatworks on my electorate's north-east boundary at Beenleigh—who have made contributions to the benefits of reducing red tape in this sector.

Deloitte in Brisbane have recently announced that they have a very bullish outlook for the agricultural sector over the next 10 years in the forward outlook. Their bullish outlook for the agricultural sector is predominantly based on the emerging middle-class in China and their demand for protein. Even with the softening growth rates in China, the amount of growth based just on population has secured our partnership with that country for many years into the future. But we should not think that China is the be-all and end-all. There are other emerging markets that we are now shifting our attention to. I mentioned that the minister is spending energy looking at opportunities in India as they look to shift into an emerging middle-class economy

After that, we have Africa, which will keep us busy as a nation in the way of food production for many, many years to come.

When Deloitte stand on the global stage and say that they have a very bullish outlook for the Australian agricultural sector, it is not hard to understand why international companies who are looking to invest in long-term gains in and around the agricultural sector have
expressed such an interest. We heard the previous speaker, the shadow minister for agriculture, speak about foreign investment and its importance here in Australia—and I agree. Since the First Fleet arrived here in Australia, we have traditionally been an importer of net capital in this country. In order for us to reach our absolute maximum output, we rely heavily on foreign capital. Having said that, I think from a government perspective we need to have a conversation domestically about why we have foreign investment companies lining up from here to the War Memorial, looking to invest in our companies, yet we have $2 trillion of our own superannuation money. We do not see Australia in the same light as other countries who are falling over themselves to get here do.

I welcome foreign investment. We cannot be our best without partnering with foreign investors. But I do struggle with some of the limitations in the make-up of the boards of the superannuation firms. We need a more entrepreneurial, more independent look at the way that we invest in our own future. Why is it that we have international companies who want to make that journey but we struggle to make that transition with the superannuation money of our own mums and dads? These projects will benefit our nation. They are nation-building projects in which the world sees benefit.

Closer to my electorate, Peter Hayes from the Silverdale Saleyards, Roy Bartholomew, who has the Beaudesert and the Moreton saleyards, as well as Neil Goetsch, from Goetsch & Sons, Kalbar saleyards, have seen an enormous increase in beef prices more recently. We have seen prices increase over the last 12 to 18 months to two years. They are prices that I have never seen before in my lifetime. There are a number of factors involved when we talk about this bill and quotas internationally as to why we have seen upward pressures in our cattle markets. Obviously, we should never forget the horrific effects of the drought that has grasped many of our cousins in country Australia. I was reminded only last night of this by a friend of mine, Boyd Curran, who has got country in Longreach, Queensland. He has totally destocked. Unfortunately, the future for some of those operations is very bleak. Whilst we talk about the bullishness of the industry, we must remember that there are parts of our economy that are struggling as a result of the drought. The drought is having an enormous effect on lowering herd numbers and is factoring into that basic demand and supply push for cattle.

One of the other factors as to why our cattle prices are firming and holding is without a doubt our ability each to increase our export volumes of cattle internationally. No-one will ever forget what was probably the single, most damaging policy decision in the cattle sector when Labor were in office. Overnight, they shut down the live cattle trade into Indonesia. The ramifications of that single policy decision rippled through the economy of North Queensland and in my electorate, as cattle numbers got pushed back down into the southern markets. Hopefully, it is something that we will never again see as a result of a knee-jerk decision.

I mentioned that in my final comments I would pay tribute to the Minister for Agriculture for taking over the portfolio. He was starting from a very low base. He has done an excellent job in rebuilding the relationships with those economies. Each year since that live cattle debacle policy decision, we have as a nation continued to find new markets and increase our live cattle export numbers around the world. There are currently challenges for us around the globe with low cattle numbers. America's herd numbers are down. Brazil's herd numbers are down. India's herd numbers are down. We are looking at least 18 months to two years before
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those herd numbers recover. Challenges lie ahead of us. The Minister for Agriculture has done an outstanding job in partnering with the Minister for Trade and Investment in brokering these efficiencies and in bringing to completion the free trade agreements, and they should be commended for it.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:58): This bill, as the previous speakers have outlined, is about exports. In regional areas, the conversation about exports is one that we have quite frequently. Being able to export produce is one of the major economic drivers, particularly in central Victoria. We on this side of the House have said that we will be supporting the Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 as it will bring regulation of all commodity quotas under the same legislation. So this is not one of those red tape repeal days that we have seen from the government. This is smart, sensible policy that will help our government and our exporters by having a simpler system in place, with the regulation of all commodity quotas under the same legislation. So it is a bit of tidy-up work, but it will help our exporters.

This bill will enable all quota export certification arrangements for agriculture to be carried out under a common set of powers. This is important when you are dealing with agricultural industries, because quite often producers have multiple agricultural products and when they are under separate regimes it can get quite complicated. Red tape, bureaucracy, is something that comes up more often than you would expect when you are talking to the agricultural industries, farmers and producers. So, being able to have a situation where there is a common set of powers is a smart move and one that we support.

The government has assured us that stakeholders have been consulted to ensure that these quotas meet with their expectations. Stakeholders that have been consulted include many that have produce that is produced in my region. What is it that we export from my part of the world, from the area of Greater Bendigo? When you say 'Bendigo', many think about the township and do not realise that we have quite a large agricultural area and farming in the Greater Bendigo area and the Bendigo electorate. Since 2008-09, there has been an almost 16 per cent increase in our exports internationally. There has been growth in a number of areas. Believe it or not, mining is back on the agenda in Bendigo. We have started mining again and that is where one of the big increases has been. Manufacturing continues to be a big source of our exports, particularly heavy-metal manufacturing. Food processing and food manufacturing is an area that is on the increase. That was before we locked in the free trade agreements. There is food manufacturing and slaughter houses. We heard from previous speakers about meat processing. We have meat processing in the Bendigo electorate, in Kyneton and in parts of Castlemaine, and further north there is food manufacturing. As I said, it accounts for a significant proportion of income that is generated locally. In other parts of our area we export our stone fruit and our apples. Increasingly, though, our apples are being turned into cider. Wine industries is an area that is growing and winemakers are keen to get their product, their boutique wine, into industries overseas.

I want to focus on a couple of our export success stories. We have Hardwicks in Kyneton. It traditionally started out as a domestic business, but now they maintain a tier 1 export licence and have been exporting chilled lamb and frozen lamb produce and chilled beef and frozen beef produce all over the world. When I last caught up with them, about 30 per cent of what they produce goes from the farms that we have in the north to Kyneton and then overseas. For people who do not know, Kyneton is a township of about 6,000. Hardwicks is
one of the major employers in the town—in fact, it is one of the largest private employers that we have in the town. They employ just over 300 people locally. It is a 24-hour operation that they have through their processing. They have workforce issues, and I will come back to those in a moment.

I will give an example of how relevant exports are: export industries are to Central Victoria. What we also know through previous speakers is that our farmers tend to diversify. They have multiple production and cropping going on to ensure that they are getting best value and best bang for their land. We have had tough times in Central Victoria this season, not as tough as the Mallee and not as tough as parts of the Murray, but we have had a number of crops fail this year because they did not get rain at the right time. It is a good start to the season, but they did not get the right rain, so we are not going to see growth in those export markets next year, which is why they are hoping to do well in other crops in the future. Hay, believe it or not, is a new crop that more and more of the farmers in our part of the world are transitioning to, because, as the live cattle export trade grows, they need to take with them Australian hay for the Australian cattle to eat whilst they are in transit. In the north of the Bendigo region, around Goornong, more and more of our farmers are switching to hay so that can be transported and exported with our live cattle trade. Ensuring that we have a robust and rigid export system is critical.

Just to support the comments made by the member for Hunter, what the farmers and the producers in my area are now saying is: 'Great. Done. Tick. Free trade agreements are in, but what about the nontariff barriers? What about how I get my product into the port?' The shadow minister for agriculture is absolutely right that only part of the job has been done by this government. It is good that we have now secured these free trade agreements for the agricultural sector. It has come at the expense of other jobs in our economy and, without the safeguards that were put in place, it was going to come at the expense of a significant number of local jobs in trades. But, now that those safeguards have been adopted, we hope that we will not see the high levels of exploitation in the China free trade agreement that could have happened, with a local workforce.

What needs to now happen to ensure we can maximise the potential of the trade agreements is an effort by this government to deal with the nontariff barriers. I mentioned wine industries. We have more wineries in the Bendigo electorate than we have schools. We have a brilliant network of winemakers that produce beautiful boutique wine, but they sometimes struggle to get their product off the port. In a place like China, every region has a different set of rules. If your wine is going into the Guandao province, there is a different set of rules to wine going into Shanghai. I will quite often get calls from really stressed out local winemakers saying, 'What can you do to help me? My wine is stuck in the port, or 'My wine is stuck here in China, overseas.' Unlike Japan, where we have a well-established, centralised and mature trading relationship, a lot of our Chinese relationships have blossomed overnight. We need to start focusing on how we can help these businesses with the nontariff barriers that currently exist.

This is an issue that is being faced not just by winemakers in Bendigo but by a lot of groups, and they are starting to get very vocal about it. Agricultural exporters say that nontariff barriers to trade remain a problem, despite recent free trade agreements. They have welcomed the government announcing five agricultural counsellors for overseas ports and
they hope that will help fix the problem, but it is not enough if you think about the size to which we want to grow our export industry. This is supposed to be how we get our country growing again. Everyone keeps saying ag is the new black. It has the potential to be the major employer of our economy. If we are serious about that then we need to be able to complete the process and deal with these non-tariff barriers.

There is a strong sense of urgency when it comes to some of our commodities, such as stone fruit and mangoes. Horticultural Exporters' Association executive director Michelle Cristoe said there is an urgent need to address market access. She said they have had market failure this season and therefore will not achieve market access in regions that can make a significant difference. It is so much harder with mangoes. If you have a problem with mangoes getting stuck in a port or trying to get them into one market, it is not like wine, which can sit around for a couple of weeks, even though that hurts the cash flow. Mangoes go off. So there is a need for us to start tackling these non-tariff barriers as soon as possible.

We also heard the Cattle Council’s chief executive officer saying that:

… free trade agreements, while welcome, did not address technical issues.

"We've done some research through Meat and Livestock Australia which has identified that as being significant. We've been working with the government to try and address those issues," he said.

This is another example of how this government needs to start getting on with the work. You cannot just do one part; you have to address all the issues.

There have been problems with China, which suspended all Australian chilled beef imports in 2013 after reviewing its health protocols. There have been problems identified with America to do with certain labelling requirements. These are some of the challenges that we have in front of us. We need to address the non-tariff barriers to investment and government-to-government relationships. We need to help not only our producers; we need to develop a mature trading relationship so that we can resolve issues when they arise.

I also want to touch very quickly on the fact that, if we are serious about building on the potential of the export industry, we need to be developing a skilled workforce locally. We have heard lots of rhetoric from the government and its ministers about how great these free trade agreements will be for local jobs. But without significant safeguards in place to ensure that people working in those industries are not exploited they will not generate the many jobs the government have talked about. In fact, the minister herself has been caught out misleading the Senate on how many jobs these free trade agreements will create. In the space of 10 years the evidence in the modelling shows that about 14,000 jobs will be created as a result of these free trade agreements. If you put that into context, this government has sacked over 16,000 public servants since coming to office. So it is not going to be the great job generator that the government is claiming it will be.

Also we know the ag industry is heavily reliant upon overseas temporary workers. Weekly, if not daily, there is a media report about the exploitation of temporary workers. People who come here as a guest worker, whether they be an international student, a young person here on a working holiday or someone here on a 457 visa, should be paid the same wages under the same conditions as Australian workers. In our ag industry, we have had some of the most grievous and shameful examples of exploitation—such as people being paid as little as $8 an hour or, in some cases, $4 an hour and people who have had their passports confiscated from...
them by the agency they are working for. The farmers say they want to help clean it up. We need the government to step in and stop ignoring this problem and help clean it up.

If we are serious about exploring and celebrating the potential of exports, if we are serious about being a country that makes things and exports things, if we are serious about having ag be one of our growth industries for good jobs and profits in this country, we need to tackle the things that are not in this bill. We need to tackle the non-tariff barriers through good relationships with countries overseas and we need to tackle the workforce pressures that we currently have.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:13): I rise today in support of the Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015. This bill seeks to replaces multiple acts that govern tariff rate export quotas with one act that covers all commodities. This will decrease red tape and clarify a complicated legislative scheme, making it clearer and readily understood.

The current legislative schemes for quotas are specific to meat and dairy products and are not sufficient to address the range of quotas arising under recent free trade agreements. For example, the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement introduced quotas for honey and juices. A comprehensive legislative quota scheme under the Export Control Act 1982 would enable a more secure and flexible legal framework for implementation of these and any future quotas negotiated in pursuit of export opportunities under the agricultural competitiveness white paper.

Where export tariff rate quotas are established by trade agreements Australia seeks to manage the quotas in order to offer exporters the maximum concessions possible on agricultural products. For example, eight new quotas introduced under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement saved exporters approximately $3 million in tariffs in the period January to May 2015.

Based on consultations internally and externally, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has determined that a comprehensive quota regime administered under one act is preferable and more efficient than the existing commodity-specific regimes which are currently administered under four different acts. The Export Control Act 1982 is the preferred vehicle to enable all of the department's export certification arrangements to be carried out under a common set of powers. This would be achieved by abolishing one act in its entirety and parts or divisions of two other acts and consolidating provisions currently sitting within the Export Control Act. The bill consolidates four acts that govern tariff rate export quotas into one act that covers all commodities.

The bill enables the secretary to make orders providing for or in relation to the establishment and administration of a system or systems of tariff rate quotas for the export of goods. Orders may be made to cover goods currently subject to quota regulation but could cover any other goods that quotas may apply to in the future. The bill provides the secretary with the ability to make directions in relation to matters covered by an order. Directions provide flexibility to deal with complex situations relating to an individual exporter in a fair and transparent manner. The amendments enable the directions to override an order. This is consistent with section 17(4) of the Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997, which provides that, if a direction given by the secretary is inconsistent with an order, the direction prevails.
A comprehensive general quota legislative regime will enable a more secure and flexible legal framework for the implementation of existing and any future quotas negotiated in pursuit of export opportunities under the *Agricultural competitiveness white paper* and free trade agreement negotiations. Exporters will gain access to quota tariff rate concessions provided under free trade agreements through contemporary, flexible and efficient regulation. The bill complements the government’s strategic approach for capturing premium markets outlined in the *Agricultural competitiveness white paper* and builds on the gains from recent free trade agreements with our major trading partners.

This bill will facilitate red tape reduction, bringing regulation of quotas under the same legislation as other export controls of the same commodities and offer opportunities for synergies in deployment of resources. It will also enable a consistent approach to the appointment of third parties as authorised officers, where they are permitted by importing countries.

Since 1974, Mundijong, in the electorate of Canning, has been home to Mundella Foods, Western Australia’s premier dairy company. Since 1974, when local farmers Peter and Anne Hector founded Mundella, the local farmers have supplied the milk to Mundella that has resulted in numerous awards for their high-quality products. A company that was founded to capitalise on a surplus of milk has now grown into a thriving enterprise. In the early days the company focused on condensed milk but, over time, expanded into cheese and yoghurt. The expansion of the dairy range by Mundella increased the demand from the local dairy farmers and created jobs in the local community. It is success stories like Mundella’s—of a small business growing from hard work and determination—that strengthen the local community of Canning. Mundella’s operational ethos is to become the leading producer of premium yoghurts in Australia without compromising the quality of the Mundella brand.

The Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 will assist companies like Mundella in expanding their operation beyond the domestic market with clearer and less encumbering regulations. With countries such as China having an ever-increasing demand for dairy products, companies like Mundella are well placed to help bridge that gap. For what started as a small Western Australian farming operation, clear and unambiguous regulations on export tariffs are critical to allowing easy entry into the export market.

Also in the electorate of Canning is Margaret River Premium Meat Exports, a vertically integrated Wagyu beef business run by Pinjarra local Mr John McLeod. Producing premium-branded Margaret River Wagyu beef, Mundella also export to many countries. Commencing business at Cowaramup in 2003, the company now owns the largest herd of purebred Wagyu in Western Australia and employs a network of farmers throughout the South West who manage the breeding, backgrounding and feeding of the Wagyu cattle. Reducing these tariffs means better business for Canning.

The reduction of red tape to allow greater business efficiency and operating protocols has always been a key focus of the Liberal team. The Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015 not only eases red tape burdens; it creates a more workable legislative framework for Canning. For this reason I commend this bill to the House.

**Dr STONE (Murray) (13:20):** I too rise to speak on the Export Control Amendment (Quotas) Bill 2015. This bill consolidates four acts that govern the tariff rate export quotas into one act—the Export Control Act—which will cover all commodities.
We have recently been celebrating new free trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea, we have had a CER—closer economic relationship—with New Zealand that dates way back and we are busily working on new FTAs with India and maybe Hong Kong. We have the Trans-Pacific Partnership too. I would like to think that we will continue on this marvellous rollout of FTAs, which will mean that more food, in particular, and fibre exports will make their way out of the dependence on the big duopoly concentration of retail ownership of the grocery business that we have in Australia and give our growers, particularly of our fine foods and beverages, an opportunity to get better prices in the export market.

In my electorate of Murray, we have a very critical issue in relation to the FTAs—that is, to get all of the protocols in place as soon as possible so that exporters can undertake the necessary changes to their product or processes so that they can produce, export and take full advantage of the new market opportunities. It is not simply a case of ticking off the FTA and then the gates are opened; it is a case of developing the appropriate protocols between the two countries to make sure that the biosecurity arrangements remain safe and that both countries are more than happy with the way that things will be as the products move in whatever direction. Without protocols in place, exporters cannot get their product into new markets. Exporters are responsible for ensuring that the conditions associated with the export of goods and the relevant importing country requirements for the goods are met for them to be exported from Australia. This legislation is designed to provide exporters of agricultural product with a more efficient and flexible approach to exporting in the future.

I have large exporters of meat, fruit and vegetables in my electorate of Murray. Of course, we have been one of the biggest producers of export dairy product for decades. I think it is still the case that the biggest exporting commodity out of the ports of Melbourne and Geelong are milk powders, most of them coming from my electorate. Some of my producers have been exporting from Murray for more than 80 years. In speaking with meat processors and fruit growers who export from my electorate, the No. 1 issue is to remove the burden of red tape. Anything that makes the administrative processes easier is welcomed by agricultural products exporters—whether it is legislation, computerised systems in this new paperless world, or more streamlined processes. It is about reducing the costs of the processes that are required without in any way changing the quality of the outcome of those processes.

We do not want to see things change just for the sake of change. We understand the critical importance of crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's as far as food safety goes, because we in Australia are proud of our reputation for clean, green produce. It gives us a premium in markets—in particular for products like infant milk formula—and there is no way that we will ever compromise the safety of our product by some less adequate procedure or regulation being applied. On the other hand, we cannot be burdened with unnecessary or complicated processes or processes which claim to be full cost recovery but where within that full cost recovery there are costs which are not fair or reasonable to impose on the primary producer or the manufacturer.

As well as the removal of red tape, there is concern over cost recovery by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Our fruit and vegetable exporters have high input costs compared with some of the countries that they are competing with, such as South Africa or Brazil. Given the cost recovery required by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, as it discharges its responsibilities under this bill for processing export
certification, it is critical that those costs do not increase the costs of our produce, making it less competitive when it comes into those new markets. The department must conscientiously deliver efficient and cost-effective services, and we want to see these benchmarked against other countries with similar wage structures, so that we are always competitive and always innovating to make sure that the system works for all parties.

We have a premium product that we export from Australia—whether it is a fresh cherry, infant formula, prime beef or a beautifully produced bottle of olive oil. We acknowledge that we are also competing against other premium products, often with much lower costs of production coming from other parts of the globe. Interpreting protocols for different countries is a big enough minefield. Anything that our government agencies can do to support and assist our exporters is most welcome. I was very pleased in a briefing we had with officials from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to see that the clear intention of those officials was to be seen as part of the team of 'Export Australia' and to be in good communication with the primary producers, with the manufacturers and with the bodies that represent them collectively. I was very pleased to hear about how closely they had communicated and consulted with our primary producers in the development of this bill and in streamlining it. We have to make sure that those close communications continue and persist. One of the concerns expressed in relation to protocols is that sometimes a negotiating party does not fully understand the ramifications of what is being processed and the full stops that it will put into the arrangements that have to be undertaken in future. With that close communication between officials, the primary producers, the abattoirs, the dairy factories and the piggeries, we are going to be able to have everyone on the same page.

The implementation of comprehensive legislative quota scheme under the Export Control Act 1982 will enable a more secure and flexible legal framework for the implementation of any quotas negotiated in pursuit of export opportunities under the coalition government. With our consultation with officials from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources earlier this week, the members of the coalition from rural and regional areas were also very pleased to have a better understanding of how these quotas are determined—how the product opportunities for exports are distributed between competing suppliers in Australia. We listened carefully to how they make sure that they do not simply choose to allocate quota to those who have a history of supply into that market; they also try and make sure that there is a proportion of the quota in some instances for those who are new to the market and just beginning to export. I think that those sorts of considerations are extremely important. We also have to make sure that when we have inspections of our products in preparation for them being exported that that is a cost-recovery process but without any extra overheads for administration which are not sheeted home typically to the primary producer in other countries.

This legislation puts in place regulation of exports, guarantees product integrity and ensures the safety and hygienic preparation of agricultural products for export. Over time, the legislation has expanded to include other elements to increase trade opportunities, including: product descriptions; volume limitations, which also can be called quotas; and industry requirements. The Export Control Act is the legal basis for the regulation of exports and sets the conditions that must be met to export certain goods from Australia.
I strongly commend this bill to the House. It is of enormous importance to the food producers of the great Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District and the non-irrigated parts of the Murray electorate. We have a great strength in food production in Australia, and we have to maximise opportunities by the most appropriate legislation. In that way, we will maximise the benefits of all of these new free trade agreements.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Taxation

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:29): No Australians on modest incomes can breathe easy while those opposite are in government. Nobody in the suburbs and neighbourhoods of my community is out of the woods when it comes to government attacks on their standard of living—a tax on people who are just trying to put food on the table and make ends meet. We know this from their plans to jack up the GST, to make everything in our community more expensive. We know this about their abolition of the schoolkids bonus and we also know this from wave, after wave, after wave of family payment cuts. The latest rounds of cuts would have seen two-parent families with two schoolkids worse off to the tune of $2,600, and a typical one-parent family $4,700 worse off. My community would have been the hardest hit in Queensland, because I have 18,000 people on family tax benefit A, and 16,000 on family tax benefit B.

If we know one thing about this government, it is that even after a humiliating retreat like the one they had to perform today, it is only ever a temporary reprieve. If we know anything about those opposite it is that they are already ready for another attack on people on modest incomes in our community. I am proud to stand with people in my local area and around the country, with the members for Lalor, Bendigo, Newcastle, Jagajaga and others, to push back this latest attack. We will stand together again, and we will stand up for people again when the next attack inevitably comes.

Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (13:31): I rise today to congratulate Campbelltown City Council on hosting the 60th anniversary of the legendary Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost. The festival is steeped in history, dating back to 1956, and is one of Australia's longest running community events. It is named after Australia's most famous ghost, Frederick Fisher, a local Campbelltown farmer who was murdered in 1826. Since his death the ghost of Fisher has been said to have been seen around the Campbelltown area and has become enshrined in local folklore. Each year Campbelltown council aims to enrich the social and cultural fabric of the community, and it is an opportunity to promote, unite and share creative energy, spirit and pride. This year was no different.

Held over 10 days, the festival featured a spectacular street parade, the prestigious Fisher's Ghost Art Award, the annual Fisher's Ghost Fun Run, a street fair, craft exhibition and a giant carnival with fireworks. For me the highlight of the festival was the ever-so-popular street parade. The procession made its way along Campbelltown's main street, Queen Street, with a heavy emphasis on the diversity and vibrancy of the local community in a lively and colourful celebration.
I commend Campbelltown City Council for their continuing support for the festival, which is always a huge success each year. A special mention also goes to the festival’s sponsors: Channel 9 News, C91.3FM, the Macarthur Chronicle and Macarthur Square. I am truly humbled to share these special moments with the residents from all walks of life who make Campbelltown, and indeed Macarthur, so special and so unique.

Vehicle Registration

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:32): At the annual general meeting of the Myrtleford Chamber of Commerce earlier this year the issue of the cost of managing cross-border anomalies was raised. In particular Chris and Nadina Bonacci operate Alpine Spirit High Country Coaches. They are based in Myrtleford and they work largely in the education market, taking students on excursions all around Australia, maybe to Canberra or to Central Australia. They are registered in Victoria as part of the Victorian bus accreditation scheme, and they also operate in South Australia, New South Wales and the ACT. However, each state requires their own bus registration fee. Chris tells me that this cost to business includes in the ACT, $315; South Australia, $415; and Victoria, $484—all on top of the registration that he has to pay.

These examples of cross-border fees and charges impact a large percentage of my businesses, particularly those based at around Wodonga and Albury. The Master Builders Association has published a full report indicating the costs, types of licences, insurance costs and the cost that adds to their businesses. I call on the Commonwealth, in particular, to take a lead role in addressing the cost to business of cross border anomalies, and I call on them to appoint a Commonwealth cross-border commissioner to work in partnership with the New South Wales commissioner to address some of these issues.

Reid Electorate: Deepavali

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:35): Earlier this week I was delighted to attend a magnificent Deepavali event here in Parliament House. This Indian festival of lights is the most celebrated festival of the people from the Indian sub-continent and across the whole world. Deepavali means rows of lights. It is the festival symbolising victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. This event in Parliament House was one of many across the country organised by the Hindu Council of Australia.

The Hindu Council of Australia is a national body representing over 300,000 Australian Hindus. It is based in my electorate of Reid and has been celebrating the festival of lights for the past 15 years on a large scale throughout Australia. The Hindu Council does amazing work in our community. Their mission is to work for a strong, cohesive and active Hindu community in Australia—aiming to live in harmony with other religious and cultural communities. Members of the council are also committed to preserving, promoting and sharing Hindu faith, culture and traditions with other members of the community. I can advise all members here that the Hindu Council successfully achieve their mission and so much more.

To the Hindu Council President, Professor Agar, all of the executive members of his committee, the organisers of this event and all my Indian friends throughout the community of Reid, I say thank you for organising another great series of Deepavali events and celebrations, and for continuing to make such a magnificent contribution to our community.
Family Payments

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:36): Ever since this government was elected, regardless of who they have as Prime Minister, they have tried to cut family tax benefit. They have tried to make it harder for the families with the smallest incomes to survive—about 20,000 families in my electorate that currently get family tax benefit A and B. It is about the same in the neighbouring electorates of Murray and Mallee.

Cuts to family tax benefit hurt regional communities. But, again, the government has backed down—they have been forced to back down—because these communities have demanded of their MPs that they not proceed with voting for this legislation. So, again, the government has backed down. But people in regional Australia are in no doubt that this government will try to bring them back, because that is what they have done every single time: they have brought back another cut.

The other thing that this backdown today demonstrates is that this government is serious about increasing the GST and potentially broadening it to include fresh food. There is no way that you can say to families, 'We are going to cut your family tax benefit' and then hit them a few months later with an increase in the GST. Yesterday in question time we heard that AUSVEG have come out and said that broadening the GST to include fresh food will hurt regional communities. The government needs to come clean and back down on the GST.

Gargett Country Women's Association

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:37): Many times in this House I have praised the work of the Country Women's Association across this great nation. The CWA is a tremendous organisation where women contribute much towards community life and issues affecting rural and regional Australia. Recently, I met with the CWA at Gargett, in the Pioneer Valley west of Mackay. I attended a lunch provided by CWA president Mavis Head and her members Connie Muscat, Dawn Breadsell, Mary Vassallo, Caryn Kempster, Anne Webster, Nola Duncan and Carolyn Tandridge. There are 25 members of Gargett branch, and I thank the ladies for their warm hospitality and feedback on federal issues, as well as the lovely cookbook on slices, which I am yet to use. Recently, I was thrilled to announce we were able to secure a new mobile phone tower at Gargett to fix up mobile black spots under our federal government's $100 million Mobile Black Spot Program.

Current president Mavis Head has been involved with the CWA for 45 years as a member and in varying executive roles. The Gargett CWA was formed in 1948, and their hall was built in about the 1950s. Gargett CWA recently refurbished aspects of their hall, thanks to grants from the Mackay Regional Council. The wider Pioneer division of the CWA is made up of 12 CWA branches spanning from Koumala to Collinsville and the Sarina Range.

Family Payments

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:39): The relief on the other side of this chamber today is absolutely palpable. Do you know why? Because they have backed off on those changes to the family tax benefit just in time to go home to their electorates for Christmas and not have people in their electorates be knocking on their doors waking them up in the morning and at night to say, 'You should not be doing this, because it is not fair.' This is terrific—you can go home to your electorates and not have that. Similarly, when we say GST,
what do they say? They do not want their electorates to know that in the new year they will come back with a new plan.

It is clear. Round 1 of $8.5 billion in cuts to the FTP has beaten back by Labor. But do they give up? No, in they come again, with round 2 and $4.8 billion in cuts to the family tax benefit, to hit 1.6 million families and three million children. We have pushed them back again. Those opposite—our supposedly progressive Prime Minister with his regressive tax—need to come through the doors today and tell Australian families that they can be certain. Rule out that GST, rule out that 15 per cent on food and rule out any other changes to the family tax benefit. That is what those opposite need to do to sleep through Christmas. That is the assurance your electorates need.

Bowman Electorate: Community Services

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:40): There are some important advances in my report card 2015 in Redlands. Chief among them is the social enterprise that is kerbside pick-up, being introduced next year. It is a social enterprise which employs Work for the Dole participants and gives them a chance to get some new skills in recycling and repairing.

We also have swim lessons for some of the most complex and high-needs families. I congratulate Cleveland Aquatic Centre, Aquatic Champions and YMCA Aquatics for offering free lessons to families in my electorate.

The Imago Project is Australia-leading. We are going to identify every zero- to 5-year-old who is struggling on their developmental indices and deliver the care they need, including enhanced education and intense therapies from child psychologists and speech therapists.

Lastly, we have home repairs for pensioners. We are, for the first time in at least a decade, allowing homes of pensioners to be repaired and emergency maintenance performed by Work for the Dole teams. That is a very exciting trial and expansion of this coalition-leading Work for the Dole policy.

That stands in stark contrast to the policy marshmallow that is the Leader of the Opposition, who has never seen a policy challenge that cannot be met with a scare campaign.

We know, with an election coming next year, that a coalition government means more jobs, freer trade, lower taxes and less red tape.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:42): There is nothing fair about the Abbott-Turnbull government's plans to hit Australian families with a 50 per cent increase in the GST and to cut their family tax benefits. Liberal governments have always been about putting the highest burdens on people who can least afford it—and that is exactly what increasing the GST will do. That is why Labor will not support Mr Turnbull's plans to raise the GST. Labor will always stand with Australian families.

Last year, it was a Liberal Prime Minister who tried to cut $8.5 billion from family tax benefits. Labor fought those cuts then, and we won. Then this year, in what they touted as a compromise, they tried again, this time with $4.8 billion in cuts. Eighteen months and two Prime Ministers later, it now appears that Labor has defeated the harshest of these cuts as well. Today, because of Labor's campaigning, because we stood side by side with families, we have defeated these cuts, so 1.6 million families and 3 million children have been spared. Who could forget the Liberals abolishing the schoolkids bonus: a cut of $842 for each
secondary school student and a cut of $422 for each primary school student—a massive attack on household budgets.

Today, the government has admitted that they cannot get these through the parliament. Next week is the last week of parliament before Christmas, and the new Prime Minister should come into this place and give families the certainty that they deserve. No more cuts—enough is enough.

Edith Cowan University

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (13:43): I would like to congratulate the vision and passion of Lyn Farrell, Dean of Edith Cowan University's Bunbury campus, for the great interest generated by the University's first-year engineering course. Next year, for the first time, students from the south-west will be able to access a world-class, accredited engineering and technology course in Bunbury and not have to move to the ECU Joondalup campus in Perth until late in their first year. The year in Bunbury will also include lab work, thanks to an investment in equipment at the Bunbury campus.

Large local employers and the resource and construction industries are very supportive of this course. This program will see greater engagement, professional links and internships between regional students and the local industries that will need their skills and ideas in the future. It is this kind of forward thinking and regional engagement that Edith Cowan University is to be congratulated for.

South West students will be able to study mechanical, civil and chemical engineering and something that creates great interest—ECU's internationally known Bachelor of Technology. This is a motorsports program. Bunbury is the largest regional centre in WA and has the greatest growth rate. It needs to maintain a skilled workforce to support that growth. I congratulate Lyn Farrell and ECU for investing in opportunities for students, business and industry in the South West.

Family Payments

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:45): Today the government backed down on legislation that would have cut $4.8 billion from family payments. Those cuts would have affected 1.6 million families around Australia and three million children. But the government backed down not because it understood how unfair those measures were but because it could not get its unfair legislation through this parliament, thanks to Labor's position on it.

It was legislation that was going to make life so much tougher for families that were already struggling to make ends meet, cuts that would have seen an average family with two children lose $2,600 a year. A typical single-parent family would have lost $4,700 a year. These cuts are top of the government already having abolished the schoolkids bonus of $842 for each secondary school child and $422 for each primary school child.

The government wants to fix its budget mess, but it wants to do so on the back of the lowest income Australians. We know that from the policies that it has brought into this House time and time again. We now also know that the government wants to increase the GST or broaden the GST base. On Tuesday in the MPI they had every opportunity to dismiss that suggestion and did not do so. This is a government that wants to fix its budget mess on the back of the poorest Australians when it has other options of targeting higher income Australians instead.
Australain Garden Council

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (13:46): I rise today with great delight to congratulate the Australian Garden Council, who came together for the first time right here yesterday in Parliament House. I met the garden icon and new CEO and founder of the council, Mr Graham Ross, last year at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains and have met with him several times since. The council is concerned there is no overarching national platform to coordinate gardening in our nation's interest, such as that which exists in Canada. I could see immediately the potential of this idea and have supported the concept of an Australian garden council since.

Yesterday garden enthusiasts and specialists in the field travelled far and wide from across Australia to Canberra to meet for the first time, forming the national executive of the council. They brought together their ideas, showcasing them to the Prime Minister, Minister Colbeck, members, senators and advisers so that they can bring their vision to reality.

With some 150 tourist gardens in Australia nationally, a national coordination to gardening in Australia is essential, particularly in the area of tourism, which plays such a vital economic role for Australia. Indeed, there are some 300 million gardening tourists around the globe, and what this council hopes to do is to attract these tourists to Australia as a premier destination for garden tourism.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (13:48): It does feel like deja vu: Turnbull, Abbott, Turnbull. You might want to add that to the rolling prime ministers list. I was there when Turnbull was leader, I was there when Abbott was leader and now Turnbull is the leader. So we see this time and time again. But I have also seen the scare campaigns. If you want to talk about scare campaigns, there was a doozy of a scare campaign in the last election. We had the 'great big tax on everything', but it is the Liberal Party that wants to put a great big tax on everything. Indeed, it was the Liberal Party who would 'never, ever' have a GST. I was here in the parliament in 1998—the 'never, ever' GST. Mind you, I am going to miss not having Joe Hockey in the House this time, because we will not be able to do the Joe Hockey pyjamas stunt again. We will not be rolling out tins of soup or cakes to work out which bit has GST and which bit does not, because now the GST is going to be on everything. So it is not just increasing to 15 per cent; it is being put on everything.

Who will it impact? Of course, it will hit low-income households who cannot mitigate any costs. The impost upon them will be enormous and they are scared. They are rightly scared because it is you, the Liberal Party, who says we are 'having this conversation'. It is all very interesting. In question time it is 'no, no, no', but out there in every press conference it is, 'We have to debate this issue.' Well, we debated it for a very long time. Craig Emerson came in each day and the pile of legislation got bigger and bigger. Where is he now? It is just deja vu.

(Time expired)

Hughes Electorate: Community Awards

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:49): Earlier this month I was proud to host the Hughes Community Awards to recognise the dedication of volunteers from the Hughes electorate and to thank them for their outstanding commitment. Special thanks go to Adele English, Paul Burgess and Roger Pitt from the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association; Tara Banbury.
from the East Hills Netball Club; Elaine and Gordon Crockett for their fundraising activities; 
Kerry Fozzard from the Child Protection Foundation; Garry Murray from Panania Diggers; 
Mike Weatherly and Brian Collins for supporting groups like Scouts New South Wales; Bob 
Bell from Panania Youth Soccer Club; Phyllis Aldridge from the Revesby Ladies Group; Joan 
Carter from the Sydney Heritage Fleet and Aussie Hero Quilts; John Sutherland for 
supporting people with disabilities; Leanne Reed for her work supporting the National Breast 
Cancer Foundation; Peter McIlveen, who had served as a volunteer Sutherland police officer; 
Austin Gillan, a volunteer bus driver for the Sir Thomas Mitchell Residential Care Facility; 
Ian Hamilton for raising money for charity and working as a Bushcare volunteer; Russell 
Smith and Max Portsmouth for supporting Make-A-Wish Australia; Steven Smith for his 
long-term work on the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal; Barry Grant, as President of 
Woronora River RSL; Fergus Haines for his work with children's charities and 
Neighbourhood Watch; Mitchell Brack for supporting Sutherland SES; and, last of all, a 
special mention to seven-year-old Lennon Maher for supporting ChildFund Australia.

**Goods and Services Tax**

**Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR** (Gorton) (13:51): What we are witnessing here in this place 
is a government that has an obsession with a consumption tax. The goods and services tax is, 
of course, a Liberal tax. Let's remember it was the Liberal party that introduced the goods and 
services tax to this country. John Howard said there would 'never, ever' be a GST, and then of 
course he did a dirty deal with the Democrats and introduced a consumption tax across the 
nation. Across the country, everyone felt it. And then the Liberal Party said, 'We will never 
increase the GST.' But what we know is that Malcolm Turnbull has a plan to raise and 
broaden the consumption tax in this country, to hurt ordinary working families in this country. 
In my own electorate many families will be badly hit by the plans of the Prime Minister to 
introduce a tax on goods and services including fresh fruit and health services. Every time you 
visit the doctor, every time you visit the supermarket, you will be paying more tax because of 
Malcolm Turnbull. Malcolm Turnbull could end this debate today. He could go to the 
dispatch box and say, 'I rule out increasing the GST.' But he will not do that because he has a plan—a plan to inflict pain on ordinary working families. That is the Liberal way.

**Dobell Electorate: Menin Gate Buglers**

**Mrs McNAMARA** (Dobell) (13:52): On Remembrance Day this year the Dobell 
community was honoured to have two Menin Gate buglers along with a representative of the 
Belgian Last Post Association attend a twilight service at The Entrance memorial and 
cenotaph. This special visit was organised by Student Voice, a group which involves students 
from across the Central Coast having a voice in planning, leading and presenting activities. 
The commemorative service was held at 7 pm in order to coincide with the Menin Gate 
buglers playing The Last Post with the 11 am playing on the Western Front. It has been many 
years since Menin Gate buglers have been to Australia. Every day since 1928 the Last Post 
has been played by the buglers under the Menin Gate in Belgium at 8 pm which is organised 
by the Last Post Association.

The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing commemorates British and Commonwealth 
soldiers killed in the Ypres-Salient area during World War I, and whose graves are unknown. 
In researching and planning Remembrance Day the students discovered there were 18 men 
from the Central Coast named on the Menin Gate wall. For the students that brought even
greater significance to the Menin Gate buglers' visit. I am truly impressed by the hard work and mature approach taken by the students in arranging such a poignant event and facilitating the Menin Gate buglers. Their efforts were a great acknowledgement to our service men and women and I congratulate them on the success of this event.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (13:54): A politician's word is their most valuable commodity. When John Howard said that he would never, ever increase the GST, he meant it. It was great to see Queensland Senator Ian Macdonald coming out and saying that his word meant something. Senator Macdonald said that he had made a commitment to the people of Australia that he would never increase the GST above 10 per cent and he was going to stick to his word. Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss, Minister for Defence Senator Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and current Special Minister of State Mal Brough and their colleagues including Tony Abbott, Bronwyn Bishop, Bruce Scott, Ian Macfarlane, Warren Entsch, Bill Heffernan, Sharman Stone, Kevin Andrews and Senator Ronaldson and Senator Abetz, all made the commitment that the GST would never, ever go above 10 per cent. All of those people made that commitment. Why have they not come out and joined their Queensland LNP colleague, Ian Macdonald, in saying they would never, ever support such an increase? Surely the word of people of honour who made a commitment to the Australian people at the election means something.

Mr Craig Kelly: Like 'no carbon tax'. You voted for the carbon tax.

Mr PERRETT: If the member for Hughes thinks this is a moment like that, he is a deluded fool. This is nothing like that at all.

**Bass Electorate: Launceston Cycling Festival**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:55): It is with great pleasure that I stand to speak about my electorate. As a patron of cycling in Tasmania, I am pleased to inform the House that the Launceston Cycling Festival will be held on the weekend of 5-6 December this year. The festival is comprised of several events but is headlined by the Stan Siejka Classic—one of Australia's premier cycling events, incorporating Australia's most iconic criterium—and the Rotary Club of Central Launceston's charity event called Sally's Ride. I acknowledge the Hodgman Liberal government for providing a three-year funding grant of $75,000 last year to assist with a substantial international relaunch of the Stan Siejka Classic. As a result, the 2014 Festival attracted dual Tour de France winner Chris Froome and his former team mate Richie Porte, who is from Launceston, as well as a host of top Australian cyclists.

The other headline event at the festival, Sally's Ride, started in 2002 when Sally Fletcher rode around Tasmania to raise funds for mental health. It is now a community bike event through the picturesque Tamar Valley staged over five distances, which caters for a wide range of cycling ability. I look forward to once again participating in this beautiful ride with friends from the Dad's Army and Coffee Crawler bunches. I am also pleased to report that the federal government is delivering on its promises with $2.5 million committed for the Blue Derby mountain bike trails and $1.47 million for the exciting North East Rail Trail project. These are all exciting cycling-focused developments, and Tasmania is rapidly becoming the recreational cycling capital of the nation.
Goods and Services Tax

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (13:57): I rise to highlight the mendacity of the Liberal Party—a party that promised they would never, ever have a GST. When they dogged on that promise they then promised to never increase it beyond 10 per cent. The mendacity of those opposite knows no bounds. I submit that if they want to solve the revenue problem they have they merely have to apply a GST to the Prime Minister's arrogance. That is untapped potential. Ignore the perpetual energy machine—just tax his arrogance and all our spending and revenue problems will be solved.

We heard ridiculous claims from those opposite, including from Barnaby Joyce, about $100 legs of lamb. What would put up the price of a leg of lamb is a 15 per cent GST on fresh food and vegetables. If you are worried about lamb prices, rule out a GST on fresh food. The truth is that those opposite were happy to play the rule-in, rule-out game in 2009, the last time we had the member for Wentworth as the leader of that political party. Why won't they play that game now; why won't they rule out hitting ordinary Australian families with a 15 per cent tax on food? The truth is that they do not care about low- and middle-income Australians—all they care about is looking after their mates in the top end of town. They will be condemned by history for their mendacious attitude and their attack on the working women and men of Australia.

Robertson, Mr Jim

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:58): Today I wish to pay tribute to a valued member of my electorate, Jim Robertson, who was tragically killed in a road accident last Saturday. Jim was a grazier from Mundubbera in the North Burnett region. People who knew him well said he had a generous spirit and remember him as someone who always puts others first. He could talk all day; he loved a chat. It was a tragedy that Jim was struck and killed by a car outside the South Kolan Hotel on the Bundaberg-Gin Gin Road. He was attending a fundraiser for Bundaberg police officer Senior Constable Dan Lukan at the time—Mr Lukan himself recovering from injuries sustained in a car accident earlier this month. Jim donated $1,000 to the fundraiser 15 minutes before his accident.

Jim was a passionate supporter of local causes, including regional facilities and fundraising events. He sat on the board of Gayndah's aged care facility, Gunther Village, for many years and supported many fundraising events over the years. Jim and his wife made billy tea and damper at events across the region. Jim was 79 years old and lived a full life, but he was still taken from us too soon. My condolences to Jim's wife Jocelyn, son James, and other family members. It was a big loss to the community. Rest in peace, Jim.

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

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Bushfires: South Australia

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:00): I express our deepest sympathy and condolences for the two victims of the devastating South Australian bushfires. There are now also over 13 people in hospital and there are grave concerns held for at least five who are in a critical condition. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.
Late last night I spoke to both the South Australian Premier, Jay Weatherill, and the opposition leader, Steven Marshall, to say that we stand ready to assist in whatever way we can during this tragedy. I know that the Justice Minister, Michael Keenan, has been in close touch with the South Australian authorities.

While conditions have eased, and the emergency warning has been downgraded overnight for Pinery, we know these situations are very unpredictable and we will remain in the closest contact with the authorities in South Australia. People need to stay vigilant and monitor closely the advice from the emergency services, and provided over the ABC.

The bushfire season is upon us, as we know. Our Australian summer is challenging, unpredictable and often, as we have seen just in this week, very cruel. I want to pay tribute and record our great admiration and thanks to the firefighters, and their crews, who are tackling the South Australian fires. The nation is in debt to the bravery of our professional firefighters and the volunteers who put their lives at risk again and again to protect their communities. Other states are always helping and they are helping here, with Victoria providing crews and New South Wales aerial support overnight. Defence has also provided a refuelling support at the RAAF Base at Edinburgh.

As I said earlier this week, the bushfire season has arrived early this year in many parts of Australia, and it just reinforces the fact that all of us have to be very, very vigilant and take care to protect our lives and property, and those of our neighbours, in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): The people of fire-affected South Australia should know that they are in the thoughts of this parliament and of all Australians. We offer our deep condolences to the loved ones of the lost and the injured.

In the last 30 minutes, I have spoken to Nick Champion, the member for Wakefield, who has returned to be with his family and to be with his constituents in fire-affected South Australia. He tells me that right now there are still lots of blocked roads and that the CFS are still putting fires out. He tells me that the fire has lapped right up to the town of Kapunda, where he is, and where he grew up. There are harrowing stories, but the hazard has passed for the time being.

Everyone says they have never seen a fire like this, of such magnitude and ferocity. A volunteer firefighter in Greenock reports that his father, who has lived and farmed in the area for 75 years, has never seen the like of it before: the scale of losses, the damage, the grief, the death, the injuries, the lost of livestock, cars burnt out by the side of the road, with one abandoned in the middle of the highway and others facing the wrong way—destroyed. Shock is the dominant emotion.

We commend the hundreds of South Australian firefighters and CFS volunteers who, in the past 24 hours, have shown incredible bravery in difficult and dangerous circumstances. As a Victorian I am proud that 200 firefighters and 50 trucks are on the way to Adelaide and will start their first shift tomorrow. This is what Australians do. As Adam Lindsay Gordon once said of Australia:

*Life is mainly froth and bubble*

Two things stand like stone—
Kindness in another's trouble.
Courage in your own.

This is the second time in four days our parliament has paused to pay respect to the people who have been lost to bushfires and to salute the resilience and resolve of Australians. With summer having not even begun, these fires are a reminder to all—especially those who live in areas at risk of fire—to be prepared for the very worst. We urge all Australians to have your fire plans ready, and please do everything you can to keep yourself and your family safe in the weeks and months ahead.

The SPEAKER: I thank both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:05): I inform the House that the Minister for Vocational Education and Skills will be away from Question Time today attending to a personal matter. The Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science will answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Special Minister of State

Mr Dreyfus (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:05): My question is to the Special Minister of State. Yesterday the member for Fairfax said:

The member for Fisher stated to me that we needed to destroy Peter Slipper.

Given the minister is responsible for government integrity, were the minister's actions, in seeking to destroy the man he replaced, appropriate and in keeping with the standards he would enforce as a minister?

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the minister, I have listened very carefully, obviously, to all of these questions over the course of the week. It is fair to say that, whilst some of them have got very close to the line, they have made the connection with his ministerial responsibilities. My view is that it is out of order to refer to a statement that the member for Fairfax made in the MPI. It bears no relationship or connection, I should say, to the hook, if I can put it that way, that the member for Isaacs has been drawing—and that is the minister's previous answers and the statement he alluded to. I will give the member for Isaacs an opportunity to rephrase.

Mr Dreyfus: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's previous answers and previous references to the statement that he made.

Given that the minister is responsible for government integrity, were the minister's actions appropriate and in keeping with the standards he would enforce as minister?

Mr Brough (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:07): I say to the honourable member that integrity is uppermost in everything that I have ever done and it will always continue to be.

I refer the member to the comments by the member for Fairfax yesterday. They were so new that he made them at a press conference in Brisbane as the PUP leader in the lead-up to last election! He made all those allegations, and I answered them in full at that time. Furthermore, he then proceeded to take defamation actions against me. He subsequently
withdrew those, informing the media that he was holding out 'an olive branch'. I have answered these queries, these allegations, in full in the past.

Mental Health

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (14:08): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister inform the House of the vital contribution that effective mental health services make to Australia's social and economic future?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:08): I thank the honourable member for her question. Australia's greatest assets are not underground. They are the men and women of Australia—all of us and the rest of our 23 million brilliant Australians. Our greatest asset is our human capital through their talents, their enterprise and their capacity to find new and better ways of doing things through their imagination. That is why mental health is such a significant issue for the health and wellbeing of Australians and their families but also for how we perform as an economy. Nothing diminishes the human capital of Australia more than mental ill-health. Nothing diminishes what Professor Ian Hickie calls 'the mental wealth of our nation' than that—the debilitating impact of mental illness.

Unlike other chronic and degenerative diseases which we focus on with billions of dollars, with compassion and with great attention, mental illness often strikes in the prime of a person's life and it often strikes before they have even properly commenced adulthood.

Currently, the cost of mental illness is estimated to be four per cent of GDP in developed countries. The Commonwealth alone spends $10 billion a year on mental health, and around 60 per cent of this is in welfare support services. It is absolutely vital that we deliver mental health services in a manner that is agile, flexible and modern and uses 21st century technology. And so today, with the Minister for Health, we released the government's response to the National Mental Health Commission's review of mental health programs and services. Our response is about delivering a modern, 21st century mental health system. It puts the individual at the centre of the mental health system. It provides real choice and contestability of mental health services.

Now, our priority as a government is jobs and growth. It is ensuring that our children and our grandchildren have jobs in the future—more jobs and better jobs, greater opportunities, more investment, more enterprise. We know that our economic output is a function of participation, population and productivity. Mental illness diminishes participation and it diminishes productivity. It is estimated that around 37 per cent of people affected by mental ill-health are either unemployed or not in the labour force. This mental health program that we have announced today, these changes and these recommendations that we have adopted, will strongly contribute to ensuring that we have the jobs and growth that Australia deserves.

Special Minister of State

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:11): My question is to the Special Minister of State. I refer to his previous answer, where he referred to the statements by the member for Fairfax yesterday in parliament, where the member for Fairfax said:

… the current member for Fisher at the meeting requested I fund the legal costs of Mr Ashby … Can the minister confirm that he asked the member for Fairfax to hand over $200,000 to fund James Ashby's legal case? Given the minister is responsible for government integrity, were
the minister's actions appropriate and in keeping with the standards he would enforce as minister?

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:12): I again say to the honourable member that, when these allegations were made two years ago, I responded to them decisively then, and those words continue to stand.

Mental Health

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (14:12): My question is to the Minister for Health. What is the government doing to ensure that people living with mental illness get the right type of care at the right time?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health, Minister for Sport and Minister for Aged Care) (14:12): I thank the member for Bowman for his question about the government's key structural reform in mental health service delivery. I was delighted to join the Prime Minister; the chair of the National Mental Health Commission, Allan Fels; and Professor Ian Hickie this morning to talk about what Ian Hickie called a breakthrough.

Ms King: It's because you didn't do anything for two years!

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat will cease interjecting.

Ms LEY: The federal government introduced mental health reforms—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham is warned!

Ms LEY: It is always sad when the opposition plays politics with a subject as important as mental health. Because I know that many people listening are actually interested in what these reforms are, I will just keep talking and I will try to ignore the interjections.

For the first time, service delivery will be tailored to the consumer and their needs, depending on where they are on a spectrum that the sector often calls stepped care. This does not relate to a set of steps where you start at the bottom and finish at the top; this means that whatever your needs are, depending on the step that you are on, you should receive them.

Coming back to what Professor Hickie said this morning, and he put it very well, it is not about him as a clinician and where he might want to practise and what he might want to do from his geographic location; it is about where the consumer is and what they are entitled to and what they can access—because one of the key benefits of this reform is that it will actually see professional resources come away from our capitals and into our regions, because the regional contracting and commissioning that will be done through the Primary Health Networks will pick up what local needs are.

The consumer advisory committees at Primary Health Network level will be informing the model, informing best practice and making sure that those who, up until now, have been missing out receive the care that they need. This includes people discharged from acute mental health facilities who fall through the cracks every time. They are discharged from an acute episode into nothing at all. They will have an individualised care package. They will have something and someone to wrap the resources around them. Digital transformation will mean that one digital mental health gateway will exist for everyone. It is not a matter of 'Take a ticket and wait in a queue.' Help will be right here and right now, when you need it and at
the time you need it. For example, for a young person at two o'clock in the morning or an older person when normal phone lines have closed, there will be a voice at the end of the phone navigating the way through a complex system. We are delighted that every single cent of the almost $10 billion that the federal government allocates for primary mental health care will finally be used at the end point of looking after the consumer, the carer, the patient—the person on a difficult journey through our health system.

Special Minister of State

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:16): My question is to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's repeated references this week to his previous statement, in which he referred to material he provided to the Federal Court.

Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Herbert is warned!

Mr DREYFUS: I refer to a text message to the minister from Karen Doane, a staffer to the former Speaker—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs can start the question again. I could not hear all of it due to the interjections. The member for Herbert is warned, in case he did not hear.

Mr Nikolic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bass is warned!

Mr DREYFUS: My question is to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's repeated references this week to his previous statement, in which he referred to material he provided to the Federal Court. I refer to a text message to the minister from Karen Doane, a staffer to the former Speaker, which was tendered into Federal Court evidence, 'I look forward to your assistance with Clive and the possibility of working with him.' Given the minister is responsible for government integrity, were the minister's actions appropriate and in keeping with the standards he would enforce as minister?

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:17): Mr Speaker, I would have thought that, given your previous role, you would have some respect for the full bench of the Federal Court. I do apologise, Mr Speaker. To the shadow Attorney-General I say: I presume that, given your former role as a Queen's Counsel, you would have some respect for the full bench of the Federal Court. I direct you to their finding, which was—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Member for Grayndler, I am trying to hear the answer.

Mr BROUGH: I say to the shadow Attorney-General: I refer you to the findings of the full bench of the Federal Court, which dealt with all of the evidence put before it and found entirely that I acted appropriately.

Mr DREYFUS: I seek to table the text message from Karen Doane to the minister.

The SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Leave not granted.
National Security

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:18): I seek clarification, Mr Speaker. The minister cannot just keep palming off questions to poor old Barnaby Joyce!

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will resume his seat. The member for Kennedy can ask questions of ministers in question time. If he wishes to seek a clarification or ask me a question, he needs to do it under standing order 103 at the conclusion of question time. Does the member for Kennedy have a question for a minister?

Mr KATTER: I will try again. My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. The United States ex-Secretary of State was stunned by the giving of the Port of Darwin—the South Pacific's only Panamax port—to the Chinese. A moderate but more ominous rebuke came from the President. Minister, has the mindless arrogance and insensitivity previously applied to Indonesia now been extended to the United States? Finally, would not prudent development fear the granting of monopoly powers over all North Australian exports to a foreign Checkpoint Charlie?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:19): I thank the honourable member for that very lucid question. I advise the member that the process that was engaged in with the sale of the Port of Darwin was one which was totally compliant with all of the legal requirements that we have in this country regarding foreign investment. But the Territory government decided to go well beyond the legal requirements.

Mr Katter interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will cease interjecting.

Mr ROBB: I did not interrupt the member for Katter's very interesting question!

Mr Katter interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will cease interjecting.

Mr ROBB: Secondly, the Territory government, in fact, sought the involvement of the Foreign Investment Review Board from day one. They were not required to do that. The Foreign Investment Review Board followed that process from day one over a period of nearly 18 months, I understand. Then the Defence department was engaged and brought into the picture by the Foreign Investment Review Board. The Defence department, at every level, including a level which had contact with the US government, reached a decision. Dennis Richardson, the secretary of Defence, made it very clear that they had no objections to the sale of the Port of Darwin to Landbridge. He said:

No part of Defence had a concern from a security perspective …

The Defence department was consulted about it. They did not have any concerns about it. I advise the member that we, as a government, take great care with the propriety and integrity of foreign investment, as does the Northern Territory government. We have to carry the nation with us. We have to have national support. We have to act in the national interest of our country. That is what happened with the Port of Darwin. That is what happened with other major assets. If we do not get foreign capital into this country, we will not develop as we should.
Taxation

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (14:22): Will the Treasurer inform the House of the importance of reducing the burden of tax on hardworking Australians and the need to remove inefficient and distortionary taxes? How is the government backing Australians who are working, saving and investing to grow our economy and create more jobs?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:22): I thank the member for Bonner for his question. He knows that Australians understand that we are facing difficult global circumstances and that we are transitioning our economy. They know that, as a government, it is important that we build a strong national platform for growth and jobs that backs Australians who are out there working, who are out there saving and who are out there investing.

Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—

Mr Whiteley interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Herbert has been warned. The member for Herbert will not interject again in question time, nor will the member for Braddon.

Mr MORRISON: It is true that next year the average full-time wage earner in Australia will move into the second-top tax bracket. That means they will be paying 41c in the dollar in tax. If you are on the average wage in this country next year, you will be paying 41c in the dollar in tax. That is not a system that is encouraging and backing Australians who are working, who are saving and who are investing. We know that high income taxes penalise Australians and they penalise them for the thing that we should be encouraging most, and that is for their effort.

On this side of the House, when in government this time and when in government before, we have the record of cutting taxes—to cut the burden of taxation on Australians.

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Member for Hotham, that is your final warning.

Mr MORRISON: In 2000, when there was a new tax system, we delivered personal income tax cuts in the order of $12 billion a year—at that time the greatest in our nation's history. In 2003-04, there were further tax cuts of $10.7 billion; 2004-005, tax cuts of $14.7 billion; and 2005-06, tax cuts of $21.7 billion over four years. In the 2006-07 budget, they built on this with further reductions in personal income taxes of $36.7 billion over four years. The coalition government also cut the company tax rate from 36 per cent down to 30 per cent.

When we came to government, we did something that those opposite have trouble doing. When we came to government, we said that we would get rid of the carbon tax. We said that we would get rid of the mining tax. When those opposite railed against the GST when in opposition for all of those years, did they change it? Did they roll it back? No, they rolled over on rolling it back. What we know from those opposite is that they crow about all these things in opposition, but if they ever get the chance to do anything about anything that they have banged on about in opposition, they do not follow through. But when we say we will get rid of taxes, that is what we do. We got rid of the carbon tax. We got rid of the mining tax. And, on top of that, we have also got rid of the bank deposits tax that was introduced by the now shadow Treasurer when he was Treasurer. So this government gets rid of taxes. We
reduce taxes, because we know a better tax system is going to encourage Australians. It is going to back Australians. We have form on cutting taxes and reducing taxes. When we talk about a better tax system, that is what we are about achieving. When it comes to tax reform, those opposite are on a smoko.

Special Minister of State

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:25): My question is again to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's repeated references this week to his previous statement in which he referred to material he provided to the Federal Court. I refer to an email to the minister from Karen Doane, a MOP(S) Act employee, which was tendered in Federal Court evidence, and I quote: 'Please find attached a resume for consideration by Mr Palmer for a position at the Coolum golf and spa resort.' Given the minister is responsible for government integrity, were the minister's actions appropriate and in-keeping with the standards he would enforce as minister?

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:26): Yes.

Industry

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:26): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. I remind the minister that in 2013 the coalition government made a commitment to deliver $1 billion per annum in red and green tape savings for business. Will you update the House on how this commitment is assisting Australian industry, in particular, the manufacturing sector?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:26): I thank the member for Bennelong for his question. I know that he is particularly interested in deregulation and the impact that it is having on the economy in terms of jobs and growth. Sometimes you forget that the enormous changes that we have wrought in the area of deregulation over the last two years have had quite an impact on businesses themselves. An example came along to me recently, which I think needs to be amplified. Overall, the work of the now minister for resources, the minister for social security and the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister has delivered the repeal of 10,000 legislative instruments and 3,600 acts of parliament over the last two years, which has delivered $4½ billion of savings to business in red and green tape. It is a dramatic improvement for business across Australia. I know that the three gentlemen concerned have been relentless in driving this agenda, because it is not just good policy; it actually has an impact on the profit margins of businesses and creates jobs and growth.

Recently, I got an example of the impact it has had on businesses. Rheem Australia, the water heater manufacturing business near the member for Bennelong's electorate at Rydalmere, told me that, when the Labor government was in power from 2008 to 2013, they had 35 full-time equivalent employees moved from their research and development and innovation section across to their government regulation section to deal with a new regulation introduced by Labor every six weeks over that period. It was so ridiculous that they had 35 people moved from research and development to government regulation to deal with all the red and green tape imposed by the former government. But, because of the changes that we have brought about, in the last two years they have been able to move all those 35 full-time
equivalent employees back into the research and development division of Rheem. This is extremely important. They are working on things like a $60 million expansion of the Rydalmere factory; product improvements that have enabled Rheem to extend the warranties on their electric heaters, without increasing costs; a heat solution that allows waste heat to be recovered from renewable energy sources and used to provide commercial hot water, which is being sold in Dubai. These are good-news stories about the impact of deregulation and how it has allowed businesses to improve and innovate, be creative and invest in research and development, so improving jobs and growth in the Australian economy.

**Special Minister of State**

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:29): I refer to the minister's previous answer and to the minister's responsibility for the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act. Can the minister explain why it is appropriate or acceptable to offer inducements to an employee under the MoPS Act to provide unauthorised access to a member of parliament's official diary?

**Mr BROUGH** (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:30): As much as you may wish to verbal, shadow Attorney-General, let me make it very clear that I never said any such thing. As much as you may try to avoid the unfortunate fact for you—

*Mr Mitchell interjecting—*

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

**Mr BROUGH:** you, the shadow Attorney-General—the full bench of the Federal Court examined all of the matters that you were wishing to prosecute here today and found in full. I would refer you to those comments, as unfortunate as they are, in you prosecuting your arguments.

*Ms Burke interjecting—*

*Mr Bowen interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chisholm will cease interjecting. I remind the member for McMahon that I have asked him to cease interjecting.

**Welfare Fraud**

**Mr VARVARIS** (Barton) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Human services. Will the minister update the House on what the government is doing to address welfare fraud?

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (14:31): Let me thank the honourable member for his question and for all his hard work looking after vulnerable Australians in his electorate. The government is pretty serious about protecting the integrity of our $154 billion welfare system—it is a third of all government outlays—and will continue to take a very strong stance against welfare fraud. We are pretty serious about protecting the integrity of the welfare system. Most Australians are doing the right thing. Most Australians only claim and receive the benefits they are entitled to, and this government wants to ensure that those in support are able to continue to get that support. But the unfortunate reality is that some welfare recipients believe it is okay to cheat the system.

*Ms Butler interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned!

Mr ROBERT: The government says to those: you are not just cheating and stealing from the government; you are stealing from your neighbour; you are stealing from those genuinely in need. So today the government announced the establishment of Taskforce Integrity, which will ensure taxpayers' money only goes to those who genuinely need a helping hand. Taskforce Integrity is the largest welfare taskforce ever initiated by government. It is led by the Department of Human Services. Forty-seven million dollars has been provided to it over the next four years. There are 100 men and women as part of the taskforce, led by an Assistant Commissioner of the Federal Police, with eight other AFP officers, supplemented and supported by the 300 other investigators in the department, as well as 1,900 others in the compliance section. It is part of the 2015 welfare integrity budget measure, which is projected to recoup a staggering $1.7 billion. This is on top of the $3 billion in overpayments and fraudulent payments my department has already identified and has already commenced stages of recovery.

Taskforce Integrity will target specific geographic areas where data analysis points to a high risk of noncompliance and suspected welfare fraud. While the taskforce focuses on specific locations, the department will continue its nationwide fraud and noncompliance program which saved taxpayers a record $918 million last year. So, as you can see, Taskforce Integrity will significantly bolster the already substantial assets the department has. The pilot program has been very successful. There have been 1,107 compliance reviews, 790 cases of overpayments and 36 cases of fraud. You would think those opposite would support this measure. You would think those opposite would support welfare fraud. The member for Jagajaga came out this morning complaining that we are being too tough. There is a pattern here. Labor complained about fraud in the CFMEU, Labor complained about the royal commission, Labor complained about fraud on construction sites and the ABCC— (Time expired)

Special Minister of State

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:34): My question is again to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's responsibility for the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act. As a matter of government policy, what action does the minister take when a staff member employed under that act provides documents held on a computer in a member of parliament's office to a person who is not authorised to access those documents?

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the Special Minister of State, I remind members on my left that I need to hear the question, which I have heard. I need to hear the answer, given that the questions are referring to previous answers. If there is a wall of interjections, I will deal with it. The minister has the call.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen is warned! The minister has the call.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:35): If I am to understand the member's question, the answer I would provide is that you would seek advice from the department against the specific issues that are raised and deal with it appropriately.
Bushfires

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister update the House on the status of the bushfires in South Australia?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (14:36): I thank the member for Barker for that question. I acknowledge that his electorate has been the subject of two significant fires: one at Lamaroo and one near Bordertown. I thank him for keeping me informed about developments within his electorate over the past 24 hours. Like the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, we have all been shocked by the scale and the ferocity of the fires in South Australia yesterday. Fortunately, the fire perimeter has not expanded since midnight, but a watch-and-act warning remains in place. I spoke to my colleague, Tony Piccolo, the South Australian Minister for Emergency Services, just before question time and he has informed me that containment activities are expected to continue for several days, but the focus of South Australian authorities is now on bringing those fires under control. We in Australia know that bushfires are a feature of our environment, but the impact of these bushfires can be devastating, with loss of life, livelihoods and infrastructure.

It is going to take us some time to get a complete picture about what impact this fire has had on the South Australian community but, as the House would be aware, the fires have resulted in at least two confirmed deaths. I offer the federal government's condolences to the families and to all of those affected. Whilst the damage is still being assessed, it is clear that the impacts of this fire are very widespread. At least 16 homes and 22 other buildings have been destroyed. Over 85,000 hectares of land has been affected, with substantial crop and livestock losses. Very sadly, there are reports of at least 19 injuries. Some of them are very serious.

For the second time in recent weeks we are extremely grateful for our emergency services personnel, who are still working hard to bring this blaze under control. As well as highlighting the professionalism and dedication of South Australia's firefighters, yesterday showed the enormous strength of the national cooperation efforts, as both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition referred to in their contributions. New South Wales has sent two DC10 and a C130 aerial tankers and the Defence Force provided support in refuelling those tankers. Geoscience Australia has assisted and continues to assist with fire-mapping capabilities. Victoria have sent 50 strike teams, including 50 trucks and 200 personnel, to South Australia. They will commence operations from tomorrow.

I have also spoken to the member for Wakefield, Mr Nick Champion, Senator Sean Edwards and, as I have said, the member for Barker. I acknowledge that the electorate of the member for Wakefield, in particular, has been very severely affected by these fires in communities that he knows very well. He is out there working to alleviate community concern within bushfire affected areas.

Under longstanding arrangements, the Commonwealth will assist the South Australian government with the recovery. These fires remind us all of the need to prepare for what is going to be a very difficult fire season. I would urge every Australian to proactively think through what they are going to do in the event of an emergency.
Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:39): My question is, again, to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the minister's answers in question time this week. Clause 1.2 of the Prime Minister's statement of ministerial standards states:

In recognition that public office is a public trust, therefore, the people of Australia are entitled to expect that, as a matter of principle, Ministers will act with due regard for integrity, fairness, accountability, responsibility and the public interest …

Will the minister act in the public interest and resign?

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:39): After due consideration, no.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (14:40):

Toowoomba Second Range Crossing

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:40): I thank the member for Wright for the question. The second range crossing at Toowoomba is a major project. It is probably the biggest single project ever in regional Australia road construction. It is a project that I know the honourable member for Wright, the honourable member for Groom and the honourable member for Maranoa, in particular, have been pursuing now for generations. It is a project that did not get much support from the opposite side, but the member for Wright and the member for Groom have pursued the arguments and I am delighted to see that the project is now underway. The contract has been let, and on Sunday week the Prime Minister and I, along with the member for Wright and the member for Groom, will be turning the first sod for the beginning of this very substantial project.

Valued at about $1.3 billion, this project will relieve the burden of traffic that goes through the heart of Toowoomba. It will certainly provides to people like Toby the opportunity to travel from his base in the Lockyer Valley up to Toowoomba, which he would do on many occasions, much more easily. It could potentially take 30 minutes or more off the journey time and, of course, it would be in a safe and much more convenient way.

This is one of the great regional road construction projects of this government's $50 billion construction program. It will make a huge difference to the lifestyle of the people who live in the city of Toowoomba, Australia's largest inland provincial city. As a result, the shopping circumstances in the upgraded central business district of Toowoomba will be a more pleasant place for people to come to and undertake their retail therapy. This is a road project that will be really transformational for Toowoomba, connecting the cities of Brisbane and Melbourne in a more rapid way and providing transit and access to the markets for Western Queensland. It is one of those projects that will make a real difference to our country. I congratulate the honourable member and his colleagues on their advocacy which has led to this great project at last coming to fruition.
Special Minister of State

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to clause 7.1 of the Prime Minister's statement of ministerial standards and I refer to the Special Minister of State's answer to the question, 'Did you ask James Ashby to procure copies of Peter Slipper's diary for you?' He answered, 'Yes, I did.' How does that reconcile with your statement of ministerial standards?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:43): I thank the honourable member for his question. The facts and circumstances of this matter, all of which occurred prior to the last election and have been well known for considerable time, have remain unchanged.

Mr TURNBULL: The facts and circumstances relating to this matter have been very well known for some years and were well known prior to the last election—

Mr Danby interjecting—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will leave under 94(a).

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand is warned.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley is warned.

Mr Danby interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne Ports is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: When Mr Brough stood for parliament to represent his constituency. There are no new facts, matters or circumstances that have come to hand, and so there is no basis for the shadow Attorney-General's withering torrent of cross-examination. If there are new developments, obviously, they will be considered.

Lyons Electorate: Airport Leasing Arrangements

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (14:45): My constituency question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development on behalf of the ratepayers of the Northern Midlands Council. As the minister would know by virtue of my previous representations, the Northern Midlands Council and the Launceston Airport have been in dispute over the ex-gratia payment paid to council in lieu of rates on Commonwealth land. Can the minister please advise how this impasse can be resolved and what capacity the Commonwealth has to intervene to achieve a positive outcome for the ratepayers of the Northern Midlands?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:46): I thank the honourable member for his question. I recognise his many representations to seek to resolve this issue over the ex-gratia payment of rates between the Northern Midlands Council and the owners of Launceston Airport.

I understand that the owners of Launceston Airport have appealed the valuation of the airport made by the Tasmanian Valuer-General through the Tasmanian courts, and so it is not
appropriate for me to comment on too many details in relation to those issues. But let me simply make the point that my department has been endeavouring to act as a mediator between the council and Launceston Airport, but so far that mediation has not been successful.

For the benefit of the House, neither the Commonwealth nor airport lessee companies are under any statutory obligation to pay local government rates. That has been the standard principle that applies to government land since time immemorial, and that has been transferred in the leasing arrangements under the privatisation of airports. However, there is an expectation that there will be rate neutrality between airport or other Commonwealth land when it comes to commercial developments that occur on the property. The fact that someone builds shops on Commonwealth land should not exempt those commercial businesses from paying the sort of rates that their competitors have to across the property boundary. So the system is designed so that there is a negotiated arrangement in regard to the amount of rates that should be applicable to the lease, bearing in mind that the aeronautical activities will be exempt but that any commercial activities should incur the normal rates.

I think it is important that the Northern Midlands Council and Launceston Airport reach an agreement on this issue. Other councils and other airports across the nation, for decades, have been able to do it, and it should not be beyond the ability of the council and the airport to do it also in Launceston. Whilst we must allow the processes of the court to run their course, we need to continue with mediation in relation to this matter—and my department remains ready to participate and to assist in that process, however best we can.

**Special Minister of State**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Prime Minister. In former Prime Minister Abbott's ministry, Senator Sinodinos had to stand aside. Since then the new Prime Minister has appointed a Special Minister of State, a person who, by his own admission on 60 Minutes, has engaged in behaviour incompatible with the responsibilities that he now holds. Are the standards of this Prime Minister lower than the standards of Tony Abbott?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr Dreyfus: Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The SPEAKER: No. The member for Isaacs will resume his seat. I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to refer to members by their correct titles. He did not refer to the member for Warringah by his correct title.

Mr SHORTEN: My question is to the Prime Minister. In former Prime Minister Abbott's ministry, Senator Sinodinos had to stand aside. Since then the new Prime Minister has appointed a Special Minister of State, a person who, by their own admission on 60 Minutes, has clearly engaged in behaviour incompatible with the responsibilities that they now hold. Are the standards of this Prime Minister lower than the standards of the member of Warringah?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:50): I thank the honourable member for his question. I note his keen interest in high parliamentary standards. He has led by
example for many years. I say to the honourable member that the standards of conduct, as set out in the minister standards, are unchanged, as he well knows.

**Bass Electorate: Defence Science and Technology**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (14:50): My constituency question is to the Minister for Defence Materiel and Science. Over the last 60 years, the Defence Science and Technology Group facility in my electorate of Bass has provided world-leading food science outcomes, including ration packs for our troops. Will the minister advise the House of new innovative opportunities being considered for the Scottsdale facility, including the potential of new microwave-assisted thermal sterilisation technology, which I have been strongly advocating for?

Mr Perrett interjecting—

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned. The member for Chifley has already been warned.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (14:51): I thank the member for Bass for his question. As everyone in this House knows, the member for Bass is a decorated former member of the regiment—duty first. Of course, he would have consumed a few ration packs in his time and would know that they are not necessarily the best tasting items. But he also has been, as he says, a very strong advocate for the defence science establishment in his electorate at Scottsdale. Down there he also has a very large agricultural sector. What the member refers to is the potential to have defence science working with commerce and local agricultural producers in leading-edge technology to produce not only a better product for our soldiers as they deploy but also the potential for great new job opportunities down in the northern part of Tasmania.

He asks is this particular technology going to be deployed. Well, I can advise the member that a study was concluded in September of last year, and I am expecting some advice to come to me. If that advice is that the business case warrants it, I would be hoping that we would be able to install a piece of machinery down there that would allow the agricultural sector to work with the defence sector and most particularly the Defence scientist. The role of Defence science in this nation is not well known. In fact, only CSIRO has more PhDs than Defence, and their contribution to science and innovation is critical not only to protecting our Defence forces but for creating the jobs of the future, including in Scottsdale, in the member’s electorate.

Whilst at the dispatch box, I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate Dr Mark Patterson, who last night was the recipient of the 2015 Minister's Award for Achievement in Defence Science, and the incredible work that he has done in digger works in ensuring that the men and women of our Defence Force who put their lives on the line in our protection have had the best equipment available. It is the science being applied—the application of science through DSTG and his team—that has made that possible. I congratulate Dr Patterson, and I thank the member for his interest in his electorate and in Defence, security and science.
MOTIONS
Prime Minister
Attempted Censure

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:53): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) when asked on 60 Minutes if he had asked James Ashby to procure copies of Peter Slipper's diary for him, the now Special Minister of State admitted - and I quote, “Yes, I did”;

(b) the Special Minister of State is referred to in an Australian Federal Police search warrant in relation to two separate criminal offences under the Criminal Code Act 1995 and the Crimes Act 1914;

(c) the Minister's actions in relation to the Ashby affair render him completely unfit to have ministerial responsibility for Government integrity as the Special Minister of State;

(d) the Special Minister of State was appointed by the Prime Minister as a member of the Ministry as reward for being a key henchman in the overthrow of the former Prime Minister; and

(e) the Prime Minister was fully aware of the extent of the Special Minister of State's involvement in the Ashby Affair prior to giving him responsibility for Government integrity; and

(2) censures the Prime Minister for his:

(a) complete lack of judgement in appointing the Member for Fisher as the Special Minister of State when he was fully aware of the extent of the Minister's involvement in the Ashby affair; and

(b) failure to show leadership and dismiss or even stand aside the Special Minister of State from his ministerial responsibilities.

Leave not granted.

Mr DREYFUS: I move:

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

(1) notes that:

(a) when asked on 60 Minutes if he had asked James Ashby to procure copies of Peter Slipper's diary for him, the now Special Minister of State admitted - and I quote, “Yes, I did”;

(b) the Special Minister of State is referred to in an Australian Federal Police search warrant in relation to two separate criminal offences under the Criminal Code Act 1995 and the Crimes Act 1914;

(c) the Minister's actions in relation to the Ashby affair render him completely unfit to have ministerial responsibility for Government integrity as the Special Minister of State;

(d) the Special Minister of State was appointed by the Prime Minister as a member of the Ministry as reward for being a key henchman in the overthrow of the former Prime Minister; and

(e) the Prime Minister was fully aware of the extent of the Special Minister of State's involvement in the Ashby Affair prior to giving him responsibility for Government integrity; and

(2) censures the Prime Minister for his:

(a) complete lack of judgement in appointing the Member for Fisher as the Special Minister of State when he was fully aware of the extent of the Minister's involvement in the Ashby affair; and

(b) failure to show leadership and dismiss or even stand aside the Special Minister of State from his ministerial responsibilities.
The government refuses to admit that the member for Fisher's position has—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Isaacs will resume his seat.

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:57): I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the member for Isaacs be no longer heard.

The House divided. [15:02]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 83
Noes ...................... 47
Majority ................ 36

**AYES**

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, GR
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gamban, T
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD (teller)
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:04): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:04): Do they really think that they can cover this up? He confessed on television—

The SPEAKER: The member for Watson will resume his seat. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, he needs to second the motion, rather than just nod at you. A nod is not sufficient.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat. Does the member for Watson second the motion?

Mr BURKE: I second the motion.

The SPEAKER: The member for Watson will resume his seat.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:04): I move:

That the member for Watson be no longer heard.
The **SPEAKER:** The question is that the member for Watson no longer be heard.
The House divided. [15:06]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ................... 82
Noes ................... 47
Majority ............... 35

**AYES**
Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O’Dwyer, KM
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD (teller)
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

**NOES**
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Question agreed to.

The Speaker (15:07): The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

Mr Pyne (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:07): I move:

That the question be now put.

The House divided. [15:08]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................. 82
Noes ................... 47
Majority .............. 35

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hawke, AG
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
AYES

Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O’Dwyer, KM
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Lundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Dowd, KD
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LTD
Giles, AJ
Hall, JO (teller)
Husic, EN
Leigh, AK
Mitchell, RG
O’Neill, CE
Parke, M
Pilberserk, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Eliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Marles, RD
Neumann, SK
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Thomson, KJ
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:09): The question now is that the motion moved by the honourable member for Isaacs be agreed to.

The House divided [15:11]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 47
Noes ...................... 82
Majority ................ 35

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodman, G
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LTD
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husie, EN
Leigh, AK
Mitchell, RG
O’Neil, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Mr Turnbull: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:14): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

COMMITTEES

Membership

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:14): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Buchholz be discharged from the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration and that, in his place, Ms Marino be appointed a member of the committee;
(2) Mr Buchholz be discharged from the House Committee and that, in his place, Ms Marino be appointed a member of the committee;

Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Climate Change

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

The Government's failure to act on climate change.

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 BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (15:15): At the outset, as a South Australian MP, can I add my remarks to the words of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others about the bushfire disasters in South Australia over the last 36 hours. My wife's family has lost two farms—her auntie's and her cousin's. My thoughts are with Helen and Andrew, Belinda and Ed. All our thoughts are with the volunteer firefighters, the firefighters, and other members of the community who are dealing with these awful disasters in my state of South Australia.

The Prime Minister is off to get on a plane and jet off overseas to attend another series of summits: CHOGM in Malta and then the much awaited Paris conference on climate change. I think most people in this House are pleased that there is very good reason to hope that this conference in Paris, the 21st conference of the parties, will be a very positive conference that will finally yield an ambitious agreement, including all significant countries in the world seeking to reduce carbon pollution levels and ensure that global warming does not extend beyond two degrees of warming above pre-industrial levels. We are not there yet, but it is certainly a much better position than I think anyone thought we would be in only 18 or 24 months ago.

I think it is fair to say also that the international community, by and large, has greeted the demise of the member for Warringah as Prime Minister of Australia and Stephen Harper as the Prime Minister of Canada with unadulterated glee. Both of those prime ministers were regarded, rightly or wrongly—we say rightly, some others may say wrongly—as the twin proponents of the argument not to achieve an ambitious agreement in Paris. For that reason I think it is broadly thought that the new Australian Prime Minister and the new Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, will be received very warmly indeed, just for not being the previous prime ministers of Australia and Canada.

Indeed, Justin Trudeau, as we know, will bring a substantially different policy platform for Canada—a promise to introduce an emissions trading scheme, a promise to look at more ambitious targets, a very ambitious program of green energy. But the Australian Prime Minister, although he will undoubtedly be presenting a friendlier face to the international community on climate change, will still be selling the old wares that were developed by the member for Warringah, precisely with the ambition of doing nothing. In that sense they are working, because they are doing nothing.
He will be presenting 2030 targets that put Australia right at the back of the pack. He will present no long-term target for carbon pollution reduction at all, because the member for Warringah stripped from the statute books the idea that there should be a mid-century ambition about decarbonising this economy. It was stripped from the statute books. Although there is lip-service to the two-degree commitment, and certainly we think the Minister for the Environment genuinley sees that commitment as important, there is still the four-degree scenario of the International Energy Agency right the centre of this government's energy white paper.

But the biggest immediate problem this country has, which the Prime Minister continues to endure, is the lack of a policy framework to constrain emissions at all, let alone to reduce them. The Climate Action Tracker, an international NGO that not only assesses the targets that different countries are bringing to this conference but also assesses the policy mechanisms to see whether those targets are going to be achieved, has found that, notwithstanding the fact that Australia's targets are at the weaker end of the global spectrum, Australia still has the largest gap of any nation between the targets that the Prime Minister is taking to Paris and the policy mechanisms to achieve those targets.

If you watched the National Press Club address yesterday, you would be forgiven for thinking that Australia is leading the world and that people are flocking over here to learn all the wonders of the Emissions Reduction Fund and the safeguards mechanism. Although the Minister for the Environment is not usually one for overstatement and triumphalism—I will say that—he was a little bit triumphalist yesterday. He dropped a couple of stories and said to the National Press Club that Australia was going to achieve its Kyoto 2 target. He did not present any new data about this. He had a PowerPoint for the joy of the Press Club, but there was no year-by-year data to update the March data that was published by the department.

It is probably true in a technical sense that Australia, happily, will achieve its Kyoto 2 commitment. It is probably true, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with this government's climate change policy. There are three reasons why we will achieve the Kyoto 2 commitment. The first is the carryover from the first period of 129 million tonnes. The second is the fact that in 2013 and 2014 we overperformed. We had emissions significantly below the average for the eight-year period between 2013 and 2020—unsurprisingly, really, because of the impact of the renewable energy targets, the reduction in emissions from the national electricity market and the high point of reductions in emissions from the Queensland land sector because of land-clearing restrictions put in place by the Queensland state Labor governments of Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh. So those two reasons have nothing whatsoever to do with this government's policies.

The only thing this government can take credit for in the reductions in the total abatement task that the minister published is strangling economic activity. The coalmining sector and the heavy manufacturing sector are slowing down, as a result of which 200 million tonnes or thereabouts is stripped from the projections of emissions between now and 2020. That apparently is a cause for celebration by the Minister for the Environment.

There is no data year on year between now and 2020 other than the data that the department published in March that would indicate that by 2020 pollution levels will be 17 per cent above 2000 levels—not five per cent below, but 17 per cent above. We do not think that is going to happen—we think it will be substantially lower than that, but there is no
question that emission levels under this government are rising. There is no question that emission levels under this government will be higher in 2020 than they are now. The minister did not present any year-on-year data at the National Press Club yesterday, and he did not answer the question that was asked of him in question time as to whether or not emission levels in 2020 would be higher or lower than they are now. We know that emission levels will be higher. RepuTex says, using the same datasets the department uses that were incorporated ambiguously into the powerpoint yesterday, that emission levels will be six per cent higher in 2020 than they are today, in spite of the fact that strangling economic activity has yielded a dividend for this Minister for the Environment, and four per cent higher than 2000 levels—not five per cent below but four per cent higher.

Under the last Labor government emissions came down by eight per cent, from 600 million tonnes in the last year of the Howard government to 550 million tonnes in the last year of the Labor government. Under this new Prime Minister, with a friendlier face on climate change, emission levels will increase between him taking over as Prime Minister and 2020 by six per cent. Why? Because the attack on the renewable energy industry last year has meant that electricity emissions rose by four per cent alone in the NEM in the last financial year of 2014-15; emissions are rising in the land sector because of Campbell Newman winding back the Peter Beattie-Anna Bligh land clearing restrictions; and there are whole range of other reasons.

Let us recap: what will the new Prime Minister be taking to Paris? He will be taking weak targets. He will be taking no ambition on renewable energy beyond 2020. When the Leader of the Opposition asked the new Prime Minister whether he would join with Labor in a 50 per cent goal for renewable energy by 2030, he called that goal reckless. The office of renewables innovation in the minister's department got a bit of a rap again yesterday. That brings in the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and ARENA. Of course the minister did not repeat the fact that the Clean Energy Finance Corporation Abolition Bill is still on the agenda for this House. The Minister for Finance is still banking as a saving all of the money allocated to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, yet still this minister trumpets the idea that there is an office for renewables innovation and that incorporate two agencies that do fantastic work, creatures of the last Labor government, who are in the gunsights of this government.

We have a safeguards mechanism that the Prime Minister will take to Paris that will do nothing to constrain emissions of the 20 biggest polluters between now and 2030—absolutely nothing. It will do nothing to constrain the emissions of four-fifths of all polluters covered by it, which is why we need a cap on carbon pollution. And of course he will take the Emissions Reduction Fund that he himself, the Prime Minister, in a moment of honesty, said five or six years ago would be a recipe for fiscal recklessness on a grand scale. So Paris will receive a friendlier face on climate change but there will be the same old policies. (Time expired)

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (15:26): The two things come out of this discussion. First, Labor wants to bring back the carbon tax. No matter what else they say, they want higher electricity prices, they want higher gas prices, they want a higher cost of living and they want to make sure that Australian farmers are paying higher prices for fertilisers. Second, they are just a little bit embarrassed and disappointed that we are meeting our targets, that we are beating our targets, and that we are doing it without their carbon tax.
Let me say something about our targets and their targets, about policies under us and under the Labor Party and also about some of their sources.

Let me begin with the issue of targets. We do share some common targets, but there is one small difference. In 2012, when they left office, they left a gap of 755 million tonnes between what they predicted would occur and what was needed to meet their targets. There was a gap of 755 million tonnes. Under us that gap has dropped to 421 million tonnes, and then 236 million tonnes and, now, we have reached a point of meeting and beating our targets officially, with yesterday's formal update from the Department of the Environment before the Paris conference. It shows that we have had a reduction in predicted emissions of 264 million tonnes since the last update. The last update was the one they referred to yesterday in question time. When I asked them to table that update, they would not do it— they would not do it because they knew they were using figures that had already been superseded by the latest formal departmental assessment. It was a moment of cringeworthy embarrassment on their behalf.

As a consequence of that, we see a deep sense of shame on their behalf because we are meeting and beating our targets, and now they are arguing there should be higher emissions, from some of the interjections that we hear from our friends on the other side. It has reached the point of absurdity, so much so that yesterday the shadow minister held a press conference decrying not just their own rules, not just the United Nation's rules, but the very thing they demanded. He said it was an outrage that Australia is using carryover from the previous international assessment period. I did some research last night, and I found a little document. This document is called Submission under the Kyoto protocol: Quantified emission limitation or reduction objective (QELRO)—November 2012. In other words, it was the Australian submission to the United Nations in relation to our targets, known in the trade as QELROs.

Australia signed up to new targets: this is the minus five per cent equivalent or the minus 13 per cent from 2005 to 2020. Under Labor, they did that on the basis that confirmation of its provisional QELRO will be conditional on—in other words they said the only way we are accepting these targets will be conditional on:

The rules applying to carryover of units from the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol being appropriate for Australia.

They set, not just as an objective but as a condition for signing on, that carryover can be available. The UNFCCC did that for a reason. They did that for every country. They did that in a way that allowed Australia to do that, and they did that because it provides incentives for countries to overachieve. So there is a deep, powerful policy objective behind this. Labor incorporated this in its national accounting rules. Labor counted this carryover, and I am not critical of any of that. In fact, Labor made their participation in the entire set of target frameworks conditional upon setting carryover—it is there in black and white, and I table the conditions.

But yesterday they said it is an accounting trick that the coalition government would use our rules. That argument seems to have disappeared from his protestations today, because it took them three hours to work out that it was not just their rules, not just the UN rules, but it was their demanded conditions that these accounting frameworks be allowed. So we have not changed anything, except we have reduced emissions.
We have reduced emissions not just by the 755 million tonnes but by 783 million tonnes in total since we came into government. What does that represent? That represents 98 million tonnes a year over the eight years of the second period. That represents a reduction of almost 100 million tonnes per year on average on our watch compared with Labor's last prediction. That is an astonishing outcome. It defies every prediction that they and their favoured modellers have made—and, by the way, only a year ago their favoured modellers made a prediction that we would be more than 500 million tonnes short. But they are still stuck in the past. The department has got it right. What is interesting is that they were 500 million tonnes out, for the latest auction they were $500 million out, and then—my favourite—for the first of the emissions reduction fund auctions, their favoured modellers said that the 'absolute maximum' outcome would be nine million tonnes. Well, it was 47 million tonnes—more than 500 per cent greater than their favoured modellers had predicted. I think that they might need to find a new set of favoured modellers going forward.

But then we turn to policies. We don't have just one or two. We have six significant complementary policies to achieve our outcome. Firstly, the Emissions Reduction Fund, which has achieved 92.8 million tonnes of abatement over its first two auctions, at an average price per tonne of $13.12—that is one per cent of Labor's $1,300 per tonne of abatement under the carbon tax. Beyond that, we have a safeguard mechanism that will save 200 million tonnes over the course of the period out to 2030, and we have the renewable energy target, on which we have settled on a bipartisan agreement. Going forwards from here are three further mechanisms. Firstly, we have the National Energy Productivity policy, which is expected to save 150 million tonnes, which the Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia is expected to release within the next two weeks. Secondly, we have already commenced the vehicle emissions reduction process, which will save over 90 million tonnes between now and 2030. Thirdly, we have the ozone gas revisions, which are likely to save an additional 80 million tonnes between now and 2030. It is not just a set of policies, it is a comprehensive framework.

By comparison, what do we have from the ALP? Let us ask ourselves: has anybody seen their policy document? After all this time, it does not exist. There was a leaked document, obviously designed to kill their own policy, which was given to The Daily Telegraph—you will all remember a $600 billion cost for their favoured policy. But what we see now is that their renewable energy target is on some days a target and on other days an aspiration. We do not have a set of international targets, although I am told that they will pick the minus 26 to minus 28 per cent but bring it forward to 2025—you heard it here first. Let's see how they are going achieve it. The most fascinating thing is that we do not have a scintilla of a mechanism from them after all of the discussions about the Emissions Reduction Fund, about the safeguard mechanism and about the renewable energy target.

We have six significant elements on our side. We have overachievement in our targets, we have overachievement in our Emissions Reduction Fund, but on their side of the house: no targets, no policy, no hope, and just an approach of higher prices for mums and dads across Australia—their approach to climate change is a disgrace. (Time expired)

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (15:36): Firstly, can I say to the minister who has just spoken: if he is so confident in what he has just said then why is it that the Australian people are simply not convinced that his policies are working? Government performance is often measured against
economic, environmental and social policy. When it comes to the economy the government's budget is in a mess, its deficit is up and all of the economic indicators point to it not managing the economy well. When it comes to social policy we see no coherent strategy. The government is already in retreat, as we saw with the legislation that was before the House only this morning, and it has no clear policy with respect to social outcomes for the nation. But its greatest failure on policy matters is clearly its failure when it comes to its environment policies. Environmental policies go hand in glove with climate change policies.

Unfortunately, the climate change policies of this government are being driven by the climate change sceptics within its ranks, who believe that Australia has no responsibility to address global climate change challenges and believe that other countries should be doing the heavy lifting. Indeed, we have a Prime Minister who has sold out his own climate change views to those very people, whom he is beholden to for getting the leadership of the Liberal Party. In selling out his own views, he has sold out the future generations who will bear the cost and the burden of the government's inaction today. It is the worst kind of intergenerational theft that I can think of. It is based on a discredited policy of paying big polluters money so that they can pollute more, encouraging the use of fossil fuel and cutting investment in renewable energy schemes that are already in place. And it is a policy that this Prime Minister cannot walk away from. He said, right after he was voted in as Liberal leader:

Let me make this clear. The policy on climate change … is one that I supported as a minister in the Abbott Government and it's one that I support today.

Malcolm Turnbull, by making that statement and by turning his back on the serious issue of climate change, betrayed people who had put their trust in him.

These are policies that take Australia in the wrong direction. And fudging the figures, Minister for the Environment, will not get you over the hurdle that you have, and that is to convince not only the Australian people but also the rest of the world that Australia's actions are working. The figures, which have been fudged, do not fool anyone. They do not deliver the outcomes, and Australia does not rate well when we benchmark against other countries.

Australia has as much to lose by not acting on climate change as any other country, because Australia is as much prone to extreme weather events—fires, floods, cyclones, hotter weather conditions, droughts and the like. But, while Australia fails to act, other countries are doing their fair share. And it is not just countries; is also private enterprise. Only a couple of months ago, 81 of the US's biggest companies, with combined assets of $5 trillion, made pledges to take drastic action—I repeat, drastic action—in respect to climate change, ahead of the Paris conference. More companies are expected to make those same pledges over the coming weeks and months.

We have also seen 436 institutions, 2,000-plus individuals and 43 countries representing some $2.6 trillion in assets divesting themselves of fossil fuel investments and, in turn, putting those assets into clean energy. Equally, there are a whole range of countries that are acting, though we are not, including China, the UK, South Korea and the USA, and those in the European Union. Just last month, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency made the point that two-thirds of all new power generation over the next five years will come from renewables. One hundred and fifty countries have made pledges to reduce their energy emissions ahead of the Paris peace conference.

Mr Taylor: Peace?
Mr Hutchinson: Peace conference? There'll be peace in our time!

Mr ZAPPIA: I started off by talking about economic, social and environmental outcomes. All three of them are highly dependent on climate change, and the cost of extreme weather events—which no-one knows better than this country because we have endured them for the last few years—has been highlighted again by a research paper put together by Stanford and Berkeley universities, and it makes the point that climate change will add to global economy costs by 10 times more than previously estimated.

Climate change is not a second-order issue. It is a front-and-centre policy issue for governments. Future generations will pay dearly for this government's failure to act on climate change.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (15:41): The member for Makin has certainly elevated the climate talks in Paris. Indeed, it has been a terribly, terribly trying fortnight for those people. But to suggest that the talks have gone from a climate conference to a peace conference is somewhat testing!

I have learned during my time in this place that you should judge Labor by what they do, not by what they say. In government, they overpromised and under-delivered absolutely. In government, they failed in addressing climate change. In government, they failed in implementing policies that would address our carbon dioxide emissions.

In the Abbott and now Turnbull government, we have one of the most overachieving ministers in the Minister for the Environment. The minister has been pragmatically, methodically, going about putting in place policies that will deliver results—not the job-destroying carbon tax that this country was subjected to under those opposite. I must touch on the presentation that was given by the Minister for the Environment yesterday at the National Press Club. I had an opportunity to hear most of that and I would recommend to anybody in this place and anybody that is listening that they take the opportunity to listen to the minister's contribution yesterday, particularly the questions that were asked after his presentation and the minister's absolute command and understanding of the issues. The way he is managing this portfolio is truly something that all Australians should be very proud of. It is based on five pillars: clean air; climate change, the subject of our discussion today; clean land, of course; clean water; heritage and, more recently, cities.

It was interesting that the member for Port Adelaide, in his speech in this debate, criticised the minister for what is always, in this area, going to be very lumpy data. I almost believe that, instead of yearly data, the shadow minister was seeking a day-to-day update in terms of our nation's carbon dioxide emissions. There was certainly a clear suggestion that there was a carryover of reductions achieved under the opposition in government and that, once we achieve those 2020 targets, it could be used as credit for our 2030 targets. It is logical. It is not ideological; it is logical. It is pragmatic. The whole debate about reducing carbon dioxide emissions should be about policies that work and the result. It is not about ideology. The facts are there for anybody to see. It seems that those opposite are upset that the policies that this government has in place are in fact working. The point is how we deliver and measure those results. The Emissions Reduction Fund is delivering low-cost abatement—92.8 million tonnes in the two reverse auctions that have occurred thus far, at an average price of $13.12 per tonne, which is 500 per cent less than was forecast under the previous government's carbon tax. The Emissions Reduction Fund has had huge benefits for agriculture in rural and regional
Australia. Much of the abatement that has been achieved has been achieved with the good work of farmers.

Before I continue, I must also highlight that Australia's target of between 26 and 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, which is the target we will be taking to Paris, absolutely compare favourably with countries such as Canada, Japan, the European Union and New Zealand. Of course, at this point in time, the United States have not set a 2030 target, but they have a 2025 target and, indeed, we are in line with that target. I am looking forward to early next year, when the departmental people will come to work with a number of communities in my electorate to look at ways community groups and local government areas can participate in the Emissions Reduction Fund. This is a really great opportunity. I had the pleasure of meeting with a group at St Marys in the Break o' Day municipality in my electorate recently, and it is one of those community groups that will certainly be participating.

(Time expired)

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (15:46): I rise with great pleasure to talk about this very important MPI and to respond to some of the mendacity we saw from the Minister for the Environment's contribution. It was an incredible contribution because of the falsehoods prosecuted in the speech. For example, he claimed an astonishing outcome, which is the revision in Australia's cumulative abatement task from 2013 to 2020 from 1,335 megatonnes of CO2 to 236 megatonnes. He was claiming credit for the downward revision in projections over the next seven years of around 1,000 megatonnes. His department's own papers give the reasons for the downward revisions in these projections. Projections have fallen:

… due to a range of factors including:

- lower electricity demand …;
- worse than expected agricultural conditions due to drought;
- lower manufacturing output due to industrial closures;
- weaker growth expectations for local coal production due to a fall in international coal prices; …

The minister is claiming credit for a revision in our abatement task because they have killed manufacturing, particularly the automotive industry; there is a drought on, reducing cattle production; consumers are responding to higher electricity prices by reducing electricity demand; and coal production is not as strong as expected because of falling coal prices. This is his great environmental policy: destroying manufacturing, a drought and falling coal prices! The mendacity of the Minister for the Environment is that somehow this is going to solve our environmental problems. This revision in our abatement task will cause the 2020 minus 5 per cent target to be relatively easily achieved.

Yet, even with that easy task, most of the lifting is not done by their own dog of a policy; it is done by other policies. For example, 35 per cent of the target will be achieved by carryover units from Kyoto period 1, and 47 per cent of the abatement task will be achieved by projection improvements—more industrial closures, the drought and changes in the LRET. Only a quarter of the abatement task will be done by Direct Action, if you totally ignore the issues around additionality, which are at the heart of the problem with the Emissions Reduction Fund, where a third of the money went to operations up to 10 years old and half of the money went to paying farmers not to clear land they had already promised not to clear. That is how ridiculous their policy is. Yet it is only doing one quarter of the abatement task. In fact, if you look at the original 2008 abatement task, the abatement contribution of Direct
Action is 6.9 per cent of that huge sum. That shows what a dog of a policy it is. It is a dog of a policy, implemented by a minister who has given up any conviction and any commitment to principle in a naked attempt to hold on to his cabinet post. Despite all that, the government's own projections in their own document show that they will fail the task in 2020. The government's own projections show that, in 2020, emissions in Australia will be 17 per cent above 2000 levels. This is from official government documents released this year. Their only hope of getting anywhere under 17 per cent is their dog of a policy, Direct Action. Electricity emissions are projected to grow by one-third under them. That is how bad they are about controlling climate change.

By contrast, under Labor, emissions fell by eight per cent and emissions in the electricity sector fell by 20 per cent. So the truth is I am proud to be discussing this climate change MPI. I am proud to be representing the Labor Party that stands up for taking concrete action on climate change. Those on the other side stand by bizarre and pathetic accounting tricks, where somehow the drought is a good thing, closing the automotive sector is a good thing and a declining coal price is a good thing because they mean that their abatement task is easier. Yet they still will not reach it, because their policy is a joke. Their policy is Stalinist control and command of the economy at its worst. It is paying polluters to pollute. Their policy will be condemned by history, and, unfortunately, future Labor governments will have the heavy burden of restructuring the economy, decarbonising industry and decarbonising the economy to compete in the 21st century in a low-carbon industrial revolution. Those on the other side laugh because, ultimately, they do not care about combating climate change. They just care about naked political opportunism. I am proud to say I stand for a party that will be applauded by history. The coalition will condemned by history because they do not take climate change seriously. (Time expired)

Ms PRICE (Durack) (15:51): I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak on this matter of public importance to set the record straight and to smash yet another one of the myths started by the increasingly irrelevant Labor Party. Australia is on track to meet and beat our 2020 target to cut emissions by five per cent below 2000 levels. This was confirmed in figures released by the Department of the Environment only yesterday.

Australia has a strong, credible and significant emissions reduction target. We heard about it today from the Minister for the Environment—26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Our emissions will be up to 52 per cent lower on a per capita basis—the equal largest reduction of any G20 country. Currently, Australia is the 14th largest emitter; however, after taking into account all countries' commitments, we drop down to being the 25th largest emitter by 2030. That is real action by the Turnbull government.

Whether you believe so-called climate change is due to human behaviour, planetary motion, ocean currents or solar variability et cetera, to me, is not the point. My view is that governments all around the world should focus their efforts on ensuring that the environment in which we live is in better shape tomorrow than it was yesterday. Australia has one of the most effective systems in the world for reducing emissions, and with environment minister Greg Hunt at the helm, we have led the way. The world is rejecting carbon taxes and embracing direct action style approaches involving practical actions to reduce emissions.

When it comes to renewable energy, the Turnbull government, yet again, has a solid record. We have reaffirmed our strong commitment to supporting household solar. We in
Australia have the highest proportion of households with solar panels in the world, with about 15 per cent, nearly double that of the next highest country, Belgium, at around 7.5 per cent. But, like most of their other portfolios, the Labor Party do not have a plan to tackle climate change. They just whinge—

Mr Taylor: Oh, I think they do!

Ms PRICE: or do nothing new in particular. They stand up—as we heard them today—and make a big song and dance about the government's plan, yet they do not have a policy on the area themselves or none that they care to commit that might be new. In the last five years, the Labor Party have had five—that is right, five—different policies, while we on this side of the chamber have had one strong, consistent and effective policy. As for the watermelon party, the Greens—let's face it, we all know they are green on the outside but red on the inside; as we have seen in election after election, they preference their partners in crime on the other side—are grossly irresponsible. They want to reduce emissions by 60 to 80 per cent by 2030. But how? The question remains.

While in government together last term, Labor and the Greens presided over a series of waste, mismanagement and bungles. Who could forget the carbon tax? It was their big idea for dealing with climate change. This tax did little to improve the environment, but it put a huge impost on the price of energy in this country. It had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable members of our community, whom those opposite say they represent. What a joke? Of course, the biggest flaw is that the carbon tax was a local tax. If global warming is the problem it was trying to solve then, by definition, we require a 'global solution'. That is why Australia must join with the international community to determine how to achieve a long-term global reduction in CO2 emissions.

While we are talking about those opposite, who could forget the Home Insulation Program, which was linked to deaths of four people, 224 home fires and 70,000 repairs.

Mr Taylor: That is worth repeating. It's important.

Ms Price: It is worth repeating, because it was Australia's greatest embarrassment. There were the bungled green loans. Three independent reports found extensive mismanagement. Let's not forget the citizens assembly. What a fabulous initiative! It was a 2010 election promise to assemble 15 citizens to discuss ways to tackle climate change, which was dumped just weeks after the election. What a shameful waste!

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you can see, clearly the government has made significant inroads in addressing climate and change, and improving our environment. Our current policies are working. We will meet our 2020 and 2030 targets. As we have heard today, the Department of the Environment has released a formal emissions update on our 2020 target, which shows that we are on track to beat out 2020 target by a whopping 28 million tonnes. That is what I call good government.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (15:56): I too am very pleased to be speaking on this MP1, because the government's failure to act on climate change is, indeed, a major concern right across the country. It is an area that is very often raised with me by my constituents in Richmond. As I have said many times before in this House, we have Liberal and National party members who, at every level, whether it is federal or state, are just absolute and complete environmental vandals—that is the fact. That environmental vandalism can best be
seen in their inaction on climate change. We know that their inaction on climate change is a great concern. Thousands and thousands of people in this country and throughout the world will be marching in the People's Climate March this weekend. They are sending very clear messages as we approach the talks in Paris. Here in Australia, these gatherings and marches will be sending a very, very strong message to the Turnbull Liberal-Nationals government, and that message is that we want action on climate change. Our community does demand that.

What do we get from this government? We just get a whole lot of spin. They can try and spin it any way they like but the fact remains that Australia's emissions are going up, and the government have failed to do anything about it. As the shadow minister has previously said, all the government have done is be tricky with their numbers. The government falsely claim that Australia is on track to beat our emissions reduction target of five per cent by 2020. What they are not telling us is that they are in fact only being dodgy with the numbers. The government will be able to count 'carry over' from the period before 2012. So they are just being tricky with numbers—that is all—in the absence of any actual policy.

The fact is that the government under both the previous Prime Minister and the current Prime Minister has targets for 2030 that put Australia right at the back of the pack. This would mean Australia would still be the heaviest polluter and the biggest polluter per head of population by a very significant margin. In contrast, under Labor's period of government, carbon pollution levels dropped by eight per cent. Between now and 2020, carbon pollution levels will increase by six per cent, such that pollution levels will be four per cent above 2000 levels in 2020. This is exactly what the experts predicted would happen under the direct action policy, because the government have no action when it comes to carbon pollution levels, other than paying big polluters—that is about all they have. So the government can try and spin it anyway they like, but the fact remains that Australia's emissions are going up and they fail to do anything about it.

Even though we do have a new Prime Minister, nothing has really changed at all with their approach to climate change. So, changing the leader has changed nothing about their inaction. We also know, as we have mentioned before, that this new Prime Minister did a couple of dirty deals with National Party to become Prime Minister—pretty desperate deals, I would say. Fancy making a deals with them! The National Party are in fact the greatest environmental vandals we have ever seen. Handing the Nationals the water portfolio and refusing to take real action on climate change are some of those desperate dirty deals that the Prime Minister did to in fact get his job. So we now have a situation where the Nationals are going to be dictating policy on climate change and environmental policy. What a joke!

We know the Prime Minister promised the extremists in his party and the National Party that he will not make any changes to their policy on climate change. They will remain with their policy of complete inaction.

It is interesting that, in the past, the now Prime Minister once called Direct Action a 'farce' and a 'recipe for fiscal recklessness on a grand scale', but now what does he do? He pledges to support it. That is what he says. So he sold out on action on climate change to become Prime Minister, and what is he doing? Paying big polluters to keep on polluting. We also know that in December 2009 the now Prime Minister said:
The Liberal Party is currently led by people whose conviction on climate change is that it is "crap" and you don't need to do anything about it. Any policy that is announced will simply be a con, an environmental figleaf to cover a determination to do nothing.

And now what does he do? He supports it.

Just as they have no plans to tackle climate change and have indeed failed the people of Australia, they also have no plans for a renewable energy future. We know the Prime Minister will not be making any change in terms of their renewable energy policy. He does not have any policy in relation to it. In contrast, we have a very proud record. When we were in government, we were committed to expanding and investing in renewable energy because we understand how important it is. We understand how important it is as part of the suite of measures to tackle climate change. We had a major investment when it comes to renewable energy, as opposed to those opposite, who do not believe in it. In fact, Labor has a very proud record and tradition of protecting the environment. We have a very proud record of acting on climate change and acting on renewable energy. In contrast, across the chamber we have the Liberal-National Party, who, as I say, at every level—whether it is federal, state or even local government—are absolute and complete environmental vandals. This is best exemplified in their complete inaction when it comes to taking action in relation to climate change. (Time expired)

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (16:01): As the member for Port Adelaide started his contribution today, I would like to pay my tribute to the South Australians involved in the bushfires—in particular, the families affected and the local communities of the regions around Hamley Bridge, Mallala and the smaller towns of Wasleys and Penarie, which we do not hear much about, but they are vital contributors to our society. The CFS do a great job in such emergencies. Over the last few weeks, in WA—which my colleague the member for Durack, Mrs Price, would know about—bushfires had a devastating effect. Within the last year, we had the Sampson Flat bushfires in South Australia. As a young boy, I remember Ash Wednesday in the South-East of South Australia, which affected so many areas of South Australia and Victoria, with tragic effect. Many lives were lost, as there have been, unfortunately, over the last two weeks. Our thoughts are with all those in South Australia and also those who have been affected by bushfires around Australia. We hope that the situation improves.

I move on to the motion today. The member for Port Adelaide is one of the other side's better performers.

Mr Matheson: That's generous!

Mr WILLIAMS: That is generous. It is all relative, but it is also due to the fact that he is a fellow Port Adelaide Football Club supporter. That is why he is a better performer in the House. There are a few other things that he does. He is neighbour, and we do need to be nice to our neighbours from time to time. We all know that we have made some significant inroads to climate change over recent years and we are on track to beat our 2020 target to cut emissions by five per cent below 2000 levels. This was confirmed by the Department of the Environment yesterday, so it is quite credible. We have a strong and significant emissions reduction target, which we have heard a lot about from previous speakers. This is 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This is significant because it is not just about cutting emissions by up to 52 per cent on a per capita basis. In other words, it is cutting our emissions...
by half. That is the largest reduction of any G20 country. So we are kicking some major goals on this front for a number of things. The Emissions Reduction Fund has been spoken about before, and that is also having some real outcome. Next month, the Prime Minister, who is a big supporter of helping the environment, as we all know, will join the Australian delegation, actively engaging in international processes to finalise a new global climate change agreement in Paris. We see from the Prime Minister's language that he is extremely committed to helping the environment in a very sensible and pragmatic way, which we always need to think about. This needs to be done through least-cost abatement. This is important. I will repeat that: through a least-cost abatement process.

In terms of meeting international targets, we are also investing in new technologies. We know about solar and the impressive proportion of households with solar panels. About 15 per cent of households have solar, which is one of the largest percentages in the world, as we have heard. We hear so much about Germany. I spent some time in Germany. They have some strong environmental credentials, but they have only just under four per cent. The renewable energy target will see close to 24 per cent of Australia's electricity coming from renewable sources by 2020.

In terms of some other important initiatives that have been undertaken in Australia, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, is spending huge amounts investing in research and development projects worth more than $70 million. There are 12 innovative solar research and development projects, as well as 25 other projects with new technology solutions, creating new skills and new jobs. One of those is the largest solar farm in the Southern Hemisphere, which is quite impressive. World records were achieved by projects that converted more than 40 per cent of sunlight hitting a solar cell into electricity.

Mr Bandt interjecting—

Mr WILLIAMS: I know the member for Melbourne is very impressed by these achievements by ARENA. We should be proud of what ARENA are doing. We are funding ARENA and they are doing some excellent work.

In closing, I am genuinely interested in this area. I have met with organisations like Oxfam, MICCA and Voices for Justice. The Minister for the Environment is kicking some goals and so are we. (Time expired)

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:06): The member for Makin made a couple of really important points in his contribution. He said, 'Climate change is intergenerational theft.' We have an obligation to future generations. I appeal to this House and to people outside to understand the consequences of allowing climate change to go on in the way that climate scientists have projected. If you look at the issue of climate refugees, think about what has been going on in Europe recently on the back of population growth in Africa and the conflict in Syria. It is one thing to think about climate refugees in the few thousands from Kiribati or Tuvalu, but in low-lying areas like Bangladesh and so on tens of millions of people could face their land being made uninhabitable. The consequences of that, frankly, are unimaginable. We have an obligation to make sure that does not happen.

The member for Makin also said that Australia is prone to extreme weather events. He is exactly right. We have had that dreadful situation in the last few days in relation to bushfires in South Australia and Western Australia. The climate scientists are telling us that Australia
will be subject to more frequent and more severe bushfires, droughts, cyclones and floods. So we have to understand that this means us.

By contrast with the member for Makin's considered contribution, the member for Lyons was totally wrong in his comments about the performance of this government compared with the previous Labor government. In fact, under Labor's period of government carbon pollution levels dropped by eight per cent, whereas between now and 2020 carbon pollution levels will increase by six per cent, such that the pollution level will be four per cent above the 2000 level in 2020.

The fact is that Australia's emissions are going up. I know that the government seeks to count the carryover period before 2012. The point about that, as has been made by Lyndon Schneiders from the Wilderness Society and others, is that the decision of the Beattie Labor government to ban the clearing of old-growth and high-conservation value vegetation was crucial in Australia being able to meet its Kyoto protocol commitments concerning greenhouse gas emissions. In 2010-11 the 90,000 hectares of approved clearing in Queensland released 21.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. But then along came the Newman government, which tripled the amount of clearing. This amounted to releasing something like 60 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. To give this some perspective, the federal government's Emissions Reduction Fund burned through $660 million of taxpayers' money to purchase greenhouse gas abatement of 47 million tonnes. So for all the money and all the hype around the Emissions Reduction Fund it was all undone by just one year of land clearing in Queensland.

There is some good news, particularly internationally. We will go to Paris now with all major emitters having domestic policies. One hundred and forty countries have renewable policies. Global power sector investment in renewable energy is now larger than in fossil fuels. We have carbon pricing in places such as South Korea and beyond, and we have regulation on major sources being much more common—for example, in the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada and China.

I was also encouraged yesterday to attend a briefing on the Renewable energy superpower report prepared by the Zero Carbon Australia project. That made it clear that renewable energy and energy efficiency will attract more investment over the next 20 years than the development of coal, gas and oil combined, that energy self-sufficiency will increase and the international energy trade will decrease, that abundant high-quality renewable resources will be the future energy advantage, that energy-intensive industries will migrate to nations with low-cost renewable energy and that Australia's economic renewable energy resource potential is greater than its coal, gas and oil resources combined.

The government needs to be willing to do more in Paris and more when it comes back from Paris in moving to renewable energy. We can achieve 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 in accordance with Labor's policy.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:11): One thing is for certain in this debate this afternoon: should a Labor government ever come back into office in this country, they will bring back the carbon tax and they will drive up the price of electricity. We heard earlier today from members of the Labor Party a completely false debate involving accusations about increasing the GST. It is such hypocrisy to come in here and talk about increasing the cost of
living for average Australians when they have a plan to reintroduce the carbon tax. They may call it another name but it will push up the price of everything.

An important point needs to be made: with the GST at its current rate of 10 per cent, that tax that people pay goes to government revenue to finance government services. What happens with a carbon tax? Yes, at the lower rates the money goes into government coffers. But as the rates continue to kick up and up—that is how a carbon tax works; they continually increase it and ratchet it up each year—what happens? All of a sudden you end up collecting no tax because you force inefficient economic activity. You force out coal fired and gas fired electricity production and you turn that into high-cost wind and solar. Revenue from the carbon tax will not come in, so there will be nothing to help offset the costs. But the pain will be there.

I had a meeting recently with a group of scientists down at Lucas Heights in my electorate. I am proud to say that I am the only member of this parliament who has a nuclear reactor in his electorate. One of the scientists down there said to me, 'It's not about the theory; it's about the evidence.' I agree with him. We as members of parliament have a duty in this place to be sceptical. That is our duty. If we are not sceptics, we are sheep. I am proud to call myself a sceptic on this issue. I am sceptical about the IPCC's predictions. I would like to compare those with real-world measurements.

There are two ways we can measure temperature. We can measure it by satellites. We can also measure it using ground thermometers. I think, if you look at the evidence, you will see that the satellites are the most accurate. What do those satellites tell us? They tell us that for the last 18 years and nine months there has been no further global warming.

Mr Bandt: It's going to be the hottest summer—

Mr CRAIG KELLY: I hear the member for Melbourne interjecting. I would encourage you to go and look at the satellite evidence. The real thing is the comparison between the IPCC's predictions and the satellite measurements. Every month we see the gap—the distortion—between what is predicted and what has actually happened. We see the variance of that. In this debate, I have heard no-one say, when they talk about taking action on climate change, how much that will actually reduce the temperature of the globe. If we come in here, as the member for Charlton did, talking about controlling the climate, what we should say is how much the action we are taking will actually reduce that temperature.

We heard the member for Wills talk about what is happening in Paris, how wonderful it was and all the reductions that are going to be needed. If we make those reductions promised in Paris, do you know what the resulting reduction in temperature will be? If all those promises made in Paris about reductions in CO2 emissions up to the year 2030 are made, the reduction in temperature by 2100—the end of this century—will amount to a grand total of 0.05 per cent. No-one should come into this chamber talking about controlling the climate and taking action on climate change unless they are prepared to say what effect it will actually have and how much it is going to reduce the temperature by. We know—0.05 per cent.

As for sea-level rises, we know that if all the promises made at Paris are actually undertaken by the end of this century, even if we assume that the IPCC's models are correct, the change in sea levels will be 13 millimetres—13 millimetres by the end of this century. We are talking about spending hundreds of billions of dollars to achieve that outcome. We have
this back to front. We need to concentrate on developing renewable energy that is cost-effective and cheaper than coal and gas.

The SPEAKER: Order! The time for the discussion has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS
Taxation

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (16:16): Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the chair to add to an answer.

The SPEAKER: The minister may proceed.

Mr MORRISON: To add to an answer at question time, next year, the average full-time wage earner in Australia will move into the second-top tax bracket of 39c in the dollar, including the Medicare levy of two per cent.

BILLS
Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Legislation Amendment Bill 2015
Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Bill 2015
Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Fees Imposition Bill 2015
Assent

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

Tax Laws Amendment (Gifts) Bill 2015
Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment Bill 2015
Aviation Transport Security Amendment (Cargo) Bill 2015
Maritime Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Returned from Senate

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

STATEMENTS
Terrorist Attacks around the World

Debate resumed.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:18): I will continue where I left off last night where I listed the terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world in the last month alone. The point I was making was that the suggestion that we somehow have Islamic extremism under control or 'contained'—the word used by the US President—is highly mistaken and dangerous.

We know that ISIS currently control a land area greater than the size of the United Kingdom. They are supported by an almost ecstatic enthusiasm. Every single day they are attracting hundreds of willing fighters all over the world. Only this week the US State Department issued a worldwide alert about the risk of a terrorist attack. We need to admit and acknowledge the problem that we face. When the French President said that we are at war with Islamic extremism or ISIS, that 'we' is not just France. That 'we' refers to everyone who believes in freedom, democracy and liberty.
Our fathers' generation defeated communism; our grandfathers' generation defeated fascism; our great-grandfathers' generation defeated German militarism. It is the task of this generation to defeat Islamic extremism. But I have some great concerns that we are not taking this problem seriously. In thinking about the tasks and how should we go about tackling and defeating this scourge, we should perhaps look to our history—and our history has told us that appeasement does not work.

WH Auden wrote a poem that was titled September 1, 1939. He did so while reflecting on the growth and strength of fascism and how, during the 1930s, the democratic nations had appeased the totalitarians and allowed them to grow strong. He wrote:

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
I am concerned that we might look back in 10 or 15 years time and have those words quoted back to us: the low and dishonest decade. Yes, we have some clever hopes—hashtags and hugs and flowers—but they are not going to defeat an enemy that is bent on worldwide domination.

As I mentioned in my previous contribution last night, there was a warning from a former German member of parliament, who wrote a book, Inside ISIS. He warned that we in the West are dramatically underestimating the risk. He said:

The IS fighters are much smarter and more dangerous than our leaders believe. In the Islamic State, there is an almost palpable enthusiasm and confidence of victory, which I have not seen in many war zones.

He warned that their plan is for hundreds of millions of people to be eliminated in the course of religious cleansing. He also warned that all moderate Muslims who promote democracy are also targeted to be killed because, from the Islamic State's perspective, they promote human laws over the laws of God.

In considering how we tackle this scourge, we should learn from our history. We know that appeasement does not work. We also know that sometimes our peace, our freedom and our democracy have to be won and protected at the point of a gun. It is perhaps worth considering a quote attributed to Martin Luther King, perhaps one of the greatest pacifists of all time. He is quoted as saying:

… if your opponent has a conscience, then follow Gandhi. But if your enemy has no conscience, like Hitler, then follow Bonhoeffer.

He was referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a religious man and a pacifist all his life who knew that when you see extreme evil you are entitled to use extreme violence to defeat it. These are the lessons that we should learn from our history.

I am also greatly concerned that there has been foolish talk which compares the strength of the Islamic State with conventional military. I will give an example of why this is both foolish and dangerous: the attacks on Paris involved eight terrorists and an estimated expense of maybe $20,000. For that, they killed over 130 innocent civilians and caused billions of dollars in economic damage. That is why you cannot look at this challenge in those types of military
terms and compare their strengths to our strengths. For very little manpower and for very little resources, they can cause enormous damage.

I will conclude my contribution with a quote from Merv Bendle, an Australian historian. He has warned of the danger of appeasement to Islamic extremism. He has warned that we are currently on a long downhill road. He said:

Comparisons with the fall of the Roman Empire are apt. That empire rotted from within, from the head down, it's leadership … decadent and unable to face the ferocious barbarian invasions that looted it, decimated it's population, destroyed it's invaluable cities and infrastructure, and ultimately left it a shell. Europe was condemned to a thousand years of darkness.

History will repeat itself unless we in the West say that our freedoms, our democracy and our liberty are worth saving and worth protecting, because that is what will give us the courage to fight, and fight we must.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:26): I rise to speak on indulgence in response to the Prime Minister's statement on the recent horrific terrorist attacks that have occurred around the world. As Australians, we stand side by side with the people of Paris, of Ankara, of Baghdad, of Beirut, of Mali, of Kenya, of Pakistan, of Jerusalem, of Tunisia, of Egypt and of the many other cities and countries that have experienced cowardly attacks this year. We here in Australia have also not been safe from the horrors of terrorism. Just last month, Curtis Cheng was going about his daily life, serving the people of New South Wales. He was leaving his workplace, where he performed that public service in Parramatta, when he was gutlessly killed in an act of terrorism.

We mourn for all the families of those killed by terrorists this year and before. We mourn and we stand in solidarity, but I also passionately acknowledge that we will not have our freedoms taken from us by these cowards and/or misguided young people. Terrorism is not a religion. Terrorists are criminals who cloak their criminal activities in the ripped and distorted veil of religious extremism. Australian citizens must always be careful not to let our fear of terrorism manifest itself in the hatred of any of our neighbours who follow the Islamic faith. Fear breeds hatred and intolerance. It can be easy to get caught up in the spreading of hate if we become fearful. It is our responsibility to make sure that hope quashes fear. We cannot control our neighbours, but we can talk to them, even if they are different, come from another country, have different religions or—even worse!—follow a different football team. The very worst thing that we could do is ostracise a group of Australians because of their religious beliefs or other beliefs. If we do that, the terrorists win. We must, despite our fears, be an inclusive nation. When we do so, we are at our best as Australians.

I have seen in my electorate of Moreton Australians doing just that: everyday people being inclusive and not only that but sharing that they care and that they have concerns for their neighbours, colleagues, schoolmates and even, especially, for the strangers in our community. Surely one of the best tests of whether someone is a decent human being is how they treat a stranger.

Mr Speaker, I will give you some examples of the wonderful contributions being made by the groups in my electorate of Moreton, which I have the honour of representing and serving. I commend Yeronga State High School—not just their staff, but the broader community—for their advocacy in trying to free Mojgan Shamsalipoor from detention and allow her to remain in Australia with her husband. They will continue to support Mojgan and advocate on her
Annerley 5 Neighbourhood Watch for their work on the renaming of the Clifton Hill Peace Park, a great little activity. Next year, they hope to hold a safety seminar for the local community. I commend the MacGregor Lions club—my Lions club, not that I am an active member—for their great health expo, which they also plan to recreate next year. It is a great service for the south side community, and an activity that highlights the importance of men's health. I also commend Yeronga Community Plus. They hold a free community breakfast each Thursday, and will continue to do this into next year. They also provide a great 'give and take' program. I dropped in to see them last week and helped out with the community breakfast. It is a pretty smooth ship that they operate, and the camaraderie and friendship between the staff, volunteers and patrons is inspiring.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (16:30): It being 4:30 pm I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Death Penalty**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:30): Last week in Kuala Lumpur I participated in a parliamentary round table concerning the abolition of the death penalty in Malaysia that was co-hosted by the Parliament of Malaysia and the Parliamentarians for Global Action, the PGA, of which I am a member and the chair of the Australian national group. At the round table I met the family of a 31-year-old Malaysian man, Kho Jabing, who faces imminent execution in Singapore. Kho Jabing's petition for clemency was rejected on 19 October by President Tony Tan Keng Yam, and his execution was initially set for 6 November. Just a day before he was to be sent to the gallows he was granted a temporary stay of execution to allow for the consideration of two separate legal challenges put forward on his behalf.

This is a story all too familiar on death row cases. The life of a young man being held in the balance as lawyers and the courts battle to determine his fate. Kho Jabing and a co-defendant were convicted of murder on 30 July 2010, which at the time carried a mandatory death sentence. In 2012 Singapore amended its penal code to reduce the scope of mandatory death sentences, giving the courts discretion not to impose the death penalty in instances when there is no intention to cause death.

On the basis that Kho Jabing did not intend to cause death, the High Court in 2013 resentenced him to life imprisonment and 24 strokes of the cane. His family rejoiced that his life would be spared, albeit facing the torture of caning, but this decision was quickly appealed by the prosecution. In January 2015, the Court of Appeal converted Kho Jabing's sentence from life imprisonment to death, with a close three-to-two majority decision.

This parliament is currently inquiring into what more Australia can do to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. We are resolute in our opposition to the death penalty and we have seen the way state-sanctioned killing harms us all, particularly the family members of those on death row. To be effective, Australia must maintain a principled and consistent opposition to the death penalty in all cases, including when Australians are not involved. I am heartened by the fact that Australians from all walks of life are standing up with Kho Jabing and his family: Amnesty International Australia tells me that more than 18,000 of their supporters have written directly to the President of Singapore, appealing for
clemency. I call on the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to also make urgent representations to the President of Singapore to respectfully ask him to reconsider Kho Jabing's clemency application and put a halt to his impending execution.

Without downplaying Kho Jabing's crimes in any way, Australia can and must stand up for what is right and advocate for his life to be spared. Earlier this year we celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations with Singapore, and we have a strong enough relationship to withstand the difficult conversations that need to be had regarding Singapore's continued use of the death penalty.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the sentencing laws are even harsher than Singapore, which at least has returned some measure of discretion to judges. In Malaysia, the death penalty is mandatory for murder and for offences relating to firearms and drugs. I am informed that half of the more than 1,000 prisoners on death row in Malaysia are there for drug-related offences. Malaysia has the lowest threshold in the region regarding the amount of drugs that raise a presumption of trafficking and thus attract the death penalty. For example, it is 50 grams of methamphetamine in Malaysia, while it is 250 grams in Singapore, and 3,000 grams in Laos.

In the entire region, only Malaysia applies the mandatory death penalty for possession of firearms in certain circumstances. Meanwhile the much more serious offence of trafficking in firearms attracts a discretionary death penalty. This inconsistency in sentencing could be dealt with by returning discretion to the courts, which would then be able to look at the circumstances of each case.

International human rights bodies have found the mandatory death penalty to be contrary to the right of a convicted person to have mitigating circumstances taken into account, as well as the fundamental principle of judicial independence, as it arbitrarily denies judges the discretion to adjudicate the most appropriate penalty in the light of the circumstances of the convicted person and their crime.

In its response to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in 2009 and 2013, Malaysia stated that it is reviewing the mandatory death penalty, with a view to restoring discretionary power to courts, and that it is reconsidering the death penalty for drug offences, with the maximum sentence being reduced to life imprisonment.

At the round table last week, government ministers, Mohamed Nazri and Nancy Shukri, announced that the government will, early next year, introduce a law to abolish the mandatory death penalty—particularly in relation to drug offences, and perhaps more broadly. This announcement was warmly welcomed by the Malaysian and international parliamentarians present, as well as by diplomatic representatives from many countries, the Malaysia Bar Council, the National Human Rights Commission and civil society groups. The PGA will continue to work with the Malaysian parliament, government and other stakeholders towards this goal. I thank the Australian government for its support of PGA's campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in the Asia-Pacific Region.

**Cancer Treatments**

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (16:35): I wish to draw the attention of the House to a great national scandal that is flying completely under the radar of political consciousness—namely, the lack of provision of proton beam therapy treatment in Australia. It is a disgrace that our great and wealthy nation is not able to offer this course of treatment to the many who would
seek to benefit from its proven efficacy. I have met constituents in my electorate faced with the utterly unenviable dilemma of mortgaging their house to pay for a course of PBT in the US, Europe or Japan for their son or daughter.

Proton therapy is one of the most technologically advanced treatments for cancer. When treating any cancer with radiation, the aim is to deliver the maximum dose to cancer cells while sparing as much healthy tissue as possible. Conventional radiation therapy faces challenges from side effects because of a relatively high radiation entrance dose and exit dose. By contrast proton therapy has a much lower entrance dose and no exit dose, causing less damage to healthy tissue surrounding the tumour. Proton therapy produces fewer side effects and a better quality of life during and after treatment. Proton therapy also avoids the risks of post-operative recovery associated with surgery. Proton therapy is vitally important in the treatment of certain cancers in children, tumours of the eye, and base-of-skull and paraspinal tumours. It is becoming the treatment of choice for many cancers such as those in the head, the neck and the brain, and for spinal, prostate, lung, gastrointestinal and breast cancers. There are no proton therapy facilities in Australia or South East Asia, apart from Japan, but more than 70 facilities in the Northern Hemisphere are either established or being constructed. There are none in the Southern Hemisphere.

I recall at this moment a little girl, who lived with her family just around the corner from me in Leeming, who had a medulloblastoma and who would have massively benefitted from a course of PBT. However, due to the lack of facilities here in Australia and the massive cost, her family were unable to provide that treatment as an option for their little girl. The point is that little girl could be anyone’s child—and we will never know how she would have responded to that treatment or if she would still be with us today.

Another child also perished after treatment, but his parents had to take out a second mortgage on their house due to the excessively long time for our bureaucracy to make a decision on whether or not to fund their case. What parent, if they have the ability, is not going to take out a second mortgage rather than wait months for a bloody decision? Following a diagnosis of cancer in a child, I know that parents writhe in anguish and are wracked with worry. They should not have to contend with a lengthy bureaucratic process for reimbursement for PBT accessed overseas as well. It is immoral and unAustralian for a parent to face the choice of risking or selling everything—mortgaging the house or saving the child.

I welcomed the $20 billion Medical Research Future Fund in the 2014 budget. It is important that we continue to invest in medical research, but the research with respect to PBT is in—and we need to fund facilities across our nation. Conversations I have had with the South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute indicate that an additional contribution of $80 million to the existing state allocation of $44 million would see a new PBT facility built and operational by 2018. This investment is precisely the type that government should engage in. It addresses an urgent public need, has massive social benefit and rectifies a situation of market failure. Indeed, it is worth noting that governments of all persuasions often have programs with considerably less material social benefit. It makes economic sense to not crowd out private capital, as some programs already do; and where we have longstanding market failure, as with PBT, this is not the case.

I further wish to acknowledge parents Edwin Ho and Rochelle Luk and their son Edric. Edric is today a strong, bright boy. But there are those that have never had this option.
Because of this, we will never know if PBT could have made a difference in some other cases. I urge us to fund proton beam therapy treatment in Australia.

**Holt Electorate: Community Events**

Mr **BYRNE** (Holt) (16:40): As we come to the end of the year, I wanted to talk about the great decency and character of the people that I am privileged to represent in my constituency of Holt. We celebrate that to some extent in the next two months through two ceremonies and other events. The two that I am directly involved in are the 2015 Holt Community Spirit and Leadership Awards, which are presented to school-age children that make a contribution to their community, and the 2016 Holt Australia Day Awards.

You read a lot that is negative in the newspapers, on electronic media and social media. It does not take too much effort to see what is wrong with our community. But often it is our obligation to try to balance that out a bit, and we do that. I know that you, Mr Speaker, will be doing the same thing at the events that you attend leading up to Christmas.

We are very much looking forward to the Holt Australia Day Awards—I have a staff member here as well—because it is a great event, where awards are presented to individuals from many different backgrounds and walks of life, each of whom make a substantial contribution and each of whom, in their own way, make the community a better place. Over the past 11 years since I have been presenting this award, over 320 people and organisations from all walks of life have received awards. This year will be our 12th year. There are a number of people that I could talk about, but I particularly think of three that I want to touch on briefly, especially given the approaching season.

Pastors Graham and Julie Shand, who have been senior pastors for over 25 years, have been responsible for three churches. They currently serve as senior pastors at the Casey Life Church in Hampton Park. Each year both Graham and Julie help to organise a number of local community events such as carols by candlelight in Hampton Park. These carols are held at the Cairns Road Reserve in Hampton Park each year, and literally thousands of people—3,000 or 4,000—enjoy a wonderful night of music and entertainment, along with the spirit and the message of the true meaning of Christmas. Senior pastors Graham and Julie are passionate about reaching out to the community, and under their leadership the church welcomes everyone with open arms.

Another recipient, particularly coming into the bushfire season—which, tragically, we are seeing start very early—is a good man called Tim Howell, who joined the SES 15 years ago in the Nunawading unit before moving to the Narre Warren unity six years ago, where after one year he was appointed controller, a position he continued to hold for 2½ years. Tim has faced personal challenges but in this time has made a massive contribution to the Narre Warren SES. In 2012 Tim was awarded the National Emergency Medal for his role as an SES volunteer in the Black Saturday bushfires in Kinglake and for local fires that we experienced in Narre Warren. In addition to volunteering with the SES, Tim works for VicRoads as part of the emergency response team, helping those in need on our roads. That gives a small flavour of the people who will be receiving awards.

Australia is a great country. The Prime Minister touched on this very eloquently today when he spoke about the greatness of the Australian character always coming to the fore under duress—be it bushfires, floods or other catastrophes. There is something unique and
great about the Australian spirit, where we come together and battle the consequences of these tragedies and disasters collectively, and we do it with great spirit and great resilience.

To some extent we like to recognise that aspect of our Australian character in the Holt Australia Day Awards. I know that we will have wonderful people with wonderful stories, each of them a small part of that great rich skein of life that makes up the Australian character, and we are very much looking forward to celebrating that on Australia Day.

We are proposing, as part of amplifying the good news—what it means to be Australian and the excellent character of our community—to do something called Spotlight on Holt. There are many different facets of my electorate that make it unique. We will be highlighting that every couple of weeks in a little video spot that we are putting on Facebook and Twitter. It is a great community. It is a community that reflects the unique nature and the unique character of Australia. I am honoured to represent it and look forward to demonstrating more of that character in Spotlight on Holt.

**Domestic and Family Violence**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (16:45): Recently I addressed the House and stated that, when it comes to domestic violence and family custody issues, Central Queensland has some appalling statistics. In fact Rockhampton police report that the rate of domestic violence is 141 per cent higher than the state average. To compound issues associated with domestic violence, including custody disputes and family law cases, Rockhampton has very limited access to a Federal Court judge. That is why earlier this year, following a submission from the Central Queensland Law Association, I took up the fight to have a Federal Circuit Court judge permanently based in Rockhampton.

Tonight I can happily report to the House that, on behalf of the families of Capricornia, we have won that fight. On 13 November, the Attorney-General came to Rockhampton and announced that a Federal Circuit Court judge would be based permanently in the city, commencing early next year. The Attorney-General said that the Rockhampton judge will be a significant step forward in ensuring the provision of efficient and cost-effective family law services to Central Queensland. The new Federal Circuit Court judge will also undertake circuits to Emerald and Gladstone, improving accessibility in those centres as well.

Until now, people needing the services of the Federal Circuit Court, especially in family law matters, have had to wait years or incur the cost of travelling to Brisbane or Townsville. That will no longer be the case. This is a great outcome for Central Queensland. I thank the Attorney-General and the coalition government for listening to the concerns of people in Capricornia and acting upon them. This is an important outcome for the people of Central Queensland, which, as I said earlier, unfortunately has some of the highest rates of custody disputes and domestic violence in Queensland. A permanent judge will help to settle family law and custody disputes sooner—and help alleviate pressure on families in an area of escalating domestic violence.

Senior barristers tell me that the coalition government announcement is the most significant improvement to law services in Central Queensland in the nearly 42 years since a district court was established there. Those in the legal sector say it will take us from having one of the worst served areas to being one of the very best serviced areas from the perspective of local families being able to gain access to a Family Court judge. I would like to thank all of
the local legal practitioners and the Central Queensland Law Association for bringing the issue to the attention of the federal government. I include in that Terry Tummon, Graeme Crowe, Paula Phelan, Joanne Madden and Lance Rundle. This will help families from Rockhampton, Gladstone and west of Emerald to have access to a permanent Federal Court judge.

For families facing custody, family law disputes and domestic violence, this announcement will help calm highly emotional and volatile situations—because it will reduce the frustration and financial costs associated with the long delays in getting matters settled in a Family Court, normally dispatched from Brisbane. Terry Tummon, the president of the Central Queensland Law Society, has welcomed the announcement. Mr Tummon said that previously families with urgent matters involving children had to wait lengthy periods for cases to be heard. He said a permanent Federal Court judge in Rockhampton would make a big difference to those families facing stressful Family Court issues.

*The Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton's daily newspaper, has been a staunch advocate in the push to stamp out domestic violence and educate people about its impact in our community. In his editorial, the chief of staff of *The Morning Bulletin*, Adam Watten, described the Attorney-General's announcement as a measure that would improve the lives of many people across Central Queensland. He said it is a positive step towards addressing one of the disappointing realities of life in Central Queensland—namely, chronic domestic violence. Once again I thank the Attorney-General and our federal coalition government for delivering this vital appointment to Rockhampton and Capricornia.

**Domestic and Family Violence**

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:50): This afternoon I want to take the House back 40 years. It does not take much maths to work out that I am talking about 1975. It was International Women's Year and there were events occurring across the globe and of course across the country. In my own area of the Illawarra there was a forum for International Women's Year to which my mum, Bev Reed, went along with her friend Anne Harrison. They participated in that forum and came back to a meeting of the Mount Warrigal Public School mothers group.

Anne put forward a proposal that the group work to establish a women's refuge in the area. This was taken up by the women in the mothers group and they began the process. They applied to Shellharbour City Council and, under the leadership of Mayor Bob Harrison, the council provided a house as a refuge. It was not in great repair, so they had to run cake stalls, jumble sales and so forth to fundraise. Many of their partners, including my dad Kevin, did the maintenance work on the house, including putting in the sewerage system. They all pitched in to get it into a reasonable condition. A local company, Camarda & Cantrill, donated paint. A group of nuns from Warrawong volunteered to do the night shifts. The Seamen's Union pitched in for repairs and to put down second-hand carpet, the wharfies union had a fundraising amongst their members and raised money to assist, and the Department of Youth and Community Services, as it was then, provided support and were the referral source—referring women to the refuge. This refuge, sadly really, continues to operate today, although it is now in a new purpose-built facility.

This brings me to a subject that many of my colleagues in this place have been addressing this week, and that is the significant importance for us as a community, for us as leaders, for families and for anybody out there who feels and understands the scourge that is family
violence to take action. In my own area yesterday there was a White Ribbon walk, attended by about 500 people—a fantastic turnout. New South Wales policewoman Shelly Walsh addressed the crowd. She had survived an axe attack by her father after he murdered her mother and two children. She urged people to speak up. The group was also addressed by Lake Illawarra Police Commander Superintendent Wayne Starling, who said:

White Ribbon Day is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end men’s violence against women and girls. It is also about creating a vision of masculinity where women can live in safety, free of violence and abuse. It is also an opportunity for women to be empowered and speak out against violence. Not only the physical abuse but the emotional abuse.

The walk was organised by the Illawarra Committee against Domestic Violence, and I commend Maris Depers, who organised it, and all of the members who participated. The walk was also attended by a marvellous young woman who is a member of our Young Labor organisation locally, Alex Costello. Alex spoke to a Labor Party meeting on Sunday about these matters, and I want to share some of her words with the House.

Today I’ll just be doing a quick talk on white ribbon, how I came to be a part of this cause and what this organization does. I am of the belief that to make real change people need to hear personal stories to hear the real effects of dv. I was abused for the majority of my life. I took a count recently and I have had 6 perpetrators in my life. 5 of which were men. They were from different walks of life, different ages, different educational backgrounds. It is an epidemic. It is a national emergency and more needs to be done. The lasting effects of DV on any woman, man or child’s life are that, for life. I had a defining moment a few months ago. I thought I can either let it control my life or I can be proactive and make a difference. That is when I joined White Ribbon in their campaign to stop domestic and family violence.

There are very few subjects of such significance and importance to each and every one of us as this issue. I commend all the organisations and the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, in particular on the work that they have been doing. But let us not just make it a day or a week when we talk about these issues—let us make it a permanent conversation to stop this scourge in our communities.

**Competition Policy**

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (16:55): I would like to speak on competition policy, and I begin by congratulating the Treasurer on reopening the debate on section 46 of our competition act, the provision that applies to the misuse of market power. The recent Harper review did get one thing right, and that is that section 46 needs reform. However, the so-called effects test debate is a phoney debate. It is worse—it is a bait and switch, and it is even a Trojan horse. I know some of my colleagues have supported the effects test, and there are many in the small business community who have supported it. I can understand, after so many years of failing to get any change, why when they see something put up they might say let’s jump at that, let’s take it. But I would ask them when they are considering this legislation to apply what I call the Adam Smith test—the Adam Smith from the *Wealth of Nations*, who back in 1776, almost 240 years ago, warned us:

The proposal of any new law or regulation of commerce which comes from this order—meaning the dealers, that people with entrenched market power—ought always to be listened to with greater proportion, and ought never to be adopted till after having been long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention.
That is the test that I ask the small business community to apply when looking at this legislation. There has been much debate over many years about replacing the word 'purpose' in the act with the word 'effect'. In the current section 46 there are three things that need to be proved. You must show that the company in question had a substantial degree of market power. Secondly, you must show that they have taken advantage of that market power. Thirdly, you must show that they have done so for the purpose of three things, and they are most important: eliminating or substantially damaging a competitor, preventing entry of a competitor or deterring or preventing a person from engaging in competitive contact.

If it just said you needed to show the effect of those things, that would solve everything. But that is not what is being proposed in the Harper review—it is a bait and switch. What is being proposed is not the effect of eliminating or substantially damaging a competitor, it is the effect of substantially limiting competition. This is a completely different concept. You can eliminate your competitors without there being a substantial lessening of competition. This puts another hurdle on the end of section 46—almost an insurmountable hurdle for many small businesses.

This alone sends us backwards, but is worse than that. In the fine print of the Harper review we see they are removing section 46(1AA). That is the section that was introduced by Peter Costello—one of the last pieces of legislation he brought to this House before the defeat of the Howard government. That fixed the anomaly in our laws that was commented on in the Boral case by Justice McHugh back in 2003. This is how he explained why section 46 needed changing:

Conduct that is predatory in economic terms and anti-competitive may not be captured by s 46 simply because the predator does not have substantial market power when it sets out on its course to deter or injure competitors

He went on:

Section 46 is ill drawn to deal with claims of predatory pricing under these conditions.

That is why section 1AA was in—it removed the requirement that a firm had to have a substantial degree of market power when they set out in the conduct. So it replaced the words 'a substantial degree of market power' and put in the words 'a substantial share of the market.' All you need to engage in a successful scheme of predatory pricing is to have a substantial share of the market and deep pockets to outlast your opposition. That is why section 1AA was brought into the act by the previous coalition government. This cannot be removed. We cannot allow it to be repealed.

The SPEAKER: It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 17:00
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott): took the chair at 09:29.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Petition: Domestic and Family Violence

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (09:29): In this constituency statement, I present this petition to the House. The petition has been presented to the Standing Committee on Petitions and certified as being in accordance with the standing orders.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of the multicultural communities of Victoria draws to the attention of the House: Our immense concern about the devastating effects that violence against women and children in their homes is having on our communities.

Family violence does not discriminate on the basis of geography, ethnicity or culture. It affects all of our communities.

We the undersigned wish to advise the House that we believe that all forms of family violence are unacceptable. As a society family violence should never be tolerated or ignored and perpetrators should be held accountable for their actions.

Victims of family violence should be better protected from abuse, intervention orders respected and if breached; appropriate and timely action should be taken.

We therefore ask the House to: Take action to review the use and effectiveness of intervention orders, whether the intervention orders available to the courts are adequate to provide protection for victims of family violence and whether the responses to breaches of intervention orders are appropriate.

from 1,001 citizens

Petition received.

Mr WATTS: The petition has been commissioned by members of multicultural communities in Victoria and signed by more than 1,000 people. They wish to draw the attention of the House to their concerns about the devastating impacts that family violence and violence against women and children is having in Australian society. They asked the House to take action to review the use and effectiveness of intervention orders, whether they are able to effectively provide protection for victims of family violence and if responses to breaches of those intervention orders are currently appropriate. We know that people are all too willing to break intervention orders at present, and their effectiveness must be reviewed to ensure that we keep women and their children safe.

Family violence does not affect multicultural communities more than others. The scourge of family violence in Australia transcends ethnicity, culture, geography and economic background; however, women in multicultural communities can be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of family violence, as they can be more isolated in their community and lack access to the support networks available to other women. Multicultural communities in Victoria want to make their voices heard to say that family violence should never be condoned, legitimised, underemphasised or dismissed.

Yesterday was White Ribbon Day, and I watched social media light up as thousands of people posted their pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence towards
women. The Leader of the Opposition announced Labor's plan to make domestic and family violence leave a universal workplace right. In Victoria we saw the launch of Victoria Against Violence, a 16-day event to raise awareness of what partners, friends, family members, businesses, organisations and people in positions of power can do to prevent family violence.

Things are changing—we are seeing movement—but they are still moving too slowly. More than one woman has been killed each week in Australia by a partner or a former partner and, despite the clear movement in the community, many continue to blame the victims.

This petition was the result of dozens of dedicated volunteers attending festivals, aged-care centres, sports events and religious gatherings and sharing this message. One of them described it as 'a painful eye-opener'. While they were able to gather over 1,000 signatures, many more dismissed out of hand their attempts to highlight this issue. Negative attitudes persist, and on numerous occasions they were confronted with responses that verged on anger, with people telling them that women should learn to be quiet, that it is their fault and that women get men upset.

We have a long way to go in curbing this scourge in our society, but campaigns like this one are changing people's perceptions around power, inequality and family violence. The people who prepared this petition collectively spent hundreds of hours gathering these signatures. It is a pleasure for me to spend but a few minutes in this chamber to present their petition to the House.

Lymberry, Ms Annie

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (09:32): Thank you very much Mr Deputy Speaker, and I am really pleased that you are sitting in the chair at the moment to share with me what I would like to say.

Yesterday was a very sad day for myself, for many of our colleagues past and present and for all parties from both Houses of the parliament. Today I would like to stop and remember our good friend, Commonwealth car driver Annie Lymberry.

Everybody in the parliament knew, loved and respected Annie. She loved to look after and care for 'her pollies', as we were generally referred to. She went far beyond the call of duty. It was a fact that was largely lost on the bureaucrats from Comcar who, quite frankly, should be held accountable for their vindictiveness and their appalling treatment of this beautiful woman. Nevertheless, Annie was fiercely loyal to her organisation to the end. When a pollie's car door opened and Annie's smiling face was behind the wheel, we always sighed with relief. She was an institution in Comcar and reflected the best in their long tradition of discretion and loyalty. Everyone knew that what was said in the car stayed in the car, with no exceptions.

Today I would like to read a communication that I received from our former colleague, Alex Somlyay. Annie was Alex's landlady for a number of years up until his retirement in 2013. In Alex's words, 'Annie was a friend to my wife, Jenny, and myself. Annie provided me not only with board but a home away from home. We discussed many things, but mostly about her family and my family.' I also had a short stay, I must declare, at Annie's house. She loved her family and she loved her animals, particularly those crazy cats, and the birds that visited the back veranda. She never said anything about any of her colleagues or my colleagues. She never gave away confidences, no matter how hard we all tried to get that information from her!
As Alex stated, 'I wish I were still in the parliament to pay tribute to Annie and give her service appropriate recognition as an important cog in the machinery of the democratic system that makes the parliament function. Goodbye, my friend.'

Mr Deputy Speaker Irons, I would like to recognise that, as I am sure you would like to associate yourself with it, as would members on the other side. Alex, I say to you, and I say it from all of us here, that we acknowledge Annie's partner also, Stew Pasfield, for his commitment to this beautiful lady. He has been by her bedside during her illness. I had the opportunity to visit Annie recently, while she was undergoing treatment at Canberra Hospital. While it was difficult, I will treasure the time I was able to spend with her.

Annie's funeral was held yesterday at St Patricks Catholic Church in Berry and was followed by a burial and wake at the Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens & Lawn Cemetery in Worrigee. Annie, we love you and we will certainly miss you. We know that wherever you are, you will still be full of your welcomed opinions and advice. To Stewie, we are sending you our love and all the best wishes at this difficult time. I look forward to catching up with you when you are back on deck.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons) (09:36): I too take the opportunity to add my condolences to the family of Annie Lymberry and also to Stewart, her partner. I also mention that Annie served this parliament well and served every member in this parliament and every one of her colleagues well. I thank the member for his contribution.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (09:36): on indulgence—I would like to add my words to the words of the member. Annie was an institution. We loved her. She provided support to so many of us. I know many times I have hopped in the Comcar and Annie was there, I would breathe a sigh of relief because it was so lovely to have her to talk to—and I know how much she loved her pollies and how much she really cared about us. I am very sad that she has passed away and I thank the member for raising it.

Holt Electorate: Community Spirit and Leadership Awards

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (09:37): On Monday 14 December, I am going to have the pleasure of hosting the 2015 Holt Community Spirit and Leadership Awards at the Cranbourne Community Theatre. We hear a lot about what is wrong with our kids. It does not take much to read a local paper and to see some misdemeanour or something that is written in a negative way about our young people. We have so many young people in the constituency that I am honoured to represent.

Fourteen years ago I decided to initiate an award called the Community Spirit and Leadership Award to emphasise that there are so many young people who we do not hear about who contribute so much to the school community and to the general community. We wanted to emphasise and focus on this awareness and actually recognise this in front of the community. Fourteen years later—this is the 14th anniversary since the awards were initiated—we are doing that.

People are voting with their feet. We have a very large attendance at these award ceremonies. We will have up to 300 people at the Cranbourne Community Theatre, and it is wonderful to see the families, friends and teachers of the schools coming together to hear the statements about the young people who are making their school community and the community a better place.
There are 55 schools that participate in this award. Fifty-five schools—that is a lot. We are never short of nominations; they come from the teachers. The award itself is awarded by the school to the student. It is not a student who has to be the most academically qualified student or the most brilliant sports student but that person who makes a difference, who goes above and beyond for other people.

In the time I have available, I want to talk about two, without pre-empting the award ceremony at the Cranbourne Community Theatre. One recipient—I will not name the school—is Georgia. Georgia, in the words of the teacher and the people involved, is a natural leader. She has had the opportunity to demonstrate her leadership qualities inside and outside the class in particular ways. She organised the girls' netball team to compete in the international netball competition held at Waverley Netball Stadium. She arranged multiple training sessions and meetings outside of school hours to assist the team, and she captained it in a particular way—she led by example. She inspires by her individual example and by her conduct. She is a very competent and good sportsperson, but her main contribution is in inspiring and leading others and putting others ahead of herself. That is a great credit to her and her family. I look forward to presenting the award to her on the 14th.

There is so much good about our young people. I hope the contribution that we make in amplifying the good in our young people outweighs a lot of the negative stuff that we hear and read about on a regular basis. (Time expired)

**Bradfield Electorate: Ku-ring-gai Historical Society**

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects) (09:40): Shortly I will be attending the launch of the second volume of *Rallying the Troops*, a four-volume work published by the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society in my electorate of Bradfield.

This work sets out the stories of the men and women with links to the Ku-ring-gai area who served during World War I. Thanks to the prodigious efforts of the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, all 1,660 men and women who served will have their stories included in one of these four volumes, ensuring that their experiences are recorded for the benefit of future generations.

This project also includes descriptions of life in the Ku-ring-gai area before, during and after World War I. There are descriptions of the processes of recruitment and training, the campaigns the troops from our area fought in and other important parts of the war history of Ku-ring-gai, such as the role of Charles Bean, the celebrated World War I historian and war correspondent—a long-time resident of the upper North Shore and a man who was instrumental in the creation of the Australian War Memorial, the director of which is my predecessor as the member for Bradfield, Dr Brendan Nelson. Charles Bean also played a critical role in ensuring that the Anzac legend was well understood amongst all Australians.

The second volume of *Rallying the Troops* was made possible through a grant of $20,000 under the government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. Indeed, the first volume was launched last year by Dr Brendan Nelson, who—as I have mentioned—is presently director of the War Memorial and former member for Bradfield.

I want to commend the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society for their important work on this project and for all that they do. The society was formed in 1963 and has over 600 members.
Their work includes assisting with the tracing of family histories, publishing books and newsletters about the Ku-ring-gai area and its rich history and heritage and maintaining interest in local heritage issues, as well as being custodians of an impressive collection of documents and records. Their annual publication, *The Historian*, details the work of the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society and includes local family and built history.

I congratulate the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society on this very impressive program of work to commemorate the contribution of Ku-ring-gai residents in World War I and to document the impact it had on so many lives locally. I very much look forward to attending the launch of this second volume of *Rallying the Troops*.

**Fremantle Electorate: Fremantle Foundation Impact 100 Awards**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (09:43): The Fremantle Foundation's Impact100 Award this year focused on building community spirit around the great potential that is unlocked through community giving. All four finalists were organisations run by dedicated people who are putting in the hard yards to help some of the most vulnerable people in Fremantle.

This year's major prize winner, Growing Change, will transform an unused North Fremantle bowling club green into a microfarm. The $100,000 prize will provide a transformational boost to Growing Change and its development of the Fremantle Social Farm. Instead of a vacant space, this plot will become a place of connection, activity and therapy for vulnerable people who are experiencing mental illness, homelessness or social isolation. Participants will undertake a 12-week introductory horticultural program, and graduates will have the opportunity to lease farmland and maintain a private or shared plot to continue harvesting produce. Sales of that produce will allow the not-for-profit Growing Change to share revenue among leaseholders, allowing them to receive a modest income and to reinvest in their microfarm.

I take my hat off to Growing Change's founder and CEO, Renee Gardiner, for her tenacity in overcoming a range of challenges and in transforming her passion for social enterprise into a tangible project that will creatively address a number of entrenched social ills.

Since its inauguration in 2013 the Impact100 Award, which seeks $1,000 donations from at least 100 people across our community in order to raise a game-changing $100,000 for one winner per year, has already made an enormous difference to three crucial Fremantle initiatives. This year, 30 more donors came aboard allowing for the remaining finalists this year to each receive $10,000 towards their projects.

Lifting Horizons' Night Hoops youth engagement program engages at-risk young people aged 12 to 18 by offering safe and constructive basketball based activities on Saturday nights. This structured alternative to being on the streets provides participants with a positive experience in an environment of respect that ultimately improves their connection to society.

Inclusion WA has developed its concept for the Freo-Connect Sport and Recreation Program to address community concerns about high rates of crime, the disengagement of local youth, increasing rates of substance abuse, antisocial behaviour and truancy. The program aims to help local groups cater for people who are facing barriers to social inclusion. Inclusion WA trains and mentors sporting clubs, recreational groups and individuals to foster the engagement or re-engagement of those who are socially isolated.
Perth's existing Befriend Social Network will be able to expand events into Fremantle that enable marginalised, socially-excluded individuals to participate in everyday community activities, meet new people and form genuine connections through sharing meaningful social experiences with others.

The annual Impact100 award is making a profound difference. Last year, the focus was on mental wellbeing and homelessness, and previously the focus was on the engagement of at-risk youth. It is a grassroots, community-level initiative that inspires collaborative philanthropy to support innovative problem-solving organisations. I especially acknowledge the work and leadership of Dylan Smith in making this wonderful concept into a reality.

(capital) 

Capricornia Electorate

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (09:46): In every community there are certain milestones that are worthy of recognition. Recently, in Rockhampton in my electorate of Capricornia, there have been several key milestones marked by some of our important community institutions.

Rockhampton's Mater hospital recently celebrated 100 years of medical service in the city. The occasion was marked with a gala centenary dinner at the Rockhampton Showgrounds. In November 1915, the Rockhampton congregation of the Sisters of Mercy extended their work to help the sick by opening a Mater hospital after purchasing Rockhampton's historic Kenmore House in Ward Street. This was followed by the opening of Mater hospitals in Mackay in 1927, in Bundaberg in 1945, in Yeppoon in 1998 and in Gladstone in 1999. I congratulate CEO Ian Mill, Mercy health board chair Leesa Jeffcoat and all of the team on the 100-year milestone.

Also this year, Mercy aged care in Rockhampton celebrated 75 years of service in providing aged care and nursing home facilities to our seniors. The celebrations included a mass at Bethany Chapel at the Bethany Residential Aged Care Facility in Ward Street, along with the opening of a 25-year time capsule. I offer my congratulations to all of the medical and nursing staff, the orderlies and kitchen staff who take care of our city's elderly.

Another celebration that has taken place is the 75th anniversary of St Brendan's College at Yeppoon. The Catholic boarding school was opened in 1940 by Bishop Hayes, on a property called Coplands, with 42 boarders. Today it is home to a mix of boarders and day students and is a renowned training nursery for up-and-coming young professional rugby league players. This year, 17-year-old student Jack White made history by being the first Aboriginal student to be appointed school captain at St Brendan's in its 75-year history. I congratulate Principal Nick Scully, the staff and all of the students on this year's anniversary milestone.

A further important occasion to occur in my electorate of Capricornia was the official dedication of a new Anglican church at Yeppoon on the Capricorn Coast. Bishop David Robinson presided over the service at which the building in Housden Place, Taranganba, was dedicated as the church of St James the Fisherman. Following the dedication, I was fortunate enough to join the congregation at a special lunch to mark the occasion.

All of these services I have mentioned today play an important role in making up the fabric of our local community.
Franklin Electorate: Broadband

Ms Collins (Franklin) (09:49): I would like to talk today about the NBN connections in my electorate, particularly as it concerns the residents of Howden. Howden is a suburb that is 20 minutes south of Hobart GPO—only 20 minutes. I have had letters from residents talking about their inability to connect to any type of broadband in their area. They have some of the worst access to a broadband in Tasmania, particularly for a suburb that is only 20 minutes away from Hobart.

Just last month, residents had a meeting with the shadow minister for communications, Jason Clare, and Labor senator in Tasmania, Senator Catryna Bilyk. We heard from residents at this meeting—I was unfortunately not able to attend but had comments passed on to me by Senator Bilyk—that they are now leaving the suburb because of their inability to get the NBN. We have students, who are signed up to courses online that they cannot do over the internet. We have school students who cannot do their homework. We have older Australians who cannot access government services. We have some senior public servants who cannot access their emails after hours, because the NBN connection in this area is so bad and there are no services available now in that area.

We heard from the current Prime Minister, who was then Minister for Communications, that NBN would have faster speeds, it would be delivered sooner and it would be cheaper. We all know now, of course, that that is not true. It is costing more for the second-rate NBN. It is, of course, not being rolled out faster, and the speeds are not faster. This area of Howden, if you go into the NBN website and try to find out when you are actually going to be connected, is like a blank spot. You get virtually nothing. We understand from contacting nbn co several times that they are talking about trying to get some services late 2016 for an area where currently, if you want any type of broadband connection, you cannot get it, because the services are so bad in that area.

Residents are moving out of this area because of a lack of broadband services, and the government for 18 months has been contacted by residents and they have done absolutely nothing. The local senators, Senator David Bushby and Senator Eric Abetz know about this issue in Howden, and they have done nothing. Indeed, two weeks before the last election Senator Bushby wrote a letter to the editor where he said, ‘There will be no difference in who gets fibre to their home in Tasmania under Labor or Liberal.’ He went on to repeat that then shadow minister for communications, Malcolm Turnbull, will deliver broadband sooner and cheaper. Of course, residents of Howden have been very badly let down by the Liberal government. They are still lobbying and they still want their services and that should be delivered. (Time expired)

New South Wales Rural Fire Service Secondary Schools Cadet Program

Mrs McNamara (Dobell) (09:52): Recently I had the pleasure to visit MacKillop Catholic College and Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, Berkeley Vale campus, to attend ceremonies for students graduating from the NSW Rural Fire Service Secondary Schools Cadet Program. Forty-four students successfully graduated from the program and received their certificates. The skills and knowledge the students gained throughout this outstanding cadet program have set them in high stead for the future. I am a great supporter of the NSW Rural Fire Service and I have deep respect for those who volunteer their time and service so freely to our community.
Volunteers are the backbone of our community and play a vital role. To have representatives from the local Rural Fire Service offer their time and expertise to take the students through the cadet program is a wonderful demonstration of their commitment to impart their knowledge to the next generation. Rural Fire Service volunteers do not offer their time and energy because it is glamorous; nor do they do it for praise. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the brave firefighters in South Australia and Western Australia for everything they are doing at the moment for us.

At the heart of our Rural Fire Service volunteers is the drive to serve, protect, rescue and provide assistance in whatever capacity they can when and where it is needed. Sometimes this means they put their own lives at risk for the sake of saving the lives and properties of others. The Rural Fire Service embodies qualities of courage, tenacity, leadership, self-discipline, mateship, teamwork, self-confidence, self-reliance, initiative and community spirit. In a practical sense, they are highly skilled in emergency responses from fires to floods, storms, and search and rescue. The Rural Fire Service Secondary Schools Cadet Program embraces all of these qualities, imparting to the students the skills, knowledge and practical experiences that will greatly assist them as they make decisions about their lives and transition into the workforce. Importantly, the program inspires a sense of appreciation for the extraordinary work of our emergency services and volunteers and their utmost importance to our local community.

The value of volunteers can never and should never be overlooked or undersupported. Australians are accustomed to long, hot, dry summers when temperatures can soar well into the 40s for days on end. We know these are the days of extreme fire hazard, when even the smallest of sparks can cause catastrophic bushfires and endanger the lives and the homes of entire communities. For every fire that threatens the Central Coast in summertime and for every emergency in between, our rural fire service volunteers are on the ground working tirelessly to save properties and wildlife. I wish all rural fire service volunteers on the Central Coast and across Australia a safe and successful summer fire season. I commend each of the volunteers from the Warnervale, Charmhaven and Berkeley Vale brigades and also the staff from the lakes district team for generously giving their time and knowledge to take the students of MacKillop Catholic College and Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College through their respective programs. I am hopeful that at least some of these students who graduated will consider becoming volunteers. (Time expired)

**Domestic and Family Violence**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (09:55): As we all know, yesterday was White Ribbon Day, and I am sure many of us received contacts from our constituents. One of the constituents who contacted me had her story told in the *Newcastle Herald*. She asked me to raise a particular issue, and that is how the lack of accommodation prevents victims of domestic violence from moving out of the situation they are in so that they can turn the situation around and change their lives. For 18 months this particular woman was forced to live under her house. She lived with her husband, her mother and her child. She just disappeared: she went under her house and lived in appalling conditions; she would wait until her husband went to work and then sneak back inside, have breakfast, shower and go off to work herself. She did this, as I said, for 18 months. She tried on numerous occasions to move into private rental accommodation. The house she was living in was actually in her name. She
was the person who was responsible for paying the mortgages. As with many similar cases, she started to blame herself, thinking that maybe this was her fault. She thought, 'If I'm very quiet and he does not notice me and he cannot find me, my mother and my child will be safe.' So, one day she decided to simply vanish, and that is how she did it.

After a period of time she decided enough was enough. As I said, she had tried to find rental accommodation. She had looked at all of her options in the community, but there were no options. In the end, she moved back into her house and changed the locks, and her husband could not enter the house. He abused her, sent her text messages and all of the usual things that we all hear about. She said to me that she is not a victim and she is stronger, but she has implored me to raise the issue in parliament of the need for affordable accommodation to help those who are victims of violence to move from that situation into safety. We, as members of parliament, have to do better. We do not want a situation where people continue to live in violent situations because they do not have safe accommodation. (Time expired)

Global Terrorism

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (09:58): On Saturday 14 November, I opened my phone to a message from my daughter-in-law Romee. Usually, it is a quick photo of my granddaughter Sophie. This one showed her sleeping peacefully with another toddler friend and included a special message: 'After all the misery today, we choose to focus on our children and hope for a more peaceful future.' This, indeed, was a beautiful, yet powerful, message. The last 12 months have been difficult for so many, but in addition to having a deep and passionate nine-year connection to France, Romee lost her close friend Tori in the Lindt cafe siege in December last year.

As a result, I decided to put a condolence book in my office—a small symbol of our support for the people of France, who are showing that such horrendous attacks will not depress their spirit. After the media announcement for contributions, I was asked in an email why condolence books are necessary, why some countries and groups get them and others miss out and why, for example, the French deserve a condolence book but not the victims of the floods in Myanmar or the countries in Africa who have lost thousands to Ebola. I could completely understand this constituent's care and love for humanity, and my response to this was:

The reason for the French initiative is that the attack on France was aimed at disrupting a country that is not at war. It only has troops involved in United Nations peacekeeping activities. France was a significant birthplace of an individual's freedoms and a fight against class dictatorship. A condolence book is a symbolic gesture of support for the French as they fight against acts of terrorism. The tragedies you speak of are a terrible loss of life, and the people are just as worthy of our heartfelt compassion, but the circumstances differ.

Our local paper reported on Milton resident Kate Douglass and her husband, Laurence. They are living in France near the 11th district, close to the bars and restaurants hit by the devastating attacks. Kate is currently researching liver and breast cancer at the Curie Institute. Thankfully, they were away. Kate has said, in true Aussie style, 'I'm scared of what this will do to Paris, but I'm not scared to live in Paris after the attacks and I won't stop enjoying my life here.'

France normally celebrates the third Thursday in November with fireworks, music and a festival. The event is called Beaujolais Nouveau Day. In my electorate of Gilmore, at the
home of Jean-Stephane and Heather Estival a small but enthusiastic group of French expatriates and French language students met together to acknowledge the day. They all signed the condolence book, as they too empathise with the people of France. I have spent a short time in Paris visiting the Louvre, touring, enjoying the sense of art and adventure and just soaking in the art of this most inspiring city and wonderful nation. I will be presenting the condolence book to the French ambassador next week. My heart goes out to all those affected by any act of violence, terrorism or extremism. It simply is not fair to the citizens of that nation.

**Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (10:01): Today I have with me a submission from the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group. They would like this submission to be taken by our Prime Minister and representatives of this parliament who will be attending the Paris climate conference. I would just like to take a few moments to outline what they believe should be Australia's approach at this conference.

The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group are calling for a more robust approach to Australia's strategic plan to tackle climate change. They believe that we need to rapidly transition to a clean, green economy as soon as possible. Australia's targets should be the world's best. They are calling for the targets to be lifted and for us to set ourselves an ambitious goal. The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group believe our current targets as a nation are disappointing and they are calling on the federal government at the very least to heed the advice of the Climate Change Authority and to adopt emission-reducing targets of between 40 to 60 per cent on year 2000 levels by 2030. They are also calling for a 30 per cent reduction target by 2025, that these goals be taken to Paris and for there to be a price on carbon through an emissions trading scheme. The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group are calling for there to be an effective plan that is developed and implemented that focuses on renewable energy generation and sets standards and targets in line with world's best practice. They are also calling for cross-party representation to represent all political views and values at Paris. The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group are calling for there to be real action on climate change. They are arguing that climate change is a moral issue and that the government needs to step up and acknowledge that there is a moral imperative on which to tackle climate change.

This particular submission that this group has put together goes on, has quite some detail and steps out a plan for this government. They are profoundly disappointed with this government's lack of action on climate change and believe that they have been dragging their feet on this area. The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group are incredibly involved in their local community. They have a number of renewable energy projects on the go and should be congratulated for the way in which they have engaged their local community in these projects; whether it be their plans to build a community wind park or their solar panel projects. This is a group that we should be supporting and I encourage the government to take this submission to Paris and adopt it as Australia's position at the Paris conference next week.

**Riverina Electorate: Scholarship**

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (10:04): Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull often says there has never been a more exciting time to be an Australian. This is certainly very true. Australia is a clever country which has long brought
to the world advances in engineering, mathematics and the sciences which have made immeasurable changes to the world, such as the cochlear implant, wi-fi technology and the black box flight recorder. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM, as it is called, is key to Australia's innovation and advancement in the 21st century. We need our students, especially girls, studying STEM, and making Australia's contribution to the industries and economies of an increasingly global and agile world.

To talk of innovation and productivity is to talk of Australia, and, particularly, to talk of our wonderful universities. I also think that to talk of how Australia is embracing the future is to talk particularly of rural and regional Australia. For this reason I was delighted to attend Burgmann College at the Australian National University here in Canberra yesterday to help launch the Northrop Grumman, ViaSat and Optus Country Scholarship for a student from the Riverina to reside at Burgmann as part of their STEM degree. The $7,000 bursary is set aside just for a student from the Riverina. This is a fantastic initiative which will help students such as Brody Hannan, a young student from Cowra who I met yesterday who was the school captain of Cowra High School in 2014 and is now a STEM student at the ANU. Brody has a clear passion for the sciences and is someone who, like many from country communities, sees no boundary, no barrier, to what he can achieve with a good education and a positive attitude—and he certainly has that.

Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington, the Australian National University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, spoke passionately and eloquently of the sacrifices many country families make to help their young ones get a good education. I think she summed it up perfectly when she told the story of a mother who had driven her daughter five hours to the ANU simply to have a look at the campus. Whilst it is a sacrifice and a long drive, it is nothing in the scheme of things if you can unlock the potential in a student to pursue lifelong learning at one of the many terrific universities—particularly the ANU. And I know Charles Sturt University in my home town of Wagga Wagga does tremendous things for the young people.

I was pleased to also chat to Dr Ian Grant, Principal of the Riverina Anglican College, at yesterday's ceremony and to hear of his enthusiasm for the country scholarship. It is a marvellous initiative, and I congratulate Burgmann, the ANU, Northrop Grumman, ViaSat and Optus on this important contribution to the sciences and to the Riverina into the future.

Isaacs Electorate: Queen Elizabeth Centre

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:07): Last week I was in the wonderful suburb of Noble Park in my electorate to meet with representatives of the Queen Elizabeth Centre. The Queen Elizabeth Centre, known by all as the QEC, is a 42-bed public hospital and community service organisation that provides a range of residential and in-home services to families across Victoria, as well as running a specialised education and guidance program so that young Australians can get the best possible start in life. The QEC has a long and distinguished history of service, having been established for many years in Carlton before moving to Noble Park.

I was given a very informative tour of the centre by CEO Athina Georgiou, Manager Karen Monaghan and Community Outreach Officer Megan Leuenberger, as well as some of the hardworking nurses who help to improve the lives of young children and their families who come to the centre. The staff at the QEC are understandably proud of their facility, which has recently undergone an upgrade to improve the accessibility and appearance of the centre.
Sadly, many Australian families face physical, psychological, intellectual or environmental challenges that compromise their ability to nurture and support the health, safety and wellbeing of their young children. It is in situations like this that the QEC steps in to assist. In addition to the residential programs, the QEC offers community-based services that support parents and other carers to learn the skills and to access the services and networks they need to build a strong family.

It is through the dedication of staff like Athina, Karen and Megan, as well as the countless nurses and support workers, that families in the community that might otherwise fall through the cracks are helped to stand up and to succeed. At a time of federal funding cuts to non-government and community support organisations—cuts that have devastated hard-working and essential community organisations in Melbourne's south-east, such as the Dandenong Community Advisory Bureau and the Springvale community advice bureau—it is heartening to see organisations like the QEC continuing to provide such outstanding service to the community. I commend the team at the QEC in Noble Park for all the hard work they do to help young children and their families, and I say that Labor stands with you in our commitment to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

**O'Connor Electorate: Infrastructure**

**Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (10:10):** I rise today to update the chamber on the progress of the great work being done by the Outback Highway Development Council, who are literally paving the way to create a new east-west connect road linking Laverton in the north-eastern goldfields of O'Connor to Winton in north-western Queensland. I particularly want to recognise a constituent of mine, the redoubtable Pat Hill, who was here in Parliament House yesterday at the invitation of Minister Frydenberg. Pat Hill was briefing Minister Frydenberg, who is the minister for northern Australia, on the Outback Way project, as was Helen Lewis, the CEO of the organisation. We had a wonderful meeting, and I sincerely thank Minister Frydenberg for being so generous with his time.

The Outback Way is Australia's longest shortcut of 2,800 kilometres. It will almost halve the journey taken by tourists travelling from the beaches of the golden west in WA to the reef in northern Queensland. No other drive passes through as many climates, landscapes and Australian attractions as the Outback Way. From the Mediterranean climates of Perth, it travels through the wheat belt and mining towns of the northern goldfields, traversing culturally rich Indigenous lands, to the harsh desert through Central Australia. It traverses Ayres Rock and the Olgas and then heads into the vast cattle country of the Northern Territory and western Queensland before reaching the balmy tropics of Cairns. The Outback Way, as I said, is 2,800 kilometres in length. Currently only 1,200 kilometres of this is sealed, with another 1,600 kilometres of gravel, which has been upgraded thanks to the work of the outback development council.

I particularly want to thank Pat Hill and the Shire of Laverton for the work they have done, and also the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku—they are the two shires in my electorate that are involved. There has been some funding made available. The federal government made $75 million over three years available, which has been matched by the states, and that is being rolled out at a fantastic rate at $200,000 a kilometre of bitumen sealed—and I have to congratulate the shires of Laverton and Ngaanyatjarraku for this. There is some more money...
available through the northern Australia policy, and that is why the Outback Way council are here today, to brief Minister Frydenberg, and I am hoping we can access some of that money.

*An honourable member interjecting—*

**Mr WILSON:** It is anyone travelling from Perth to Alice Springs. For transporters, the shortcut for livestock and heavy haulage can certainly save huge amounts of money. For example, there will be a 12-hour time saving travelling from the southern Pilbara to Central Australia, and that can be a cost saving of up to 50 per cent on current routes.

I have run out of time, but once again I would like to endorse the Outback Way to the House and certainly the work that the Outback Way committee are doing. I thank Patrick Hill and Helen Lewis and their committee on the work that they have achieved so far.

**Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:13): Despite the medical advances and improvements in sanitation and water supply, nutrition, housing and education, the fact is that poor health continues to plague many countries in the world. In fact, infectious diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis alone kill up to four million people each year. Sadly, a disproportionate share of those affected are in, for example, developing countries in Africa, such as Kenya, as well as Bangladesh, Cambodia and India. This is where the work of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria plays an extraordinary role in bringing together finances and technical expertise to combat HIV, TB and malaria.

Founded in 2002, the Global Fund works in partnership with governments and civil agencies to finance and disperse resources to prevent and treat infectious diseases. Currently this organisation is the world's largest financier of anti-AIDS programs, and TB and malaria programs as well. It is investing $4 billion, each year, in programs to accelerate the end of these diseases. As of September, since the formation of the global fund, it has disbursed $27 billion in comprehensive programs, in 150 countries, to support large-scale education, prevention, diagnosis and treatment programs. These programs, particularly, have provided eight million people with access to HIV antiretroviral therapy. Over 13 million people with access to testing and treatment for TB, and more than 550 million anti-insecticide treated beds with nets, have been provided to affected communities to prevent malaria.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Janice Reid AC on her appointment as chair of the advisory council for Pacific Friends of the Global Fund. Jan is a personal friend of mine and was the former vice-chancellor of the University of Western Sydney. She is an outstanding academic and advocate for equitable access to health and education as well as improving the role of women and girls in developing countries. Through her many administrative roles, particularly as chair of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Jan has always brought a deep commitment to advocating for equitable access to education, health-care opportunities for Indigenous people, refugees and people from low socio-economic backgrounds. I commend Jan and the global fund for their significant contribution and call on this government to continue to increase, to review and to support the philanthropic purposes that this fund was established for.

**Bennelong Electorate: Bennelong 100 Walk for Motor Neurone Disease**

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) (10:16): I commenced on 24 October and completed on 21 November, the inaugural Bennelong 100 walk for Motor Neurone Disease. Along the way
I stopped at 35 schools, 24 shopping villages, 11 aged care centres and three charities. Everywhere I went people were unfailingly generous and kind. One of many highlights of the walk was the time I spent at the schools across Bennelong. All were interested in the walk and the charity. Some schools showed off their world-class facilities; others took me on at table tennis the week before the Bennelong Cup schools competition. Many had programs or students they were especially proud of and I was lucky enough to see them all.

Epping Primary School was a particular standout. On hearing of the walk they immediately arranged a mufti day for the whole school and presented me with a cheque for hundreds of dollars when I walked through. Many other schools were similarly generous. Gladesville Public School hosted a Motor Neurone Disease Association stall on their grounds and raised a lot of money through selling their fundraising merchandise. Others, like Northcross Christian School and St Charles Catholic Primary School took donations through a fundraising tin kept at reception.

One other school that stood out was Rydalmere East Public School. I visited them on 16 November, when they had recently held their Remembrance Day ceremony. In addition to the usual memorial service, they had applied to the Department of Defence for an Anzac Centenary grant in order to put on a performance entitled Do Not Forget Australia. The show tells the story of a troop of diggers in World War I and the families they left behind. It gave the students a real picture of what their sacrifices meant, particularly as some of the soldiers who fought were just a couple of years older than the students are now.

The federal government provided the school nearly $3,000 to put on this show and, by all accounts, it was an incredible event. The school, appropriately, held the performance on 11 November, which added to the solemnity of the event in this 100 years since the Gallipoli landings. The area is steeped in military heritage as the school is situated above the A2E DHA housing site. This site is named after the first submarine to breach the Dardanelles and is built on the location of a former ammunitions store. Defence members and their families started moving into the site just last year; and in a lovely gesture to the local community the school put on a special performance of the show for the service people and their families. I commend the school for this gesture and the whole community for getting behind these young people.

Greenway Electorate: Nagle College

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (10:19): On Sunday, my daughter Octavia and I had the absolute pleasure of joining in the 50th anniversary celebrations of Nagle College, Blacktown, which was attended by a large number of former and current students, and members of the Blacktown community. In 1964 a small group of Presentation Sisters, under the leadership of Sister Mary Alphonsus Thearle, created Nagle Girls’ High School. It took its name from the founding member of the Presentation Sisters, Nano Nagle, who was a pioneer in Catholic education in Ireland and a leading light for women around the globe. She was declared venerable in the Catholic Church, on 31 October 2013, by Pope Francis.

The school opened in 1965, comprising two classes, one of year 7 to 9 students and one of year 10 students. The school was surrounded by bushland, but the grounds and buildings have had to be expanded to cope with the rapid growth in the area. In the ensuing years the school added the necessary buildings and enlarged recreation areas, as it continued to grow in numbers.
Throughout the decades, Nagle College has seen the Blacktown community transformed from a rural one in Sydney's urban fringe to the sprawling and diverse metropolis it is today. As Blacktown has changed, so has Nagle College, developing into a vitally important educational institution in the region that is serving a large number of primary schools, including many in my own electorate, such as Our Lady of Lourdes, in Seven Hills, and my old school, St Bernadette's, in Lalor Park. Many of my friends went to Nagle College and had a fantastic educational experience.

Father Peter Confeggi presided over the celebration mass. He noted that from the very beginning Nagle College has been at the forefront of women's education in the Blacktown area. It is a proudly multicultural school. As you look over Nagle College on its presentation days, you actually see the make-up of Blacktown itself. I am so proud that the young women who are coming out of Nagle College are educated to be agents of change. Since its foundation, Nagle College has instilled the Presentation Sisters' philosophy of 'In Deed Not Word' in all of its students. As they say, it is easy to talk the talk, but you need to walk it.

Today Nagle College continues this tradition and is responsible for nurturing and inspiring thousands of young women and transforming them into confident young women looking to make a meaningful contribution to society. As Nagle College proudly and correctly proclaims:

Today's Nagle College is a modern, well-equipped secondary school, serving a multicultural community.

Fifty years of education at Nagle College is something to be extremely proud of. I thank the college for its service to our community and congratulate everyone involved with the school on this very special milestone. I also want to wish all the best to those who are completing their HSC at the school, or have only just completed it. I know its fine tradition will continue to be combined with academic excellence. I want to thank the Principal, Mrs Delma Horan, all the teaching and support staff and all current and former students for inviting me to participate in such a magnificent celebration.

Global Terrorism

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (10:22): Today I rise to speak about the events that have taken place in Paris and around the world. Recently, Lady Jane Edwards AM, the Honorary Consul for France in Queensland, held a vigil following the horrifying events on 13 November in Paris, where 129 lives were lost and many more were injured. Thousands of people's lives will never be the same. I pay tribute to my dear friend Lady Jane Edwards for her dedication and her commitment to this important role and for organising such a beautiful vigil in such a short period of time.

The vigil was attended by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Graham Quirk, the Hon. Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, my colleague the Hon. Bernie Ripoll, member for Oxley and currently the only federal parliamentarian of French background. They all spoke so eloquently. We gathered with thousands of others under the red, white and blue lights that lit up City Hall and King George Square so beautifully.

The French were in mourning and the people of Brisbane mourned with them. Our Story Bridge, City Hall, South Bank, and other local icons were lit up in the colours of the French...
flag for three days of mourning and to show our support to the thousands of French citizens who call Australia home or who were visiting us from their homeland.

As the darkness descended and silence fell upon the crowd, we imagined for a short moment what it would have been like to be one of the victims in the Bataclan Theatre, the stadium or the beautiful restaurants and bars on the streets of Paris. Marcel Poualion, vice-president of Brisbane's Union of French Citizens Abroad. He said:

Our motherland, the land of freedom, equality and fraternity, is mourning.

She has been painfully hurt in the flesh.

But while we were there to mourn the loss of life from unspeakable evil, the overwhelming mood was not one of fear but one of defiance—defiance, because we will not succumb to the acts of terror witnessed right across the globe. Australia's contribution to the war on terror has been repeatedly stated. We are the biggest contributor to the crisis in the Middle East, second only to the United States. But our efforts abroad have also been matched by our efforts at home, not with the bullet and the bomb, but with the commitment to unity and diversity. Fostering a society in the seat of Brisbane, where many cultures can live harmoniously, is a model to be emulated and one that I am so proud of. Brisbane is one of the most culturally diverse seats in Queensland and it is a point of pride for me.

To the people of France, we mourn with you, we support you, we honour what you bring to our nation. We stand as one. We are one.

**BlueScope Steel**

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:25): I just wanted to report to the House of an update on a very critical issue in my electorate and that is the future of the BlueScope factory and the steel-making capacity, not only in our region, but across the country. Last week there was vote of the affected unions on the new EBA. This is the EBA, which I had previously reported to the parliament had been negotiated, that underpinned the announcement by BlueScope that, on the basis of the agreement, they would continue to produce steel at Port Kembla. It was a very critical decision. I have to acknowledge the very, very real leadership provided by all of the affected unions, most specifically the Australian Workers' Union, which has the largest significant number of employees affected, and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

It was a terribly, terribly difficult decision for those workers to have taken. They have made a decision to act as a unified community to protect the best interests of all and to ensure that so many of their colleagues, indeed their family and friends, were not going to loss their job under the potential threat of the shutdown of that steel-making facility. But it was not an easy decision because there was a price to pay, and for some of them it was a significant price. They were facing decreases in their wages and for many of the them that was on the back of previous decisions in 2010, and that is not an easy thing. I just want to pay real respect to those workers who made that decision in the interests of all, not in their own individual interest.

The campaign goes on. The Save Our Steel group, which has been campaigning to get more long-term decisions on ways to ensure stainability of steel making in this country, are in Canberra this week, and is led by Wayne Phillips, who is that local branch secretary of the Australian Workers' Union. Two of his delegates off the shop floor, who come down regularly with him, were there, as well as Arthur Rorris from the South Coast Labor Council. Their
point is—and it is absolutely critically important—that the federal government needs to step up and take more action to determine that this important strategic industry has a long-term future. I am very pleased that our shadow minister, Senator Kim Carr, has worked with the crossbenchers in the Senate to put up a proposal for an inquiry that can look in-depth, bring expert advice to the table and take the opinions and views of many of the key stakeholders about ways in which we can take action to ensure a strong future for steel making across the country.

Wannon Electorate: Great Ocean Ducks

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (10:28): In my electorate of Wannon there are many small family farms that are doing interesting things with produce. One such farm is Great Ocean Ducks, or GOD, where Greg and Jodi Clarke have established a 16-hectare operation farming free-range Aylesbury and Pekin ducks. Nicknamed GOD for short, this farm is as close to a slice of heaven as you are likely to see, with views down to the coast near the Twelve Apostles and the Great Ocean Road at Port Campbell. I can attest to this as I visited their beautiful farm in October this year and had lunch with Greg and Jodi.

Jodi and Greg established the duck farm from scratch in 2009 with no farming experience and just 30 ducklings. In fact, prior to this sea change, Jodi confessed she had never used a shovel. I suspect this may have changed by now. Greg, who is a writer, now spends more time around the farm than in front of the computer. However, he did take time to write to me to ask about the export possibilities available to small farming operations. Thankfully, the government has things well underway on delivering free trade agreements galore, with support for smaller as well as bigger agricultural operations a priority.

The ducks are fed on fresh strawberries and other fruit and nuts—not a bad diet for a coastal lifestyle. After six years of care and attention, Jodi and Greg now supply around 150 ducks per week to some of the best restaurants in the country. Whether you are sitting down to a meal at the Royal Mail in Dunkeld—another wonderful institution in my electorate—or Brae near Birregurra, in the member for Corangamite's electorate, or at the European on Spring Street, the duck you order will have come from GOD.

Great Ocean Ducks have diversified this year by producing a cookbook—the result of a large number of requests for recipes and tips for how best to cook duck. Thanks to the many noted chefs and restaurants that have been sourcing their ducks from GOD, the book is full of fantastic ideas and suggestions on the best way to cook what can be a hard dish to master. I am told that copies are selling fast; some are even being ordered from overseas.

Along with their two children, Madi and Milla, Jodi and Greg have established a wonderful farm and operation in my electorate and are a true testament that the heart of farming is to have a go. Great Ocean Ducks is a truly free range and family-run farm. The government's FTA agenda is to support ventures like this, particularly in helping to get these smaller operations into overseas markets. Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend Just Duck to you and to the House.

Climate Change

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:31): It is coming towards the end of 2015, and what a year it has been. By standing up for the things that matter, like the ability to get health care in this country no matter how much money you have, we have seen off the GP fee. By standing up
for the things that matter, like making sure that everyone can go to university no matter their background or how much money their parents have, we have stared down plans to have $100,000 university degrees and seen off cuts to university funding. By standing up in the Senate and in the community for that basic Australian spirit of egalitarianism, respect and tolerance, we have seen off Tony Abbott—potentially the most divisive and out of touch Prime Minister this country has ever seen. I think everyone is going towards the end of 2015 exhaling and feeling as if there has been a change in the tone and a change in the nature of the debate. That is good. I join with many others in sharing that feeling of relief. Up here in parliament in the last sitting fortnight, that is what everyone is feeling.

But it is not enough. This morning we heard the United Nations say that 2015 is set to be the hottest year yet. We have seen the bushfire season start shockingly early. Two hundred fires were burning across my state of Victoria in October. As I stand here and speak, our country is burning. This week Western Australia was hit with devastating fires. Right now in South Australia people are fighting fires that are destroying their homes, blazing through their communities and tragically taking some of their lives. My heart and my thoughts are with those communities who are suffering, and with the friends and families of the people who are putting their lives on the line to battle these blazes. Right now across the world we are grappling with devastating and brutal acts of terrorism in Paris, Beirut, several African countries and many other places too.

At the end of 2015, as we see people fleeing across the globe trying to find a better place to live, our world is crying out for leadership. We need action; not words. As the Prime Minister heads to the climate talks in Paris next week it is time to ditch Tony Abbott's dangerous pollution targets. It is time to say that it is not good enough for us to be on track for a world warmed by three to four degrees. It is time to say that it is not right for Australia to approve a single coalmine that will pump more pollution into the atmosphere than the entire European Union does in a year. It is time for the Prime Minister to be better and not just slicker.

As 2016 comes around the corner there is cause for hope. Hundreds of thousands of people will be heading out for climate marches saying, 'We want a better future.' We have a plan for 100 per cent renewable energy in South Australia and we have a plan for 90 per cent renewable energy from the Greens across the country. California is going to 70 per cent. 2016 can be the year that we become the new energy superpower.

**Bowman Electorate: Toondah Harbour Development**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (10:34): Redlands, in Queensland, is geographically blessed. It is surrounded by North Stradbroke Island and the koala corridor and it has a very wide river between us and Logan. But it is also an area that has tremendous ecological challenges, so for a city with a relatively small population we are trying to manage that growth carefully. With projections of around a 1.1 per cent growth rate over the next 30 years, that still means some significant planning challenges—around 560 new lots every year. Obviously no resident who moves in the hope of tranquility likes to see the next person coming along to share a slice of paradise. But we have to accede to the fact that we are all having children, there is migration and we need to be able to support future generations both in the lifestyle we have come to expect and also with jobs and economic opportunities.

That is why I am delighted that the former LNP Campbell Newman government was able to identify two priority development areas—Weinam Creek and Toondah Harbour. I would
like to speak about the latter today. These are the jumping-off points for the islands in Moreton Bay, surely the most traversed, visited and recreated place on Australia's eastern seaboard. The fact is that there is no bridge, lots of water taxis, plenty of dugongs and a lot of happy fishermen. Those things come together as, effectively, a need for a nexus to reach the islands.

Though I love my electorate, at the moment I have to concede that both the Toondah Harbour and Weinam Creek areas look a little more like East Timor on a bad day. There is only so much tarp and tyres tossed onto rocks that you can look at before you realise we are being left behind in what is a truly wonderful opportunity to showcase Moreton Bay to the world, the nation, the state and the city. You do that by taking a priority development area and working with the best—in this case, Walker Corp—to put together what is required to bring new people and new opportunities to our great city. That is the Toondah Harbour development, which has gone to public consultation this week for the first time. It is a very exciting period. Because the development falls on Ramsar areas, it has been referred to the environment minister as a controlled area for EPBC assessment. That is very important. Simultaneously, we are talking to the state government and the Coordinator-General to deem it a coordinated project and do the appropriate EIS.

If you live in Redlands City, the important thing you all need to remember is that there will be so many opportunities to have your say. We will be polling the population and no view is not welcome in this process. I look forward to hearing the views of every resident and ultimately making sure that Toondah Harbour is a place that we can showcase in Redlands and be proud of worldwide.

**Climate Change**

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON** (Wills) (10:37): The members for Bendigo and Melbourne have spoken this morning about climate change, and so will I. In the lead up to the 2015 United Nations climate change conference in Paris, the Prime Minister has said that Australia could be in for major adjustments on climate change policy by 2017. That statement was somewhat mystifying to members of his own party, to whom he has promised that there would be no change in existing climate policies.

Australians are entitled to know just what the Prime Minister has in mind. As things stand, the Prime Minister presides over a government that has no effective policy to reduce emissions and continues to hand out massive sums to producers. For example, the Minister for the Environment supports a proposal to rebuild the Hazelwood Power Station with direct injection carbon engines, otherwise known as DICE generators, to run on a slurry of pulverised coal and water. Research on this scheme has been squandering public funds for at least 25 years and has so far failed to produce a single usable diesel engine running on coal-water slurry. Indeed, a pilot plant at the CSIRO laboratories at Lucas Heights in Sydney was abandoned when an independent scientist demonstrated that the energy required to run the equipment that produced the coal-water slurry consumed more energy than the engine produced. To replace the six 200-megawatt steam turbines at Hazelwood with DICE engines would require the equivalent of 20 80-megawatt diesel engines, the largest ever built. So far, the CSIRO's energy labs in Newcastle have done no more than run a single-cylinder four-litre diesel engine on coal slurry.
According to a study produced by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the then New Zealand Electricity Commission in 2009, the capital cost for engines of the kind proposed for the Hazelwood DICE installations is approximately $2,000 per kilowatt or $3.2 billion in total for that power station. Homeowners know that rooftop solar photovoltaic systems can be produced for around $1,000 per kilowatt and produce no emissions, yet the minister proposes to spend double that amount per kilowatt for an emissions reduction of no more than 50 per cent. Hazelwood emits around 16 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, which means that cutting those emissions by 50 per cent with DICE engines would cost $400 per tonne, 30 times more than the average of $13 per tonne paid by the Emissions Reduction Fund under the government's Direct Action scheme.

In 2009 the Prime Minister said, in reference to Direct Action, it was 'a con, an environmental fig leaf to cover a determination to do nothing'. The government should get rid of the Direct Action payments, which are a waste of taxpayers' money, and support Labor's plans for serious climate action and for renewable energy.

White Ribbon Day

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (10:40): I want to add my voice to the many who acknowledged an important occasion for our society and our country, yesterday, which was White Ribbon Day. The day was observed by me, many other members of this place and the community more broadly. White Ribbon Day, as we know, is a male-led campaign to end violence against women. Violence against women is a significant issue in my electorate and across the country and is, therefore, something that many of us campaign for throughout the year. Nonetheless, it is important to have days like White Ribbon Day to bring it to national prominence. Occasions like this give us an opportunity to reflect and take stock of not only what has been achieved and how far we have come but also how much more needs to be done to end the scourge that is domestic violence.

At yesterday's White Ribbon Day breakfast, here in parliament, Prime Minister Turnbull's address struck a chord with me and many of those who were gathered. In particular, he said:

Violence against women is the end point of disrespecting women.

Now, not all disrespect of women ends up in violence but all violence against women begins there.

As the Prime Minister also said, at a personal level: 'One of the most important things we all must do is to ensure our sons, our brothers and our grandsons respect their sisters, mothers and their grandmothers.'

Unfortunately, as I have said, in reflecting on the challenges ahead, we know that there is a long way to go. We know that in six Australian women has experienced violence at the hand of a current or former partner, and more than 60 women have been killed, so far, this year.

I am therefore proud that the government is continuing to put its money where its mouth is and deliver in this area. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister and ministers announced a package worth over $100 million, designed to provide a safety net for women and children at risk of violence. This was announced at the Eastern Community Legal Centre, near my electorate of Deakin, and has been something that my community has welcomed.

I want to take this opportunity to, again, raise my concerns that we and the states are not adequately dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence against women and the flow-on
impacts to children. I highlight my ongoing campaign and calls for the Victorian and state attorneys-general, collectively, to look at minimum mandatory sentencing for violent crimes against women and children, because we do not have faith that our unelected judiciary is dealing with these perpetrators of violence in the way that they should.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice): Thank you, member for Deakin, for those appropriate comments.

White Ribbon Day

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:44): Yesterday I wore a white ribbon in my lapel. Today my lapel is empty. What is exceptional about White Ribbon Day is that it is a male-led campaign to end men's violence against women. It is a powerful symbol to see the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition both speak publicly, using strong terms, about this terrible scourge. Symbols are very important, but to end this culture of violence we need more than symbols. Seventy-seven women have died this year. Seventy-seven women have been killed by violent men this year.

Obviously, we need to stop the violence. We need to stop the culture that allows this violence to continue. Each and every one of us needs to challenge the assumptions that we make. Most of the time, we are probably not even aware that we are making these assumptions. It is so easy to do. There would not be one among us who would not have been guilty of making those assumptions at some time—that little voice in your head that says: 'Why didn't she just leave? She must be exaggerating it. He's such a nice guy. He couldn't possibly be like that.' These are assumptions we have no right to make. By making these baseless assumptions we are feeding the culture that allows this horrible violence to continue.

We—men and women—need to challenge ourselves each time we make an assumption like that. We need each and every time to assume that this violence is happening. It is not a difficult assumption to make when you look at the statistics—one in three women will experience some sort of physical assault. Once we assume that the violence is happening, without question we can then start to help these women with some practical support so that it does not happen again—domestic violence leave so that victims will not be worried about losing their job while trying to access the legal services they need; funding for community legal centres that are on the front line of helping victims access justice and stopping the violence such as the women's legal service where my wife volunteers; and not allowing the violence to continue through the court system by providing legal aid so that women will not be cross-examined by the perpetrators of the violence.

Violence against women is our problem and we all need to do our bit to stop the violence. Putting on a white ribbon is a good part of that program but obviously we need to do something else on every other day of the year.

Forde Electorate: Year 12 Graduates

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:46): Most of us in this place have attended numerous high school graduation events over the last week or so. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the year 12 students in my electorate of Forde who graduated from high school into last week. What a tremendous time this is in your lives. I am sure that many of you felt that the end of your schooling could not come quickly enough. But believe me when I say that your high school years will always be some of the best times of your life. Completing high
school education would not be possible without the incredible team of supporters behind each student. On that note, I would like to thank all the teachers, principals, school volunteers, parents and carers in my electorate for your hard work and dedication to support the graduates of 2015.

Last week I had the opportunity to attend a number of graduation ceremonies as well as academic and sporting award ceremonies. We have some talented students in my electorate who are achieving amazing things. Among them are the leaders of the future—politicians, CEOs, innovators, inventors, athletes, academics and advocates—who all have the potential to change this world for the better. Our high school education is filled with many challenges, ups and downs, laughter and tears—and getting to the finish line can sometimes be a bittersweet moment, as was witnessed at many of the ceremonies. Graduating high school is an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on your time at school. It will have been a time of learning, exploring and contemplation. You will have made friends and lost friends. Some of your peers will become lifelong friends, and others you may never see again.

But finishing school is not the end of learning; it is only the beginning. School will never teach you all you need to know but it will teach you the basics, and what you do with that knowledge is up to you. I encourage every student who has finished year 12 this year never to lose their desire to learn, grow and develop personally and, in that journey, bring others with you. It is through the inclusion of others in your journey that you can create a better future for yourselves, the community, this nation and the world. I wish you every success in your future endeavours following your successful graduation.

Broadband

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:49): I want to reflect on the sorry state of a project that should be a key infrastructure plank in delivering us a modern, stronger and flexible economy, and that is the National Broadband Network. We were told that with the election of this new government—in particular, now that it is headed by a Prime Minister who was the communications minister—we could expect better from them.

They reckon that instead of having 93 per cent of all Australian homes connected by fibre they will bring in this MTM, this multitechnology mix, which has been referred to as the Malcolm Turnbull model, in tech sectors. It would, as part of it, rely on the use of hybrid fibre coaxial that was used to deliver Pay TV and, in some instances, broadband. As most people know, particularly in my area that used to have it, the more people got onto an HFC network, the slower the network was. While there may have been technological changes that occurred after the election of the Abbott-Turnbull government, at that point it remained a big concern. To get it to work, HFC does require a lot of investment in it.

The Prime Minister used to chip me for my advocacy, for people in my area to get fibre to the premises. In fact, he used the floor of parliament to say: 'The member for Chifley knows well that the fibre network is being rolled out near his electorate, where there are not one but two high-speed broadband services already available.' He was right. On one side there was the Telstra HFC network, which would cost $105 a month if you wanted to get it. On the other side of the network was the Optus HFC network.

What has been interesting in the last 24 hours is the leaking of these documents, which show us—now that the government has purchased the HFC network from Optus—what it is
like. We were told that this purchase would be at no additional cost to taxpayers for the use of this network, but it turns out that internal NBN documents claim the Optus network is not fully fit for purpose and other parts of the network are over-subscribed and do not have sufficient capacity to support NBN services.

What we are getting is, instead of having a dedication to fixed or fibre to the premises, this reliance on a multi-technology mix—that was going to limp on using HFC—is delivering subpar. This HFC network is 'highly fried cable', it is not about hybrid fibre coaxial. It is cable that needs to be completely replaced with a system that still will not deliver what it should, in terms of the speeds, downloads and uploads. We should have got the job right the first time. Instead, we have the vanity of a Prime Minister who thought he knew best and could deliver a technological solution that was better but is being proved wrong—yet again.

**Defence Housing Australia**

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert—Government Whip) (10:52): The Defence Housing Authority has two major shareholders: the federal government and the Department of Defence. When we came to government, on that glorious day in August 2013, the new government came and had a real good look at the books. The Defence Housing Authority spends a lot of money, but they have a very good and well-run balance sheet and a very good business model. It relies a hell of a lot on private investment as well. It returns very handy dividends to the government and runs a great asset sheet. The Defence Housing Authority has never been for sale nor will it.

I was surprised when the CPSU press release arrived. It was a work of fiction to rival a Jules Verne novel. It said the Defence Housing Authority was going to be put up for sale, again. The Defence Housing Authority is not for sale, never has been and never will be by my government. Perhaps the CPSU would be better off providing services for their members as opposed to running fictitious scare campaigns.

I stand with my Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, my Minister for Defence, Marise Payne and my Assistant Minister for Defence, Darren Chester, in saying that the Defence Housing Authority is not for sale. Darren Chester has carriage of the Defence Housing Authority. I spoke with him when this thing came up. I said: 'Has something happened? I am sure that this was buried. We had a look at the books in 2013 and were saying DHA is a good return, has a good balance and was being very well run. Why would we get rid of it?' He said: 'Mate, I don’t know where this has come from. This is completely fictitious.'

While I have the floor, I give praise to my local DHA in Townsville, Bob Hayllet and the team at DHA in Kuluin. They do a fantastic job. We have a lot of people using Defence Housing in Townsville—and not just the people who live there. We have a lot of people who use it for the self-funded retirement packages—self-funded superannuation. We have a lot of people using that guaranteed return. They look after the assets for the people of Townsville. They look after the assets for the people of Australia. They make sure that the houses are well cared for and the tenants are well behaved. They make sure that the neighbours are well cared for. When someone rings up and they have a problem with a DHA house, Bob and the team act on it straight away. It is a great service. It is a great organisation and it forms a fantastic part of what we do for Defence. Defence is hugely important to our side of the government. It is hugely important to all sides of government in this place. Everyone takes it seriously. To
provide good services for our Defence personnel who travel around the country is critically important. DHA is not for sale.

**Broadband**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (10:55): In the electorate of Lalor there has been an ongoing conversation about a lack of access to high-speed broadband. Of course, being in a growth corridor, we are in a unique circumstance, with up to 5,000 and 6,000 people a year moving into the electorate. It gives us an extraordinary mix of greenfield, brownfield and those who are stuck in the middle. What it means is that there are large areas in Lalor with no access to the NBN. There are large areas stuck using wireless only—a very expensive option—as well as those who can only access ADSL1 and lots with ADSL2. There are very few, comparatively, with access to the NBN.

You can imagine what is going to happen in the electorate today when they read the newspapers and find out that the Prime Minister, in organising his second-rate version of the NBN, is now having to come clean on the fact that the cost is going to blow out again. It was already more expensive, taking longer and not providing what was originally planned. We now find out that in this process we have bought a dud. We have bought the dud Optus HFC network that is not going to be able to do what the Prime Minister, when he was Minister for Communications, said it would. A key component of Prime Minister Turnbull's second-rate NBN is likely to have to be replaced at cost, of course, to the taxpayer. We have purchased a dud and now we are going to have to pay more to get it fixed. Meanwhile, in homes in the electorate, people are still being locked out. They cannot be agile and innovative if they are locked out of 21st-century technology. People in my electorate are being left behind. They will be shocked. They will be disappointed. They will be angry when they find out today, when they open their newspapers, about the waste already and the waste to come.

The serious part of this is that our micro, our small and our large businesses are being stifled. They are being stifled by being locked out of 21st century technology. They are angry because the NBN was going to be a world-class infrastructure project and now it feels like a compromise. I know that this government wants to rule a line under the Abbott years and pretend that these last two years did not happen. People in my electorate will remember, Prime Minister, that you were the Minister for Communications and this is your mess.

**McMillan Electorate: International Volunteer Day**

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:58): We often speak about our local volunteers, but today I would like to talk about our international volunteers. I would like to start with a thankyou and name some names. They should be named and praised rather than named and shamed! They should be named and praised: Amy Stevenson, Mike Brocklehurst, Lois Pratt, Luke Ablett, Andrea Klindworth, Darold Klindworth, Tegan Mumford, Myles Mumford, Angela Fitzgerald and Joseph O'Brien. These people are all international volunteers from my amazing electorate of McMillan. I am delighted to note that International Volunteer Day will be celebrated next week and to celebrate the important contribution that our international volunteers make both to communities overseas in which they serve and in this Great South Land of Australia.

I congratulate all Australian volunteers, especially those in my electorate, who have given their time and skills as volunteers to develop countries in our own Indo-Pacific region and
some even further afield. To them I say: your enthusiasm and commitment to improve the lives of others is highly commendable, particularly when it involves taking you away from your life in Australia, your family and your friends. Your contributions are many. Your accomplishments with your host organisations and your adopted local communities during your recent assignments will endure for a very long time. Volunteers transfer knowledge, teach critical skills and demonstrate leadership in creative and resourceful ways, driven by the desire simply to help others.

The Australian government has supported international volunteering for more than 50 years. Since the 1960s, we have sent over 10,000 volunteers to countries throughout the Pacific, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America to work with thousands of organisations, small and large. Over the years, Australian volunteer programs have been reshaped and repackaged, but the vision has always remained the same. By living in the communities in which they work, Australian volunteers share their knowledge and their lives to help reduce poverty and encourage prosperity. The work of volunteers helps to advance Australia's international reputation and gives a powerful and tangible voice to the work of Australia's aid program.

We celebrate International Volunteer Day next week and thank you for your contributions and your achievements. If you have not already, I encourage you to engage the Returned Australian Volunteer Network. The network is open to any returned Australian government funded volunteer from any version of our national program, all the way back to the volunteer graduate scheme of the 1960s. The Returned Australian Volunteer Network provides a forum where volunteers can stay in contact with each other in the community and also showcases the contribution that volunteers make to those here in Australia. You have wonderful stories to tell and we want you to continue to share these stories with an ever-expanding professional network. The Australian Volunteers for International Development website has more information at www.dfat.gov.au/australianvolunteers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice): I thank the member for Macmillan for those good and appropriate words. However, in accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (11:02): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Christmas

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (11:02): Yes, it is that time of year when we all draw breath and say, 'Where has this year gone?' and, 'Good grief, it is almost Christmas.' I rise to speak about the importance of giving at this time of year, the importance of celebration and the importance of recognising a wonderful tradition in our community—the actual celebration of Christmas. I reject the comments of those individuals out there who say we cannot celebrate Christmas and we must call it a 'season'. Nobody in my electorate, school, kindergarten or community, rejects Christmas. All of them embrace it. Forty seven per cent of my electorate was born overseas, so I have an enormous amount of diversity and an enormous number of religions, but they all come together and recognise this wonderful time—four weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas and then that wonderful celebration. My schools embrace Chinese New Year,
they embrace the moon festival and they embrace Deepavali, but they also embrace and celebrate Christmas, as we all should. If you come from a Christian faith or Catholic background, as I do, you will be at mass; you will be doing all the things that I hold near and dear as my tradition.

But it is also a time for remembering others, particularly those who are less well off. It is time that brings it home very succinctly to some individuals that they are truly alone or have nothing. So I call upon those in our community who can to give at this time of year—to remember there are families out there doing it tough; to remember their friends who are alone. Call them out; embrace them; have them come over. Have the orphan's Christmas. Many community organisations at this time of year get together and do that. In my electorate, I am blessed with a myriad of organisations who will be doing that this year. There are many, including UnitingCare, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the various citizens advice bureaus, the Waverley Benevolent Society—and on and on it goes. I want to recognise two superb organisations in my electorate who will be helping those in need this Christmas: Dixon House in Clayton and Ronald McDonald House in Clayton. Dixon House is a wonderful centre, run for many years by Anglicare Victoria to support children, young people and families from all ethnic diversities and religions.

Many local children are at risk of going without presents or, indeed, food this festive season. Parents and caregivers simply may not have enough money left over from buying necessities to be able to afford presents. I can distinctly remember asking my mother why our neighbours got more presents than us. Why was Santa more generous to them? Mum said, 'There's five of us and there's only two of them. Santa can't carry as many presents into our house.' At this time of year it is really tough. As my child said at kindergarten, 'Why am I taking presents for poor kids? Isn't Santa or their mum and dad doing it for them?' I said, 'Santa can't get round to everybody, but people who can should.' That is what I am asking you all to do this year.

I have put out a call for people to donate to Dixon House and have made it available so that they can drop their gifts and perishable foods up to my office. If they could do that before Thursday, 10 December that would be great, and then we will take all those donations down. We already have a huge array of presents. This year, sadly, our local Father Christmas, Bill Thackray, will not be there. He passed away during the year. He used to make us magnificent wooden toys that made everyone smile. This year, people are asking for food, in particular.

Ronald McDonald House is another great organisation that serves our community. In my electorate, it is next door to Monash Medical Centre, one of the largest hospitals in Victoria and, indeed, Australia. They provide around-the-year care for families whose seriously ill children are at Monash Medical Centre, coming from all parts of Australia but particularly from rural Victoria. I have had the privilege of witnessing the welcoming and caring support provided in this environment. It has been operating since 1993, and since that time they have helped over 9,000 families who have needed to travel for their sick children. This year, two of their inspirational volunteers, Terrie and Peter Littlejohn, were recognised as Caroline Chisholm Awards recipients.

Clare O'Neill, the member for Hotham, and I are going down, on 8 December, to cook up a storm for all the residents who will be, tragically, spending their Christmas at Ronald McDonald House, looking after their seriously ill children. People think that because it is
Ronald McDonald House they are completely sponsored by the McDonald's foundation. Whilst McDonald's are incredibly generous in their sponsorship of the house, it does not cover everything. Monash Medical Centre is building a new children's hospital and we will see an increase in people needing to attend Ronald McDonald House. So if you can find some ways of giving to or volunteering with this great organisation that would be magnificent.

On a final note, Bernard Brell came into my office. He could not give much: he gave $100. He is a symbol of what we all need this Christmas.

**Paterson Electorate: Television Reception**

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (11:07): With the switch to full digital television services in 2012, many of my communities have been struggling to get decent television reception. The co-channel interference from out-of-area signals affects viewers who receive their broadcast from the Mount Sugarloaf site. This interference is dependent on weather conditions and is more prevalent during the spring and summer months. The interference can range from annoying minor signal video or audio break-up to complete signal loss. These have been three long, hot summers for people with limited or no television reception during our Ashes tests, the tennis or the golf.

In March 2013 I wrote to Malcolm Turnbull, the then shadow minister and former minister for communications, regarding this matter. It was to forewarn him of the mammoth task ahead facing an elected Abbott government, because the then Labor minister for communications, Stephen Conroy, refused to acknowledge or act on the issue. Soon after the 2013 election I contacted all Hunter television network bosses to meet, as a matter of urgency, to work towards better service delivery throughout my electorate.

In late 2013 I met with regional Broadcast Australia representatives to discuss digital television in my electorate. A plan was proposed by the regional broadcasters to install new retransmission facilities at Wallaroo Forest to service the Medowie, Salt Ash and Tilligerry area and Nerong, which was later changed to Bulahdelah to cover more households, and to upgrade the Gan Gan tower on the Tomaree Peninsula. This was called phase 1. Phase 2 included moving the current Stroud Tower to Pepper Mountain to better service the Stroud district and upgrading transmitters at Dungog. I have also asked them to investigate the co-location of new commercial broadcast retransmission units at Vacy to service the Paterson, Vacy and Gresford district. After four years of lobbying by me, in August this year I announced more than $450,000—which is more than half of the total funding package of $827,690—to improve television transmission services over the three sites.

In phase 1, close to 25,000 people will benefit from the improved transmission at Port Stephens, Bulahdelah and Wallaroo, servicing Medowie, Salt Ash and the lower Tilligerry Peninsula. As NBN Television is the lead regional broadcaster in my electorate, they are preforming the installation of the upgrades and the new infrastructure. Almost three years to the date since analogue was switched off in my electorate, the first stage of Phase 1 upgrade has begun.

Last Friday, the Gan Gan Tower was switched off from 9am to 3pm for the first of the upgrades. The switch-off during the day was required for safety reasons as the technicians had to physically climb the tower to preform the upgrade. I note the technicians from NBN
Television performed this upgrade in 40 degree heat. On behalf of my constituents I want to express my appreciations to those technicians.

There will be another upgrade of this tower during the week of 7 December. I am advised by NBN Television that this will only require an overnight outage of signal. Tomorrow the new tower at Wallaroo will be installed. As I said, this is designed to service the Medowie, Salt Ash and Tilligerry areas. Signal testing will begin next week. Its prudent to remind residents not to manually retune their television sets just yet, but rather wait until the testing has been continued on both Gan Gan and Wallaroo towers, which is likely to be around mid-December. NBN will be holding local antenna installers meetings to inform the installers on how these two new towers are to be maximised to get the best reception for our residents.

The last stage of Phase 1 is the new tower at Bulahdelah. Since the analogue switch-off residence in Bulahdelah have been the worst affect area, with virtually no television reception since the digital conversion. I am advised the Bulahdelah tower should be ready for testing in late January. However, there is much more work to be done and negotiations are to be completed with the broadcasters for completion of Phase 2 for the Stroud area, Dungog and Vacy. They were all part of the broadcaster's original plans and I will hold the broadcasters to their commitments to the upgrades in these areas because my constituents deserve no less.

Taxation

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (11:12): Tax policy does not always make for great dinner party conversation, but it is an incredibly important part of what the government does. At its heart, this is about the values that we share as Australians. Tax policy is a reflection of a national conversation about the kind of services that we want the government to provide, and then the critical question of who should pay for them.

This week, while we have been in Canberra, the Labor Party has tried to keep pressure on the Turnbull government as they continue to debate what we see as an incredibly damaging proposal for Australia's tax regime, and that is increasing the GST from its current rate of 10 per cent to 15 per cent, and additionally broadening the base of the tax to things that today are not covered—things like fresh food, health and education.

I want to make it really clear to my constituents in Hotham that Labor is opposed to a GST increase and opposed to broadening the base of the GST. We are opposed to this because these are proposals that would see families pay more for things like groceries and school books. A proposal such as this one would see pensioners having to pay more for their heating costs and for their energy bills. We all acknowledge in the parliament that there are tax issues that Australia faces, but what I wanted to talk about today are the five critical reasons that I think the GST is not the answer to those issues that we face.

The first reason that I wanted to cover for the parliament is that the GST is an unfair tax. It is what economists call a regressive tax, which means the smaller the persons income, the larger share of their income they pay in GST. One of the things the GST is that is covers off essentials. It means that people cannot afford not to buy the things that the GST is applied to, and that is why households with minimal income, really big families and single parents are the groups of people who will bear the brunt of a tax increase. If these groups sound a little bit familiar it is because they have been the targets of many of the cuts that have
been proposed by the Abbott government, and then the Turnbull government, over the last two years.

The unfair nature of the GST is not just economic theory. NATSEM, Australia's premier modelling institution has done the numbers on this one and made it quite clear that it is the families that are least well off that will bear the brunt of the tax. We often talk about the need for fairness across the tax regime as a whole. We know that if a GST proposal is brought to an election there will be plenty of sweeteners put on the table; there will be plenty of compensation mechanisms.

But compensating for the unfairness of the GST is a lot harder than it sounds. When Labor was in government we took a million people out of the tax system by raising the tax-free threshold. That is a million additional Australians who cannot even be compensated through income tax cuts, for example—because they do not pay income tax today. The critical issue about compensation is that it requires us to have a shared view about what fairness is. This, however, is a government, first under Tony Abbott and now under Malcolm Turnbull, which has done things like trying to make university degrees cost $100,000, something that would put university out of reach for many. They tried to put a tax on people going to the doctor, which would mean the sickest and poorest Australians bearing more of the cost of our healthcare system. The idea that we would trust this government to get fairness right, in a delicate area like this is, I think, completely unfathomable.

A GST increase will be bad for the economy. In a consumer driven economy like Australia one of the important drivers of growth is how much money consumers have in their pockets. If we raise the GST that will raise the price on just about everything that consumers in Australia buy, and that just means less money in the pockets of people around the country. That is one of the reasons why I know there are a lot of small business owners around the country who are really concerned about this proposal. Not only will it add to the significant paperwork that they have to deal with through their BAS statements but for grocers, butchers and newsagents—the people who rely on all of us as their customers—this is going to be a really significant challenge.

Labor is opposed to broadening the base of the GST because we do not want to increase the cost of things like health, education and fresh food. Governments should be trying to encourage people to spend on these things that are good for Australians, and increasing the GST would not help us with that. Finally, Labor has a better answer: we want multinational tax avoiders in this country to pay proper tax. We want to make the superannuation system fair. Tax policies are about values and we want the tax system to be fair. The GST is not the way to do it.

**Electorate of Ryan: Communications Forum**

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:17):** I recently hosted a communications forum for residents of Karana Downs and Mount Crosby, two suburbs in my electorate which have suffered from a historic lack of infrastructure investment, particularly in the area of telecommunications. The forum was oversubscribed, with a capacity crowd of more than 100 residents. I am grateful to the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Paul Fletcher, and his staff for securing the attendance of representatives from Optus, Telstra and nbn co, who also spoke one on one with residents and fielded questions about the issues that they are facing with internet and telephone availability. Nbn co spoke about the rollout of
the network and the benefits that it will deliver for residents in areas where a reliable internet connection is not currently available. Local residents raised a number of issues: the common themes being a lack of mobile phone reception and the widespread lack of fast and reliable broadband internet.

I accept that in many cases the availability of mobile phone reception is subject to the geography of the area, and commercial telephone service providers are not always in a position to install mobile phone towers on every street corner. What I cannot and will not accept is that in the 21st century, in 2015, a suburb just 25 kilometres from the Brisbane CBD is forced to suffer broadband internet at speeds below those of much of the developing world—that is if they can actually access it at all. In some cases residents cannot even access a fixed telephone service.

The Commonwealth government, or more accurately the Australian taxpayer, pays Telstra $253 million every year under the terms of the USO—universal service obligation—to provide a reliable standard telephone service with good voice reception. They are also supposed to maintain their network. Unfortunately for residents in low-density areas, such as Karana Downs and Mount Crosby, the obligation is technology neutral, which somehow allows Telstra to avoid its obligation to maintain the fixed copper network by providing residents with a mobile phone, even in areas where mobile reception either does not exist or at best is unreliable. As a consequence, most residents cannot access a reliable ADSL service.

The current USO, which is not due to expire until 2032, was a Labor Party special. In conjunction with the $9 billion definitive agreements between Telstra and nbn co, essentially a pay-off by the former Labor government to Telstra to junk its copper and HFC networks without causing a fuss, the USO fails the customer and mugs the taxpayer twice—one on the way through with Telstra and then again when nbn co assumes responsibility for the network. Many residents reported at the forum that they had witnessed or been advised by Telstra technicians that the copper network managed by Telstra was in a state of utter disrepair and that ageing and corroded copper lines had, on multiple occasions, been re-fused. One resident was told by a Telstra technician that the line was, in technical terms, 'cactus'. But either this was not reported back to Telstra or when it was it clearly fell on deaf ears.

In early 2017, nbn co would inherit this ageing and unmaintained copper network and would then become liable for its maintenance and responsible for its performance. Indeed, they explained to justifiably angry residents that the reason for the delay in the rollout in this area was the need to rebuild the local exchange. For the amount of money that Telstra has been paid and continues to be paid, like any business or commercial arrangement, they should be required to hand over their network in good working condition or pay for the cost of the repair work.

When it came to large-scale public infrastructure projects, the Rudd Labor government was a diabolical concoction of grandiosity and incompetence. As a consequence of this mismanagement, many residents in my electorate are without any internet access while they wait for the NBN. I will continue to advocate on behalf of the residents of Karana Downs and Mount Crosby to make sure they get a fair deal from Telstra.
Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (11:22): I want to lay down an infrastructure challenge. When we think about the next major road project that should be rolled out in Western Sydney, the next big thing is the M9. It sits just west of the M7. It will connect the 150,000 or so expected residents of the North-West Growth Centre with the M7 or the Hume Highway. That runs through the member for Hume's electorate as well. These projects are not just a boon for motorists in terms of making their travel times easier, but also they open up regional economies. The M7 in my area has opened up chances for us to redevelop industrial land and to create a massive job surge.

If it is built, my challenge is to build it without a toll. Run the road without a toll. The member for Greenway and I represent constituents who may spend up to $40 a day if they work in the city. No other capital city wears that type of impost—none. But Western Sydney residents do. They pay a lot to be stuck in traffic for an extended period of time. For example, you will be caught in that level of traffic with the link between the M7 and the M2. Build it without the toll and make it run freely. Even build it with a rail link running right down the centre of the non-toll road or motorway so that you can have public transport options built in as well.

But I bet it will not happen. Why will it not happen? It will not happen because we are told the money is not there, because it is not right to subsidise people in that way and because it is better to send a price signal in using the road. When I think of those arguments that are racked up against building a toll free motorway in Western Sydney, I instantly turn to the argument about building an instantaneous rail link to Badgerys Creek airport and the arguments that have been used that this should be built now and that no doubt we would probably need to cross-subsidise it—because nobody is going to use this thing until it is fully operational in 2065 anyway. But we are being told we have to expend this amount of money right now on this project.

The reason that I raise this is because it highlights of the hypocrisy of those who are advocating the massive expense of scarce public funds on a project like this, telling us how great a 24/7 airport is when they have been spending the bulk of their political lives arguing against an airport as well. I am not looking at you, member for Hume, at all; I am talking about other people in this place who have argued for ages against an airport in their backyard who tell us that this is the best thing that will happen to Western Sydney since God knows what. It is an hypocrisy.

What also gets me going is that this was a project conceived deceptively and which is now being rolled out deceptively. I am glad that the member for Greenway is here, because in early November she and I wrote jointly to the Deputy Prime Minister saying, 'Why is it that the place that we represent'—Blacktown council sits within both our federal electorates—'is the biggest council area in New South Wales, yet how many community consultation sessions have been set up for this? One.' It is one. It is being held on a weekday during working hours, all designed to minimise the amount of time people have to object to an airport that will send 50 flights an hour, 24 hours a day, over major populated areas in Western Sydney. It is scandalous.

Those opposite know that this is starting to become an issue—particularly the curfew issue. We had 800 residents in the Blue Mountains turn out, opposed to the way the flight paths
have been designed. We have had Penrith City Council residents complaining about the lack of a curfew. We had Parramatta council, that advocated for this airport, now saying that if there is no curfew on the Western Sydney airport then there should be no curfew on Sydney airport. I think this is the reality for all our projects: the quarter of a billion dollars ripped out of schools in my area because of their failure to fund Gonski and the fact that health funding has been lowered—I have had cardiac wards shut at Mt Druitt hospital and they refused to fund the MRI going into that hospital. When I think of the dilapidated public transport infrastructure in our area and the failure even to have lifts in railway stations or parking stations to encourage greater use of public transport, it is a scandal. When the West needs stuff it does not get it. When the East want to send it our way then they find the money to do so.

**Education**

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (11:27): Making science and maths more accessible and meaningful to students is an absolute national imperative. There is no doubt that our productivity and competitiveness depends on our ability to innovate. A focus in education on science, technology, engineering and maths—the STEM subjects as they are known—has never been more important, because STEM is absolutely central to innovation.

If we are to deliver all these things that those members opposite are asking for and which we have just heard about, the truth of the matter is that we have to be able to deliver more with less. The secret to that, we know, is innovation. You innovate by being deeply knowledgeable and capable in science, technology, engineering and maths.

Everyone wants to be able to deliver more with less. If I can turn up at work tomorrow and do my eight hours in seven hours, I have an extra hour to earn more or I have an extra hour with my family—and that is good for absolutely all of us. And if I earn more, I pay more tax. All of us benefit from that, so this is absolutely central to how we as a government and how we as a country are going to be able to deliver all those wonderful things that we want to be able to deliver in the coming years, including the roads, schools and hospitals that we just heard about.

Unfortunately, there has been a very significant decline in students studying STEM at year 12 and tertiary levels, and as someone who did high-level maths, physics and chemistry through to the end of my school career and in my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, I think this is an absolute tragedy. Participation in STEM subjects in Australian schools is at its lowest level in 20 years. We are struggling to find teachers with a science and maths background to take this agenda forward in many schools and to get involved in the teaching of STEM subjects.

It is also estimated that 75 per cent of jobs in the fastest-growing industries require skilled workers in STEM subjects. This is not just people who are doing high-level technology and engineering-type work. This is in business. The truth of the matter is that more often than not people who are great in business have quantitative skills they have learnt in their time at school in STEM subjects. This will be a real lost opportunity for our young people and our nation if we do not address it soon. If these trends continue, trends that those opposite were not addressing when they were in government, Australia's capacity to develop a high technology and high productivity economy will be severely curtailed.
The coalition government is developing a long-term national strategy for STEM in schools, including programs to support our teachers and our students across schools—and you will hear more about this in the coming weeks. It is an absolute focus of this government. We have committed an extra $12 million already to restore the focus in these areas in primary and secondary schools across the country. That builds on the $5 million allocated to the Primary Connections and Science by Doing programs. Restoring this focus on STEM subjects, a focus that those opposite did not seem to care about, is about ensuring that Australia's young adults are equipped with the necessary skills for the economy of the future.

At the local level, I am keen to build on these initiatives by developing and putting in place an annual STEM award for high schools in my electorate of Hume. Picton High School, Wollondilly Anglican College, Mulwaree High School, Goulburn High School, Trinity Catholic College and Crookwell High School have all embraced the idea of a perpetual STEM trophy to be awarded at the annual end-of-year presentation evening coming up in the next few weeks. The recipient of the trophy will be a student, nominated by the school, who has excelled in STEM-related disciplines. This is a really exciting project, and I will personally be presenting the award to a number of students in the coming weeks.

Focusing on STEM is a priority for the government because the jobs of the future are in these areas. In agriculture, a sector I know well, more and more of what farmers are doing is software enabled and uses sophisticated hardware. Whether it is precision agriculture or soil and moisture mapping, this is the future for industries that are not considered to be technology intensive. Starting an interest in technology and STEM at the school level will increase students taking up these subjects and will help Australia's competitiveness for many years to come.

Broadband

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:32): In July 2012, the ACCC authorised the NBN Co-Optus HFC subscriber agreement. This was for the migration of Optus's HFC subscribers to the NBN and the decommissioning of parts of the Optus HFC network. I quote from the ACCC's statement:

The ACCC accepts that Optus is unlikely to undertake the large investment required to allow Optus to offer significantly faster products on the HFC network than those currently available. The Optus HFC network would, therefore, only provide a close substitute to the NBN for customers seeking broadband services at the lower end of the range of services that the NBN will support.

Interestingly, I noted this fact in an opinion piece I wrote on 14 November 2013 following a visit by the now Prime Minister to Blacktown—to a part of Blacktown that happens to be in the member for Chifley's electorate. He basically came out and said, 'Blacktown, you've got it good enough guys. You've got it good enough!' He basically claimed there was no need for a fibre-to-the-premises NBN rollout in Blacktown for two reasons: firstly, Blacktown, apparently, is already serviced by existing Optus and Telstra HFC infrastructure; and, secondly, speeds of 100 megabits per second are already available to end users from services currently provided over that infrastructure. Well the chickens are coming home to roost. As I noted then, the reality is that the end-user services provided over such cable technology are heavily user dependent. The more users at any given time, the less speeds available. The Optus HFC infrastructure, in particular, is not dimensioned for a significant number of users. In fact, the ACCC, as I just quoted, has recently stated that Optus is unlikely to make the
investment to support higher speeds on its HFC network, and that Optus HFC does not represent a substitute for the higher-speed services that Labor's NBN would deliver. In contrast, the services provided using fibre under the NBN are not as susceptible to speed degradation as the number of users increases.

On the issue of speed, while we are here, it is completely incorrect to make broad claims of 100 megabits per second being available under existing infrastructure. Such speeds are not available to all end users, which is why service providers use the terminology 'speeds up to'—up to. In fact, consumer complaints and investigation and enforcement are some of the reasons those service providers do not even make the kinds of broad claims that the then communications minister made then. Even the retail contracts do not contain such speeds. We are talking here about downloads. What about the upload? What is the upload speed on the Telstra or Optus HFC?

Mr Husic: The telcos would be sued.

Ms ROWLAND: They would indeed be sued. Generally, you would be getting about one to two megabits per second, if you are lucky. As I said, these little chickens are coming home to roost. As in the headline from David Ramli, 'NBN faces double cost hit on ageing Optus network'. We know that the Prime Minister yesterday would not—or could not—even support the assertions he made only a couple of years ago. I quote from David Ramli:

NBN Co spent $800 million—that is your and my money—to buy and reuse Optus' cable network. Now it may be forced to invest another $375 million to rebuild parts of the fading network because it isn't capable of delivering high-speed broadband to enough people.

What did the ACCC say in 2012? We have known this for years. Under this Prime Minister, the cost of his second-rate NBN—in April 2013, he said it would cost $29.5 billion. In December 2013, he said it would be $41 billion. In August this year, it was $56 billion. Just have a look at what their rollout plan, released in October, is based on. As was very aptly said by the shadow minister, it has a trajectory that even Evel Knievel could not jump! And it is predicated on HFC being a primary delivery mechanism for this, predicated on HFC.

This financial year, nbn co said it would connect 953,000 homes and businesses to the NBN in the fixed-line footprint, ramping up in the next two financial years to 6.2 million homes and businesses—predicated on the HFC. This Prime Minister promised minimum speeds to everyone by 2016. These premises are not going to receive the NBN until 2019 at the earliest. Meanwhile, residents in Blacktown, in the electorate of the member for Chifley and my own electorate, await decent broadband services under this government.

Banks Electorate: Local Organisations

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (11:37): I am very pleased this morning to have the opportunity to highlight the fantastic efforts in my community of a number of community groups. Earlier in the month I visited Colin McFadyen Village, an independent living facility located in Hurstville. I have been to the village on a number of occasions. It is always a good and robust discussion, and I appreciate the hospitality that the residents show me when I visit.

One of the particular issues of concern is safety on Woniora Road at Hurstville. Woniora Road is a busy road that runs up towards Hurstville station and the main shopping area, and
there have been occasions of dangerous incidents involving cars and pedestrians. That is of
great concern to the residents of Colin McFadyen village, as indeed it is to me. I have raised a
number of these matters with Kogarah Council and the New South Wales Roads and
Maritime Services, and I look forward to those issues continuing to be addressed.

I want to thank Vanita Bobee, the community relations manager for UnitingCare in the
southern region of Sydney. With Vanita, I have visited not just Colin McFadyen Village but
other important villages, such as Nulgara Village at Oatley and Forest Village at Peakhurst.
Again, I thank the residents for the hospitality they have shown me.

I also wanted to acknowledge and celebrate today the success of our Local Sporting
Champions. This is a tremendous program through which the federal government provides
funding assistance to enable young kids who have excelled in their chosen sport to meet the
cost of the travel to those often-distant events. I have a local community committee which
assists me in assessing applications. We have had applicants successful in fields as diverse as
snowboarding, badminton, volleyball, ice hockey, table tennis, rhythmic gymnastics and
more. In particular, I want to thank our current group of recipients and congratulate them:
Aiden Sillato, Ray Gu, Madeleine Dahan, Finn Macmillan, Raina Rush, Lauren Carey, Alex
Yeung, Te Wehi Waitere, Chloe Tan, Celina Un and Sophia Low. They are a credit to their
community and to their families. We really do honour their success in their various sporting
endeavours.

Not far from my electorate office in Revesby is Revesby South Public School. The
Revesby South school is a great centre of excellence in our area and is very central to the
Revesby community. Recently, I visited the school and met with the principal, Christopher
Whitten, who is a very strong leader of that school. I did appreciate the discussion that we had
touching on many issues of concern to the local community and, indeed, to the education
system more generally.

I also want to congratulate the school community on its great initiative of producing a
recipe book derived from the recipes of families from the school. Each family provides a
recipe, and they all get put into this book, which is produced as a fundraising activity for the
school. It is called Food Glorious Food. It has a wide range of different recipes, and it is sold
to benefit the school. A number of local community businesses also sponsored the production
of the book and assisted in its preparation. I would like to acknowledge P&C President Leigh
Trindall and committee members Kellie McFarlane and Kristy Gilberd for all of their efforts
in putting this really important publication together. All of the funds from the book go
towards upgrading the school's outdoor play areas. It is something that is great for our local
kids. The book makes a great Christmas present. I recommend that people get down to the
school and pick up a copy of that publication. (Time expired)

Petition: Climate Change

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:42): On behalf of my community, I
present a petition signed by 87 members of the community calling on the Australian
government to increase Australia's emission reduction commitment for the United Nations
climate change conference in Paris. Next week, leaders of the world will gather in Paris to,
hopefully, agree on a framework to reduce carbon emissions to, hopefully, reduce global
warming and its effects on the global environment over the course of the years to come. They
will also discuss a financing arrangement to ensure that developing nations are supported as they adapt to climate change.

Climate change is occurring and it is getting worse. Overnight, the World Meteorological Organization outlined that the average surface temperature in 2015 will be the hottest on record. The last five years will be the hottest five years since records of temperature were recorded. This is, of course, due to El Nino and human-induced global warming. Climate change is affecting the lives of people in our neighbourhood in a dramatic way already. In the Pacific, climate change is having an effect, particularly on low island states like Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands. Wells are becoming salinised. Local infrastructure is becoming inundated by extreme weather events. Local crops that have been staple food for many communities for many years are being wiped out. On the weekend, I was very privileged to meet with Anote Tong, the President of Kiribati. He said something that shocked me, and that was that the people of Kiribati are coming to the conclusion that climate change for them is now irreversible and will ultimately result in their country no longer being inhabitable into the future. This is a big thing for a leader of a nation to admit, and the strategy of this government has now moved to what Anote Tong calls 'dignified migration'. They will be looking at how in future they will move populations from those countries.

Climate change is having a dramatic effect on our neighbourhood. Unless Australia takes serious climate action, our kids will have to pay for our mistakes and our economy will be weaker into the future. This message and the science have been ignored, unfortunately, by this Liberal government. They have removed policies that were actually reducing emissions in our economy. They got rid of the carbon price, which was driving down emissions, particularly from our energy sector, and replaced it with a policy charade. As a result, emissions from the electricity sector in Australia have now begun to increase again. In 2007, emissions from the electricity sector were 600 million tonnes. In 2013, as a result of Labor's carbon price, they had fallen to 548 million tonnes. Now the minister's own department, the Department of the Environment, project that emissions from the energy sector will increase to 656 million tonnes in 2020. They were going down under the carbon price; they are now going up again under this government. They have removed the cap on emissions that was actually a legal cap that would have reduced emissions over time.

We are the only developed nation in the world that has a policy of actively discouraging more renewable energy in our economy. That is exactly what this government has done by removing the renewable energy target. As a result, investment in renewable energy in 2014 fell by a whopping 88 per cent, and jobs were actually lost in that industry. This is a government that is trying to cut the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian renewable energy target.

When Malcolm Turnbull was elected as Prime Minister, there was some hope in Australia that we would finally get action on climate change from this Liberal government, but that hope was very short-lived. Instead, the new Prime Minister put Liberal politics ahead of a cleaner environment in our country. The new Prime Minister put his own personal ambitions ahead of the interests of our kids and their future, and that is unforgivable. Australians want real action on climate change; members of our community want real action on climate change—and this government has been a dismal failure. This government must take stronger
targets and stronger actions to the Paris climate change talks for the sake of our neighbourhood and for the sake of our kids.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The document will be forwarded to the Petitions Committee for its consideration. It will be accepted subject to confirmation by the committee that it conforms with standing orders.

Deakin Electorate: School Fetes

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (11:47): One of the really rewarding aspects of my job—and our jobs collectively here as members of parliament—is to get around our electorates and meet some of the great community minded people who make our areas, and in my case the Deakin electorate, such a wonderful place to live. The schools in the Deakin electorate are absolutely no exception to this and are replete with very community minded people. Recently, during fete season, as I call it, in Melbourne, with the beautiful Melbourne spring weather, I had the privilege of being able to join a number of schools in celebrating in their local fairs and fetes. On most occasions, I try to do a couple of hours stint on the barbecue, and I have become quite an expert at churning out some pretty good sausages. These occasions are a terrific opportunity for the whole community, as well as the school community, to come together to have some fun and, very importantly, for these schools to raise important funds at the same time.

I want to take this opportunity today to mention as many of the people as I possibly can who have been involved in putting together these fetes and fairs. The hard work and the organisation involved is quite immense in many cases, and the amount of money raised for these schools is huge. At St Timothy's Primary School in Vermont this year, the principal, Anne-Maree Jones, was very ably assisted by Mary Italiano, Marina McKenna, Kathryn Fitt, Rebecca Cheevers, Jason Footes, Mark Phelan, Steff Henderson, Jacqui Ackland, Scott Savage, Dominic Sherlock, Simon Rodwell, Ryan McCann, Sharon Burkitt, Mark Poldermans, Shanye Friffins and of course Father Rod Pitts. I want to thank each of them.

From the Holy Spirit Community Fete, I would like to acknowledge the work of Louise Downes, Martin Collins, Dale Sebire, Mark Johnstone, Peter Philip, Sharon Wolff, Alicia Keane, Sharon Garcia, Robyn Wortel, Karina Meehan, Anthony Downes, Nicole Lazarus, Mary Barnao, Yvette Collins, Sarah Postill, Tina Toomey, Annette Romijn, Natasha Knight, Lisa-Jane Sebire, Adam Stone, Sonya Pote, Julie Vendel, Trina May, Greg Pollard, Christine Conroy, Moon Houston, Ruth Frangeskakis, Peter Camilleri, Belinda Semos, Marisa Smeed and Des Turner. That is a huge fete and many people are involved.

From St Thomas the Apostle's Springtime Fair, I want to acknowledge and recognise the efforts of Liz Bailley, Sarino Miano, Shelley Campbell and all of the other countless members of the community who contributed.

At Blackburn Primary School, Kate Turner of the Parents and Friends Association was assisted by Fiona Vandenbarg, Claudelle Heeraman, Kate Fuller, Jodie Dyt Inston, Stella O'Connell, Connie Kormas and Lee Cozens. Well done; it was a wonderful fete.

In Mitcham, the St Johns Primary School Fete was again a huge fete. It was put together by chairperson and good friend of mine Andrew Russell, and included a wide range of stalls staffed by Frank Cittarelli, Michelle Plant, Scott Taylor, Caroline Russell, Melissa Greenwood, Adam Puls, Kate Lafferty, Maryanne Tully and Anna Datoy as well as many of
the hardworking staff at the school. Congratulations again. I thoroughly enjoyed having a beer with Father Reynolds too at that fete.

The Sacred Heart Primary School also put together a fete by their Parents and Friends Committee, which included Brian Grace, Emily Gurr, Paul Heffernan, Scott Hartshorn and Sally Smith along with many others.

The Tinternvale Primary School fete this year was again organised by Kerrie Anderson, principal, with the assistance of committee members Sue Pettit, Vicki Butler, Paula Llewellyn, Jo Wood and of course countless others.

Livingstone Primary School's was put together by a committee convened by Jenny Reidy with the support of her team, Denice Mayson, Jill Daniel, Ping Lee, Amelia Chin, Helen Georgitsopoulos, Jaimie Clarke, Olivia Moore, Miriam Balis, Dina Barbagniannis and Emma Freeman.

Finally, there was the fantastic fete of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ringwood. Angela Lacey, outgoing principal, did an absolute power of work, as she always does, and was again supported by Nicole Lewino and a large committee who put together this wonderful event for our community every year.

I want to acknowledge and get all of those people on the record, because each of them goes above and beyond the call of duty in making these events happen. In many cases for the parents and volunteers involved in these school fetes, their children are long gone from the school, but they have remained there to support the school community, provide a wonderful opportunity for us to all come together and, really importantly, raise much-needed funds for our school. Thank you very much from the Australian government.

Schmidt, Chancellor Helmut

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (11:53): I wish to pay my respects to a man of his times, a man of his century, who passed away on 10 November at the age of 96 in his home in Hamburg: the former Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, a man who became Chancellor of West Germany in a period that is known as 'the between times'. After World War II, after the Nuremberg Trials and after the implementation of the Marshall Plan, which had determined the future course of the new state of West Germany, he was chancellor before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of Germany. At the time Schmidt became chancellor, internal terrorists known as the Red Army Faction were carrying out kidnappings and murders throughout West Germany. He was unwavering—indeed uncompromising—in his stance against the Red Army Faction. It was his determination and his resolve and realpolitik that saw him become the chancellor that guided Germany through this terrible time known as the German Autumn.

Schmidt was born in Hamburg in 1918. His father, Gustav, was the illegitimate son of a Jewish banker and a German waitress, who was secretly adopted out after his birth—a secret that was not spoken about for many years within the Schmidt family. Young Helmut witnessed his father's anxiety about being half-Jewish at the time when the Nazis came to power and the Nuremberg laws were in full force. Helmut, even then, had nothing but contempt for the Nazis and was unable to hide it, being demoted within the ranks of the Hitler Youth. He served on the eastern front and married his childhood sweetheart Hannelore Glaser, affectionately known as Loki, in 1942.
After the war, he joined the Social Democratic Party. He was elected to the Bundestag in 1953, but gave it up in 1962 to concentrate on his role as senator for the interior for the state of Hamburg. In this role, the public first saw the determination that he would later become known for.

The Elbe River flooded in 1962; 315 people drowned in the river, and the river kept rising. Without blinking, Schmidt deployed the armed forces and the federal police in a rescue mission, at a time when it was unconstitutional to do so. But Schmidt was undeterred—even telling the mayor of Hamburg to leave, as he was 'getting in the way'. Thousands of people's lives were saved, and Schmidt became known as a 'Macher'—someone who gets something done.

When Willy Brandt was forced to resign in 1974, due to an espionage scandal planted by the East Germans, the choice for the new Chancellor was obvious. Unlike his romantic, idealistic predecessor, Brandt, Schmidt embodied Realpolitik. He was prepared to be at odds with his own party and the sentiments of the German people. He enraged civil libertarians with some of his policies, but, as the Red Army Faction threatened the security of Germany, Schmidt had little regard for what they thought, and he acted in the public interest. He was a secure, safe leader who led a prosperous Germany.

Schmidt was dismissive of cries from the political left and the greens who claimed that actions against the terrorists were a loss of civil liberties. I can say to everyone in this chamber: the more things change, the more they stay the same!

Schmidt was a person who acted very firmly against the hijacking of a Lufthansa airline in 1977. He was applauded globally for his actions. He refused to negotiate with terrorists.

After being re-elected in 1980, he became concerned at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Never one to underestimate the power of the Russians, he allowed NATO to deploy nuclear missiles on German soil—a decision that was deeply unpopular at home. But, again, Schmidt was not alarmed by the 400,000 protesters. He was unwavering in his belief that he must protect Germany from within and without.

Schmidt, seeing the economy stagnating in his time, helped found new global economic summits. The first G6 summit took place in Germany in November 1975.

In 1982, his chancellorship came to an end. He then wrote and published books every year until his death, sharing his thoughts and perspectives on China, Russia, the Middle East and Germany. In his last book, What I Still Wanted to Say, published just last year when he was 95, Schmidt names his role models—people who inspired him, and not just him but their times and their generation. One of these role models was the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Schmidt tells in his book that there was always a small model of Marcus Aurelius upon his horse, modelled on the original by Michelangelo, that he kept on his desk both at home and in his office in Bonn. Marcus Aurelius stood for inner calmness, and the emperor on the horse was a reminder to Schmidt that he had to retain his calmness. Perhaps this was the secret to his determination and to the unwavering chancellorship that is now so admired for those traits.

In 2007, Germans voted him the best chancellor in the history of Germany, and in 2008 he was voted 'the coolest guy in Germany'—not bad for a man entering his 90s. Indeed, he was a man for his times— (Time expired)
Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (11:58): It is great to be able to talk here today in the Federation Chamber. One of my last election promises back in 2013 was to address crime in strategic areas of my electorate throughout Petrie. In the 2014-15 federal budget, I was pleased to see a lot of funding—some $380,000—allocated for CCTV projects in parts of my electorate. There was $200,000 for CCTV cameras for Redcliffe-Suttons Beach, where there are a number of small businesses operating, including Pilpel by the Sea, and the local surf lifesaving club. There was also $170,000 for upgraded CCTV cameras in Margate, and $10,000 for the CCTV cameras at the Redcliffe PCYC. The funding was done through the Safer Streets Program. The cameras were up and running as of late last year, and are monitored by the local council and by local police, who can monitor these areas. We see how well these CCTV cameras are used, not just throughout Queensland but right around Australia, if there is a crime or an issue where police need to go back and look at some of the footage.

So graffiti has been a bit of an issue around that Margate area in particular as well, and vandalism in some of the shopfronts down there. This is not what you want when you are trying to shop in the local area—to see that sort of graffiti. It is also a cost for the small businesses in having to clean that off. There are literally hundreds of small businesses throughout that Margate area and some 3,000 throughout the federal electorate of Petrie. I would like to thank the hardworking small business owners in my electorate for what they do—for the services they provide, the products they provide and also the jobs they provide.

I recently ran a job-seeker 'boot camp' out at Deception Bay, and I am looking to hold another one in early 2016 down in the Redcliffe area. Perhaps some of those Margate businesses and some of the businesses from CIRP—Commerce & Industry Redcliffe Peninsula—may be able to come on along. I met some of them the other night at an awards night that CIRP put on. They may be able to come along to that and talk to the local job seekers there about what it is they look for when they are hiring—what it is that small businesses look for. The last one was really successful, with some 50 job seekers coming along and 15 small businesses. I am sure that the next one that we run early next year will also go well.

Of course, the government is very supportive of small businesses. We know that they provide jobs. Our $20,000 instant asset tax write-off this year is great because it enables them to buy some new products or infrastructure that will help their business, and they get an instant tax write-off rather than depreciating it over several years. There are also company tax cuts as well. But as we approach Christmas, I really want to encourage consumers to shop small this year, if they can—to think about who is providing local jobs. And if you are unsure what it is that you want to provide for family and friends this Christmas then perhaps gift vouchers or other products from small businesses in the area may be something that you could purchase.

There are lots of local businesses down in Margate, like the Golden Ox Restaurant, the Marconi Coffee Shop and Big Dad's Pies. They all provide local people with jobs and so forth. We have tourism down there, like Dolphin Wild Island Cruises—Lisa Edwards runs snorkelling trips over to Flinders Reef and other reefs throughout Scarborough. There are skydiving companies and whale-watching companies, or maybe a local mechanic when a friend or family needs their vehicle serviced. Someone might need a dental appointment, so...
you can pop down to Smiles Dental Care there and see Dr Amol and perhaps buy a voucher from him for a family member. And Cleaver Firearms are in my electorate—one of the biggest gun shop owners throughout Australia. That provides some 20 people with employment. If you are sporting shooter then perhaps you can get a gift voucher there.

There are lots of things happening down there, so I really just encourage people to shop small, to think about how they spend their money this Christmas and perhaps support a small business. I know that is what I will be doing, and not just in Margate, which is an important area, but down in the Brisbane City Council areas—perhaps in Carseldine, Aspley, Bracken Ridge or up in North Lakes. There are lots of businesses and employment and so forth happening in North Lakes alone.

So shop small and have a great Christmas, and thanks for supporting local business in the Petrie electorate.

**Working on Country Program**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:03): I rise to speak to the House on the Working on Country program. This is the Indigenous rangers program which I first had contact with when I was Minister for Agriculture. It continued when I was Minister for the Environment and I have kept a very close engagement and interest in it now that I have the responsibility in the shadow ministry for the finance portfolio.

In terms of effective environmental management and also in achieving significant social outcomes for employment there have been few programs provided by the Commonwealth that have been as effective as the Working on Country program. Effectively, the program funds and allows the range of work that needs to be done to look after country to be done by the traditional owners of that country. For some time I have had contact with a number of these rangers and, again, have worked with some of them in the Torres Strait earlier this year, cleaning up beaches on a number of islands.

A few weeks ago the Pew Charitable Trusts hosted a breakfast here at Parliament House. At that breakfast were some of the rangers who I had previously worked with, the Bardi Jawi Rangers from the Kimberley who I had camped with on Sunday Island—and I will never forget waking up in the middle of the night hearing what sounded like the roar of a jet engine but was simply the tide moving between the islands up there in the Kimberley in the Buccaneer Archipelago. I caught up with a couple of those rangers, Philip McCarthy and Daniel Oades.

I also caught up with a ranger by the name of Michael Ross at the breakfast. Michael Ross is responsible for Olkola country in Cape York and was very much involved with the work that was led by Indigenous rangers and traditional owners in determining whether or not they wanted to put their land forward for a World Heritage nomination for different parts of Cape York. That work and the programs associated with that consultation are currently on pause, but certainly the general work in looking after country that is performed by the Indigenous rangers up there continues, and Michael Ross continues with the work in his part of Australia as well.

It needs to be remembered that effective environmental management in Australia and the work of the Indigenous rangers is fundamentally different from environmental management in almost any other part of the world. In most parts of the world, if you take people off the land
then nature looks after itself. In Australia, if you take people off the land then you change the ecology from what it is meant to be. This is because centuries of burns—in particular, cool burns rather than burns happening in the dryer end of the season—not only have worked as a fire management system but are something which the Australian ecology has come to depend on. A whole range of plant species only regenerate after these cool burns—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 12:07 to 12:21

Mr BURKE: To continue what I was saying before the suspension, there are currently 770 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders employed in full-time jobs in some of the most remote parts of Australia, with 1,423 jobs including part-time and casual employees. Around 30 per cent of all positions and half of part-time ranger positions are women. There is, generally, an under-representation of women in the ranger jobs. This is a problem with the program and something that needs to be constantly looked at, in program design, particularly given that for some parts of country only women are able to look after those parts of country.

In January, when I visited the Torres Strait, the senior ranger there was Laura Pearson. I worked with her on Warraber Island, Poruma Island and Iama Island, cleaning up beaches and, importantly, looking at different methods they are using in the Torres Strait to deal with the rise of sea levels. When we talk about the Pacific, it is easy to overlook the fact that we have islands that are Australian islands in the Torres Strait that are being affected, imminently, by rising sea levels. On Poruma Island, for example, you can walk along the beach and see the tops of coconut trees, which are all that is left of what was, not that long ago, part of the home of the people living there. It was, indeed, part of the formal boundaries of Australia. The work of the Working on Country program remains one of the most cost-efficient and effective environmental programs Australia has. I urge the government to continue to fund it, and I urge my own party to continue to expand it.

Forrest Electorate: Tourism

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (12:23): This is the peak season for events in the south-west of Western Australia, and 2015 has been a great year for the best part of Australia. Last weekend, for instance, Margaret River hosted the annual spectacular Gourmet Escape. It is a festival of food and wine. It ran for two days over Saturday and Sunday, but the opening was on Thursday. Visitors were able to spend time at the central events, such as the Gourmet Village at Leeuwin Estate, or be part of 50 satellite and fringe events. It was extraordinary. The Margaret River Gourmet Escape brings food and wine experts from around the world and showcases the best of the south-west and Margaret River and shows exactly what they have to offer.

This year's guests included chefs Adriano Zumbo, George Calombaris, Guillaume Brahimi, Rick and Jack Stein, Marco Pierre White, Mat Moran and Mark Best. These great talents joined chefs and critics from around the world to present the best food and dining this nation has to offer. There will be plenty of activity as well throughout the south-west, but before I get onto that I want to acknowledge and thank everyone who worked so hard on the wonderful Margaret River Gourmet Escape. It is an extraordinary event and I would encourage anyone who is in part of my world to consider attending whenever they can.
We have other events in the south-west this weekend. In Bunbury, the Dolphin Discovery Centre will be an absolute hub of activity this weekend when the Dolphin City Festival takes place. These are family fun days, and it will include a brews, blues and barbecue evening on Saturday. It sounds fantastic. Also there is the Donnybrook Food and Wine Fest on Saturday, so you can just imagine the amount of wonderful food and produce from the south-west that is available. Producers will showcase their wines and their foods in a very family-friendly environment on the banks of the Preston River in Donnybrook.

There is always something happening in the south-west and it is the tourism capital of the West. However, we do have more work to do. Yesterday the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its quarterly Survey of tourist accommodation. Australia's south-west had an average bed occupancy rate across all accommodation types of 32 per cent and an average room occupancy of 49 per cent from April to June 2015. In real terms this means that for those three months, of the 320,000 room nights available, only 157,000 room nights were occupied. In simpler terms, of the roughly 3½ thousand rooms available for rent in the south-west on average, only 1,700 had someone staying in them on any particular night. That is a lot of empty rooms and empty beds. That is why we have more to do.

The region has potential to expand, but we need to do this through numerous ways. One of the most important deciding factors that people use in choosing a holiday or tourist destination is ease of access. The south-west does not have its own interstate or international airport to allow visitors direct access, but we are working on this. To go to the region requires the travellers to fly to Perth and to arrange transport to get three hours south to see the greatest destinations than Western Australia has to offer. We are all working to fix this. A regional airport with the capacity to take interstate and ultimately overseas aeroplanes and tourists is essential to the economic stability of the region and for its long-term sustainability, and also to get the produce from the region out, as we know most of the freight goes in the bellies of passenger aircraft. That is exactly what I want to see happening in the south-west.

This simple fact of access has been recognised by the Western Australian state government, which has put significant funds into developing the Busselton Regional Airport. Of course, if those beds are to be filled in my part of the world in the south-west, we need to make it easy for people to access them, and that is part of the national and international efforts to upgrade the Busselton Regional Airport.

I want to go back to where I started: the Margaret River Gourmet Escape. I know there has been much coverage of it in Australia and overseas. When people come to our wonderful south-west—the Margaret River region—as in so many parts of this country, they are amazed at what they can see and at what they can do. We talk a lot about dining, and as a farmer, who is particularly proud of what we do, I can tell you that we produce some of the world's best food and produce in my part the world. If anyone gets the chance, come and try it. Come to the Margaret River Gourmet Escape and a range of other wonderful events.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (12:28): In an unremarkable grave, in the Seymour Cemetery, is a small wooden cross. On this wooden cross is a plaque with the inscription: 'B4/707. Private J E Docherty. Result of an accident. 12/11/1950. 19 years.' It is the final resting place of Private John Edward Docherty. As Chalpat Sonti wrote in the Seymour Telegraph:

Docherty, Private John Edward
It's ironic that with 2015 designated as the year Australia Remembers, commemorating the centenary of the Gallipoli landings and the sacrifice of soldiers burned so deeply into the nation’s psyche, we should be publishing a story like this.

This tale began in the spring of 2014, when Army veteran Ossie Taylor noticed a derelict grave … Mr Taylor doesn't miss much around town, and he came into the Telegraph office to talk about a sight that distressed him—a soldier that did not seem to be remembered in the way he should be, and it was hard to disagree when looking at the grave.

Ossie spoke to RSL member and nasho Keith Murphy, who wrote to the Office of Australian War Graves, seeking an official grave for Private Docherty, much like the one that backs onto his in the cemetery. Then came the first setback: advice from the Office of Australian War Graves was that Private Docherty was not eligible for an official grave as he did not meet the criteria around war service.

Keith then enlisted the assistance of Chalpat and myself. The grave is not befitting a soldier's grave, so I contacted veterans' affairs minister, Senator Michael Ronaldson. Ronno understood our position, but it was pretty clear that we were going to be on our own.

So who was Private John Docherty and how did he die? Research revealed that Private Docherty was the eldest son of a separated mother and father, and that he had two younger brothers and a sister. Only three or four death notices in Trove were all we could find in the hunt for Private Docherty's family. The South Australian police archives indicated that John might have had a few scuffs with the law when he was a kid. With limited information, I roped in the support of Senator for South Australia, Senator Gallacher, who also searched every name in the notices in an attempt to find a living relative.

I personally rang or Facebook messaged every one of the Dochertys in South Australia in the hope of contacting a relative. Unfortunately, my efforts were in vain; despite some long, hard legwork we exhausted that avenue. But that was not the end of it. With the support of Gerard O'Rourke of the Seymour Cemetery Trust we decided, like the old adage, that 'if it is to be it is up to me'. We enlisted local support. Firstly, the CO of the School of Armour offered some men to come to help with the clean-up. The Mitchell shire CEO, Rebecca McKenzie, was also prepared to have the council chip in, and the cemetery trust offered bluestone and other materials to help.

Local businesses got involved. Gayle from North Central Locksmiths volunteered to redress the plaque and to supply a new, complementing one. Modular Concrete Sleepers in Seymour and MJ's Garden Maintenance gladly supplied the materials to create a new headstone and border. How do you thank these people enough?

Chalpat's investigative skills delivered the story behind John Docherty. Private Docherty, along with Reg Bush, died as the result of a motorcycle collision with a ute on the Seymour-Yea Road. Bush was riding the motorbike and Docherty was the pillion passenger. They were heading towards Seymour and near the racecourse turnoff when the motorbike pulled out to pass a car and the crash happened. Both men on the motorbike were members of the School of Tactics Seymour.

The incident happened 65 years ago, but some memories are still etched in the minds of those who knew him. Nagambie resident, Robert 'Bardy' McLeod, whose sister Joyce was dating Private Docherty at the time, recalled the incident for Chalpat:

"She (Joyce) was waiting for him (Private Docherty) at Goulburn Park," Mr McLeod said.
But he never arrived—

It appears the funeral was low-key, and not an official Army one.

I am proud that this young servicemen will be remembered in the way that he should be, as a member of the Australian Defence Force—regardless of the timing or the manner of his death.

At the end of the day, the project has been driven by the community for the community. After 65 years and having no immediate family to remember him, Private Docherty's grave has suffered neglect. But no more, his little wooden cross with the small brass clerk sitting askew. Private Docherty has not been forgotten, and in the year that Australia remembers it is a small but sweet victory.

Through the great work and generosity of our community, Private John Edwin Docherty has a fitting place to be remembered. Again, our community showed why in times of need the community of Seymour can be relied on to right a wrong.

**White Ribbon Day**

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (12:33): This week we have all remembered and recognised White Ribbon Day. It is the day Australia stood up, with one voice, to stop violence against women of all forms and violence in general.

Currently, two women are killed by a current or former partner every week and 78 women have died as a result of domestic and sexual violence this year alone. The Prime Minister reflected:

All disrespect of women does not end up with violence against women, but let's be clear, all violence against women begins with disrespecting women.

In this week I would also like to speak about violence in all forms and the abhorrent violence that happens in many families as well.

This week my electorate of Lindsay was sickened and horrified by a tragic event that happened to a very young boy in Penrith. On Tuesday the young boy, a 10-month-old baby, sustained horrific injuries, including third-degree burns to almost 50 per cent of his body, as a result of being deliberately left under hot water in the shower allegedly by his mother's partner. The child had also suffered bruising to his skull and to his jaw.

After posting a message on my own Facebook wall, being quite saddened by that, I have so far received 194 likes from people who are equally upset and many, many comments. To really show how widely all communities have spoken in outpourings this week about domestic violence against women and violence in our families, I would like to share some of their reflections. 'He should get life for what he did,' said Debbie Hayes. 'That poor child will suffer each and every day for the rest of his life from the effects caused from such horrific burns. I can't get that out of my head. I pray to God that just once the law gets it right,' Melanie Lauren. 'I am heartbroken. Who could do such a horrible act towards an innocent baby?' Jennifer Mc Kinlay. 'No. No. No,' from Pamela Mealey. Jo Dymock wrote, 'This story made me sick to hearing what this bloke done. If he found guilty he should get life in jail and he should be never allowed near children again.' The messages just go on and on and on.

As a nation, we must protect those who are vulnerable in our society. We must do better. We can do better. I will close my statement today by informing the House that I stand before
you and before my community in solidarity, condemning this horrendous act of barbarity to such an innocent baby. I will be doing more with my community to eradicate this surge of family and domestic violence. I have been talking with the Mayor of Penrith and also with wonderful activists like Michele Ellery from the Queen of Hearts Community Foundation about what we can do together as a community, because I know my community in Western Sydney does not want to see any form of family violence against women, against children or against anyone, and I am proud to represent a community that is committed to seeing this end.

**Petition: Aid**

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (12:37): I present this petition today which has been accepted by the Standing Committee on Petitions.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of concerned citizens of Australia put forward by the Parish of St Joseph's Hobart: draws to the attention of the House the large cuts to Foreign Aid in 2015-2016 Federal Budget. Caritas and other international aid agencies state that these cuts will significantly reduce or close vital aid and humanitarian programs. Australia’s ability to provide essential support in health, education, sustainable livelihoods and resilience to natural disasters in vulnerable communities will be reduced.

Australia is a global leader in the movement to end extreme poverty. While helping lift vulnerable people out of poverty and saving lives, foreign aid serves Australia’s national interests, especially in the Asia Pacific region. The Budget cuts take Australian aid to its lowest level in six decades. A wealthy country with AAA economic ratings, these cuts put Australia near the bottom of the OECD rankings as a contributor to international aid and development.

Australia has the capacity to be compassionate and financially astute. We therefore ask the House to:

(a) Recommit to the government’s promise in the 200 as part of the Millennium Development Goals of raising Foreign Aid contributions to 0.7% of Gross National Income, Immediately ensuring Australia meets its international obligations.

(b) Resource the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Development Goals which were adopted and endorsed by the Honourable Julie Bishop at the United Nations General Meeting in September.

from 1 citizen

Petition received.

Australia is a rich and fortunate country. We can afford to be the best international citizen, we can afford to be most generous in our assistance to countries less fortunate than us and we can afford to be much more active diplomatically when the situation calls for it. Take West Papua, for example. This territory just north of Australia was fraudulently acquired by Indonesia in the 1960s thanks to a dodgy referendum, and the citizens of West Papua have been suffering human rights abuses ever since. The people of West Papua have an inalienable right to determine their circumstances in the future. In fact, the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples makes it clear that all colonised peoples have the right to self-determination. But, remarkably, the Australian government has been virtually silent on the issue. And it is not just that we have been silent. Indeed, there are claims that Australia even helps fund and train the Indonesian security forces who are carrying out the atrocities. So we are not just complicit in these human rights abuses; we are actually a part of the problem.
Another example is the plight of those unfortunate souls in Camp Ashraf, now Camp Liberty, in Iraq. Since the 1980s these camps have been home to over 2,000 displaced Iranians, mostly supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, the country's main opposition group. They have been subject to barbaric attacks, including when the camp was stormed by Iraqi security forces in 2009, killing nine people, and just last month when the camp was struck by a barrage of around 80 rockets, killing 23 people and injuring dozens more. These are horrific acts of violence. Countries like Australia—rich and fortunate countries—need to take immediate international action to protect these vulnerable people. Indeed, we need to put whatever pressure we can on the Iraqi government to ensure that these attacks stop and that these people are safe.

Palestine is another area where we need to rethink our approach, because the situation for the Palestinian people is inarguably dire as Israel continues to illegally development settlements in Palestinian territory. Former Foreign Minister Bob Carr has acknowledged that these settlements are not legal, but the current government will not even do that. What Australia must do is recognise the need for a Palestinian state and condemn Israel's illegal acts of settlement and violence. It is alarming that too many of our political leaders appear to be beholden to Israeli interests at the expense of the Palestinian people.

Australia can afford to be much more generous when it comes to our international aid contribution. After the latest round of cuts to the aid budget Australia's contribution will be sitting at around 0.2 per cent of gross national income. That is an abysmally low figure when you compare it to other countries. Our aid program works. We know that it saves lives, improves lives for people in the developing world and is consistent with Australia's economic and security best interest.

The community understands this, so it is no wonder I am able to table the petition today compiled by a group from the St Joseph's Church in Hobart, in my electorate of Denison, who are concerned with the most recent cuts to the aid budget and are calling on the government to recommit to its promise in the year 2000 to raise foreign aid contributions to 0.7 per cent of gross national income. This petition is just a small snapshot of views from my electorate; more broadly, it is a call echoed by people all around the country. Once upon a time it was also government policy—but, shamefully, not any more. As I have said many times in this place, Australia is one of the most wealthy and fortunate countries in the world; but, too often, we do not act like it. It is time we started acting like the good international citizen the world expects us to be and started being part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Corangamite Electorate: LAND 400 Project

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:42): I rise to speak on a very important project for our nation, the LAND 400 defence program, a multibillion-dollar program to deliver 225 armed combat vehicles for the Army. In September, I celebrated the announcement by Team Sentinel that, if it is successful in its tender, it plans to establish an integration and turret manufacturing facility in Geelong. This was a great announcement for our city and a great announcement for Corangamite. Team Sentinel's confidence in Geelong and our future as an advanced manufacturing powerhouse is very exciting. Part of Team Sentinel's bid is to deliver a very high proportion of Australian industry content, which, as we know, is so important for local jobs and future local jobs. Team Sentinel's modelling shows there will be around 300 jobs, direct and indirect, created locally with a total of around 500 direct and indirect jobs
created across Victoria. Geelong companies and Corangamite companies will have the opportunity to play a vital role in this project, including in relation to component and parts supply, integration of Australian communications sensor and weapons systems, engineering and testing facilities and the like.

I have also met with another very large defence player which is bidding for the LAND 400 project. They are intending to construct a $100 million innovation and advanced manufacturing facility. They have not decided on the location but, as I conveyed in no uncertain terms, with our region's skills in vehicles assembly, advanced manufacturing and defence, Corangamite and the Geelong region is very much the right place to base this facility.

Today I want to raise a very major concern in relation to opportunities in defence in Victoria. I ask an important question: what is the Victorian government doing? What is its plan? Its advocacy on securing defence projects has been, regrettably, next to nothing. Today, I reveal that the Victorian Defence Procurement Office based at Deakin University, in Waurn Ponds, is not much more than an empty shell. The VDPO was announced by Victorian Premier Andrews in March 2015. It was an election commitment of $5 million. It is meant to have state-wide responsibility and act on behalf of all Victorian based defence companies, marketing the skill and capability of Victorian and Geelong manufacturers to the largest defence contractors in the world. Yet we have seen very little action.

Five million dollars was provided over four years at $1.3 million a year. So far, it is made up of three people, two cars and an office at Deakin University, at Waurn Ponds, at a cost of $550,000 a year. From what I understand, there are no investment programs, no projects being delivered, there is no plan for Defence jobs and there are no decisions made on how this additional money—there is about $2.8 million—is going to be spent.

Compared with the slick operation at Defence SA, Victoria's efforts in securing Defence projects, in advocating for our region and for our state, have been an absolute embarrassment. As I mentioned, there is $2.8 million to spend and no plan. If Premier Daniel Andrews cannot work out what to do, I call on him to allocate that money to the Geelong Region Job Connections program, which is doing fantastic work on the ground delivering grassroots job-creation programs. This was a very big commitment by the Andrews government—$5 million, basing this procurement office in Geelong—and it is incredibly disappointing to see so little action on the ground and no plan.

Victoria's defence industry has an annual turnover of about $1.5 billion. It includes more than 300 businesses and directly employs about 6,000 people who make equipment and provide services for defence activities. The defence industry in Victoria has enormous potential and skills, and yet we are seeing so little action from the Victorian government. I call on the government to announce its plan and, if it has no plan, to allocate this money where we can spend it. Thank you very much.

Question agreed to

Federation Chamber adjourned at 12:47
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism and International Education, in writing, on 15 October 2015:

To ask the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism and International Education—In respect of the Minister's appointment on 21 September 2015, will the Minister provide an itemised account of all associated costs, including (a) signage, (b) stationery, including business cards and letterheads, (c) web design and IT services, (d) vehicular signage and painting, and (e) marketing materials, including logos, pamphlets, and audio-visual materials such as DVDs.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

As at 15 October 2015 there were no costs incurred by the Department of Education and Training for signage and stationery. Letterheads are made available online through the department's intranet and letters are only printed as needed.

As at 15 October 2015 there were no costs incurred by the Department of Education and Training for web design or IT services. These services are performed in-house, within existing departmental resources.

As at 15 October 2015 there were no costs incurred by the Department of Education and Training for vehicle signage, painting, marketing materials, including logos, pamphlets, and audio-visual materials such as DVDs.